Exercise Description

In this exercise, I am a Product Manager at Stitcher. I will work off the assumption written below with the goal of answering the following questions.

a. Assumption

- Listeners who <u>interact</u> with other users have a <u>better</u> overall experience.

b. Questions

1. What new feature would you build to test this assumption, and why?
   Clearly define your goals and your target users, and share your brainstorming list of alternates considered

2. How does it look and behave? (hint: wireframes are helpful)

3. Discuss trade-offs, risks, and metrics for success.
   Are there times when the feature would be used a lot but it is still not a success?

1. What new feature would you build to test this assumption, and why?

The new feature I'd build is a centralized **listening activity feed**. This feature is considered to be a low difficulty and high risk solution. Implementation would require changing an existing feature that is currently being underutilized. This test will not only allow us to better understand if we can increase interactions between listeners, but also help us understand the future of an existing feature. We can choose a segment of the trusted users to launch this feature to during initial testing.

In order to test the pre-define assumption, I've come to a hypothesis for the new feature, goals, and target users.

> I believe that social power users[1] will engage more with others through a centralized listening activity feed[2], which will increase total time spent listening for a more social listening experience.

I've also included all the the steps, in order, that I did to write a testable hypothesis.

a. Exercise Unknowns

I started by stating any unknowns about the exercise, to help me be aware of any loosely defined aspects.

- How would you more clearly define interact?

- How would you more clearly define a better overall experience?

- What is our current baseline? In other words, the usage by free and premium users of each of the below community features per week and monthly:
    - Comments via Facebook
    - Share
    - Activity Feed
    - Automatically Shared to Feed
    - Interacted with another user (once defined)

b. Initial Assumptions

I've decided to state my own assumptions for the project to stay on track with the prefered timetable. Thus, I wrote out all of the related assumptions I had and would work from.

- Another person's actions within the app do matter to another listener.

- Listeners need recommendations from friends / others to help them know what to listen to.

- Interact is defined as any way two or more users can influence each other and/or communicate directly.

- Better overall experience is defined as an improvement in tracking metrics (more later) but some quick examples could be increased time on app, increase net promoter score, or conversion to paid subscription.

c. Brainstorm List of Solutions

I decided to brainstorm a couple of concepts that might help increase the interaction and experience.

After making this initial list, I went through each of the items again, to ensure they are realistic and make sense. I proceeded to rank each one on risk vs difficulty, I added an atrisks (*) to the end of any one that was a high risk, low difficulty solution. Testing the biggest unknowns (risk) that aren't a large undertaking will be the most telling for future experiments.

- Native / built-in comments*
- Ability to comment at a certain timestamp
- Native share feature
- Direct share (send via messaging apps)
- Direct messaging users
- Group listening (listen together)
- Forum of sorts
- [2]Simplified listening feed with comments* (instead of hidden)
- Premium only [access to X feature]*

    a high risk solution with a low difficulty

d. User-Focused Assumptions

Now that I had three solid concepts to work off of, I wanted to understand the user. Since I used the metrics that were available to size the market. I used these metrics and my own firsthand experience to narrow down the user groups to a single persona for this exercise.

- All user metrics are limited to Americans in the United States.

- While Stitcher offers channels, such as live radio stations, we will assume all users of the app are considered podcast listeners.

- The majority of the ~35% of American podcast listeners are weekly listeners and can be considered highly engaged users

- There's an equal parallel with Americans podcast listeners therefore Stitcher has 2.8M weekly listeners

- Based on similar apps, a good estimate of paid subscribers is ~25% or 2M listeners.

- Assuming that about half of the weekly listeners are paid subscribers, we know that there's a segment of ~1.5M weekly listening subscribers.

- The current users of the community feature are limited to power users, which can be defined as 10% of the weekly listening subscribers (or 150K listeners).

- [Validation]: This can be considered plausible because 150K listeners is roughly 2% of Stitcher's total number of listeners.

c. Power User Persona

Since there's high engagement from our existing power users, and a high likelihood that we have the open communications channel, I needed to better define what a power user was. I wrote a persona around the information in the brief, chatting with a couple friends about habits, and my personal experiences.

- [1]Meet **James** – The Social Listener (Power User)

- James is 26 years old, Male, and Single

- Works as account manager for a recruiting website in New York City

- Takes the train for 45 minutes to work from the suburbs

- Has an iPhone 8

- Discusses favorite episodes with core friend group

- Listens to his favorite five podcasts and what his friends share

- Relevant behavior:

	No						Yes
I'm tech-savvy				X			
Being smart defines me					X		
I want control			X				
I want to support creatives					X		
I accept ads		X					
I want to influence others						X	

d. Brainstorm Relevant Signals

Once I knew the top solutions and had a target user, I wanted to better understand the types of signals that I'd need to be thinking about when considering an experiment.

- Time in app

- Total time spent listening

- Number of episodes listened

- Number of shares

- Share ratio to total listened

- Number of likes (if feature existed)

- Number of comments

- Total number of social interactions (e.g. likes, comments, listens, and views)

- Number of social interactions per session

- Number of interactions between two users

- Increase net promoter score

- Conversion to paid subscription (if required paid user)

e. Testable Hypothesis & Solution

It was a this point that I felt I had a plausible solution and had a testable hypothesis that is worth exploring through visual concepts and functional requirements.

2. How does it look and behave?

a. User Stories

To start, I wanted to understand at the highest level, what were a couple realistic user stories based on the solution write up.

- As a user I want quick access to what other listeners are listening to so that I can interact with other listeners

- As a user I want to be able to listen to what my friends are listening to so that I can discover new things from people I trust

- As a user I want to be able to share what I'm listening to with everyone on Stitcher so that I can let others know I like

- As a user I want to know who can see the activities I am sharing

d. Product Requirements

Continuing this effort, I decided to outline proper requirements for the product. Outside of an exercise environment, I'd want to go over the user stories with a Product Designer (or similar) and write Design Requirements and eventually with a programming lead write Technical Requirements.

- Users can share listening feed with everyone, friends, or no one

- Users can edit their own activities after the fact

- Users should feel confident about their listening privacy

- Users can quickly view and listen to the podcast that someone else recently listened to

- Users can comment on someone else's listening activity

- ~~Users can endorse (like / heart / thumbs up) someone else's listening activity~~

## c. Brainstorming with Wireframes

Now that I had a basic understanding of needs and requirements, I started to rapidly wireframe concepts in my head to see how they'd play out visually.

You'll find that I ended up working on four separate ways of laying out the single feed item. The biggest challenge here was how to balance the user profile image and the cover art for the episode. Ultimately, I felt that it was best to ignore the user profile image and focus more on the cover art.

I would be interested in running an A/B test on user vs cover to see if one attracted more attention.

I had requirements but no simplified list of screen items, so about halfway through the wireframing brainstorming, I wrote out a simple list of UI Items.

- User Profile (?)
- Cover Art
- Privacy Icon
- User Full Name
- Podcast / Artist Name
- Episode / Show Name
- Comment CTA
- Comment Count
- ~~Like / Heart (?)~~
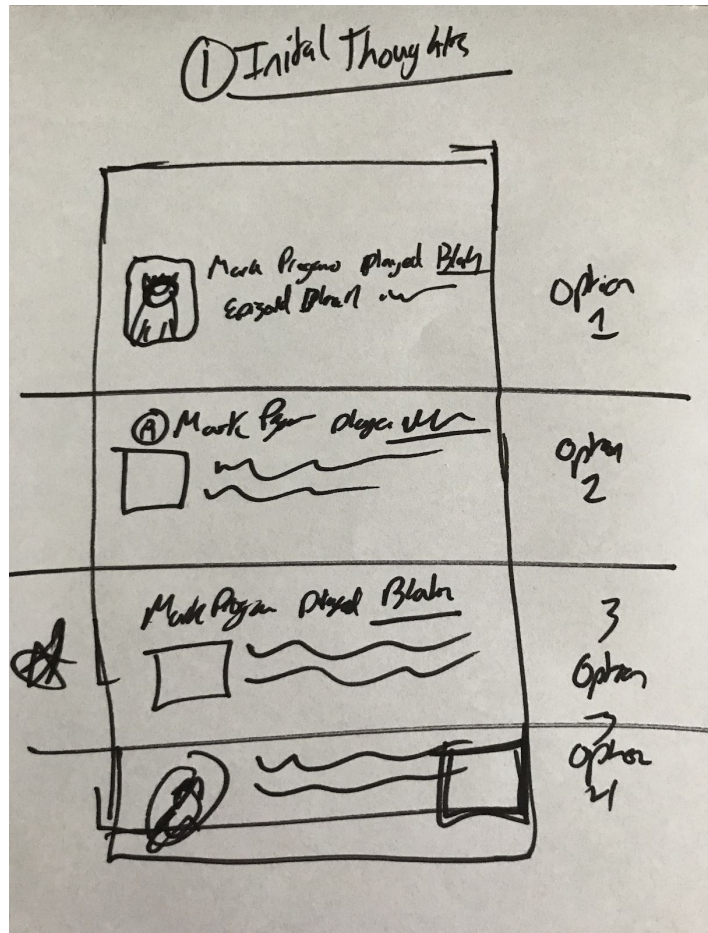
e. Refine Wireframes

Once I had a basic idea of what did and didn't work, I decided to refine my approach by adding more practical elements around the screen and this time ending up with three concepts that were very similar but displayed the comment function and privacy aspects slightly differently.
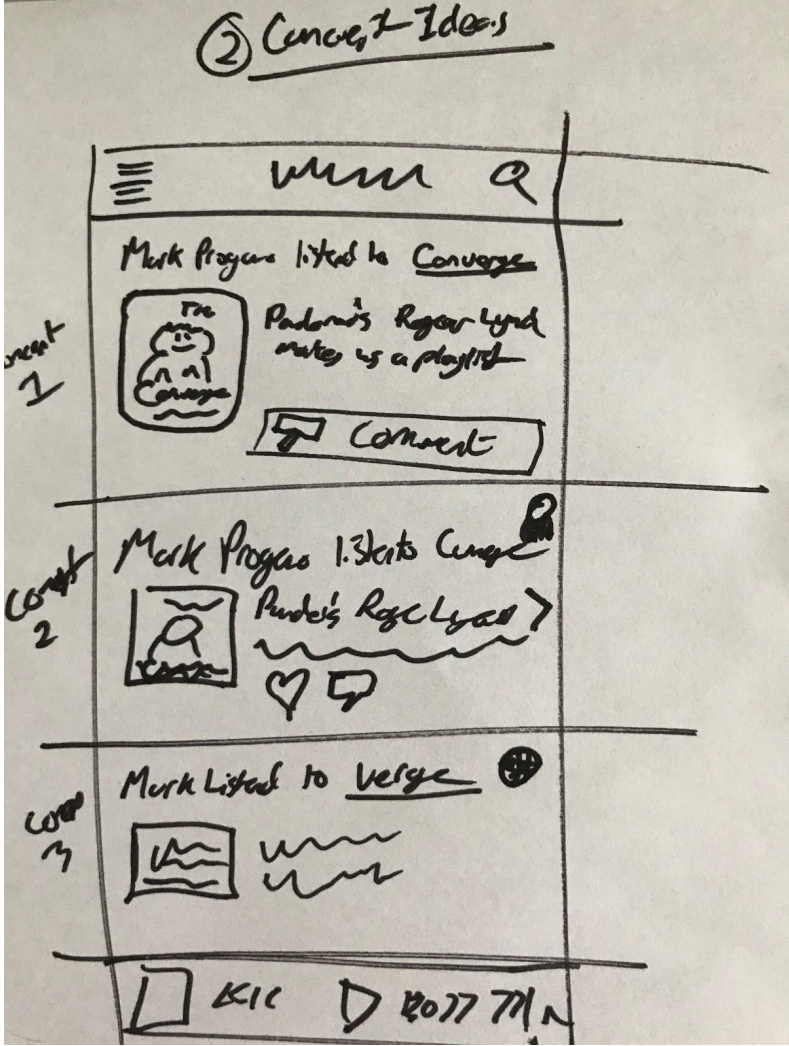
e. The Wireframe

Lastly, I grabbed a fresh piece of paper, drew up the full UI wrapper and outlined the concept as it would be presented. I was able to go from initial wireframe brainstorming to this concept within a few minutes. This final concept included details about each of the elements to add additional clarity.

While I hand drew this wireframe, there was no particular reason I chose paper over a digital tool.

1. Suggested home screen navigation*:
    a. *Discover* which showed the public feed of listening
    b. *Friends* which is filtered to only see people who are considered friends
    c. *Suggestion* for traditional recommendations

2. User's full name (linked to profile)

3. Podcast name (linked to podcast)

4. Name of episode (linked to listen)

5. Comment section (Icon, plus text field)

6. Cover art for episode
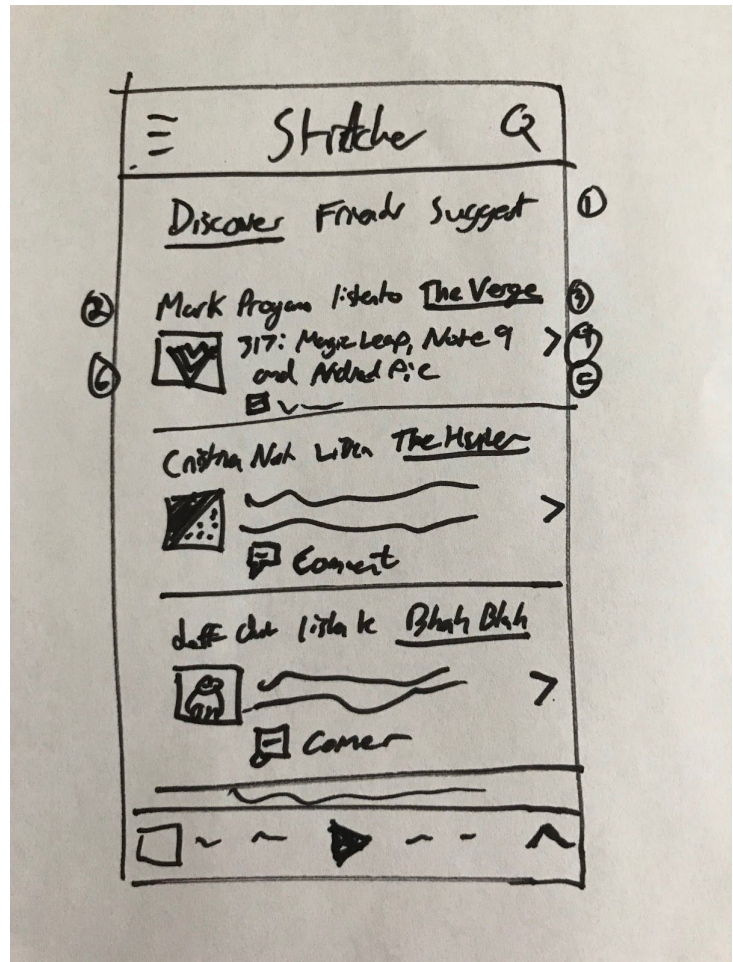
* This suggestion would need to be refined with additional team members, as it doesn't fit seamlessly into the app without making some home screen adjustments that have not yet been discussed.

3. Discuss trade offs, risks, and metrics for success.

a. Tradeoffs & Risks

It's very important to understand the risks and assumptions at hand and test the feature that not only will be the most telling but will likely answer other outstanding questions. A feature that already exists is simpler to move than start fresh and we already have sample data to understand who to test it with. It also has things like comments within it, allowing us to test the other concepts outlined without the added work or steps.

While I feel that the trade offs was pretty well sprinkled through the entire process outlined in this document. The trade off of highlighting a feature that already exists can cause backlash and negative feedback for users. The feature needing to be brought forward requires a displacement of existing content.

While this can be designed around, it can't be solved without carefully stepping through it. I'd want to launch this feature to only a sample size of the power users, ideally those who we have a relationship with.

b. Success Metrics

There are six main metrics that I'd want to track. Since the original assumption was interactions, I'd say the key success metric would be **social interactions** between users increasing. These would include listening from a song, comments, and impressions (clicks on or into an item).

Track the _____ per session, per week, and per month

1. number of **social interactions**

2. average number of social interactions per users (by user persona)

3. total number of podcasts listened* from feed

4. total number of comments

5. total hours spent listening

6. percentage of new podcasts listened to

    listened would be defined to hearing at least 80% of the track

3b. Are there times when the feature would be used a lot but it is still not a success?

a. Brainstorming – Possible Unsuccessful Findings

- The feed feature can not be adopted and the app usage can decrease

- The feed feature can not be adopted and app usage can remain the same

- The feed feature can be adopted but not increase app usage or time spent listening

- The feed feature can be adopted and increases app usage but not time spent listening

- The feed feature can be adopted and increases time spent listening

- The feed feature can be adopted, increasing user interactions between each other, but not increase time spent listening

b. Direct Answer to Question

Yes, it is possible for the feed to be adopted and accepted by users, but no one is commenting. Similarly, listeners can use it but not listen to the music recommended and only comment – thus no increasing time in app dramatically nor the total hours listened. And finally, it is possible for it to be used but the metrics around interactions don't change for existing usage.