Idno

Publish more, together
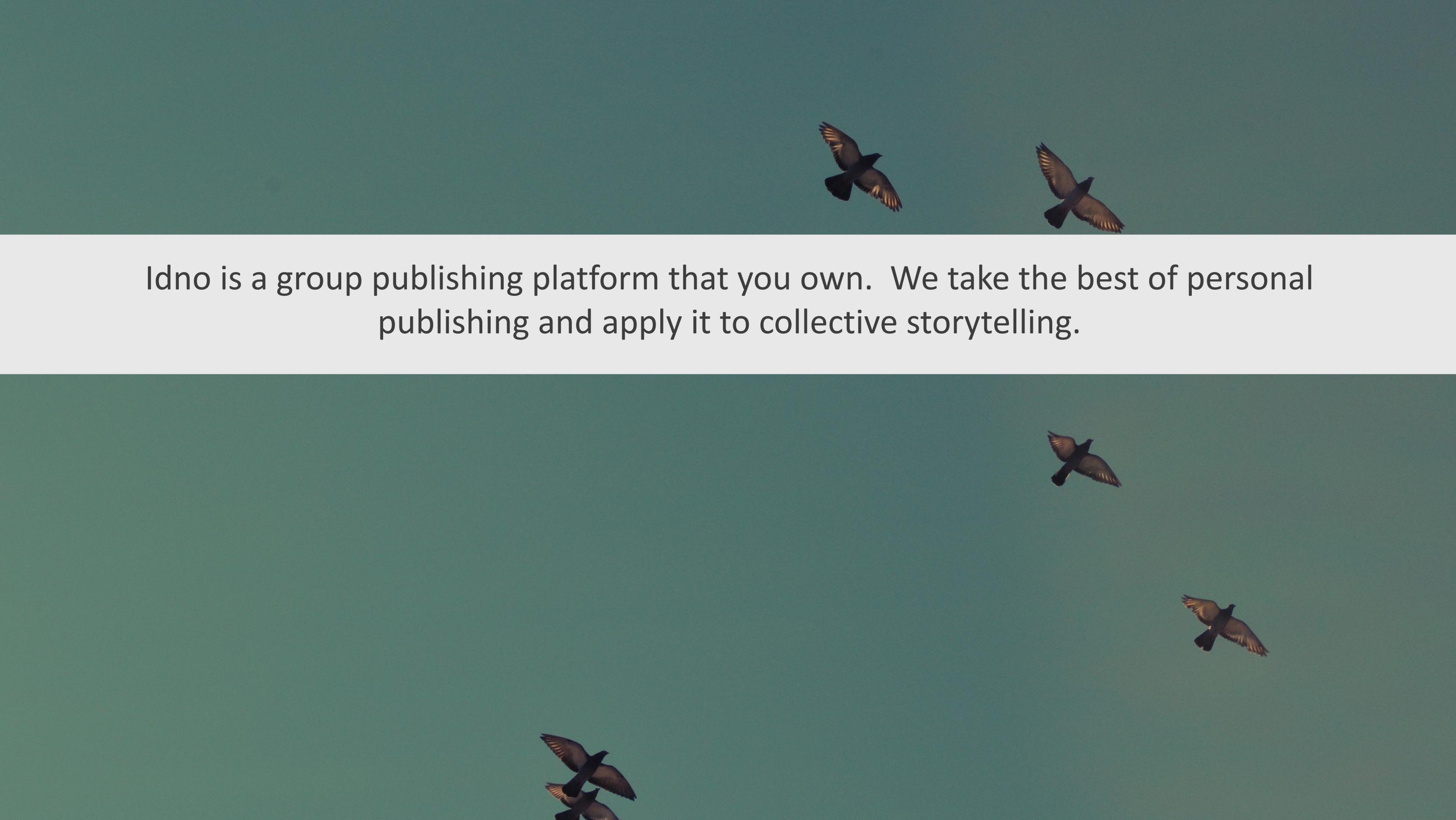
Idno is a group publishing platform that you own. We take the best of personal publishing and apply it to collective storytelling.

The problem

Groups are the cornerstone of the web.

There are 500 million Facebook Group users.
There are 54 million Facebook Pages.
Each user is connected to an average of 80 groups.
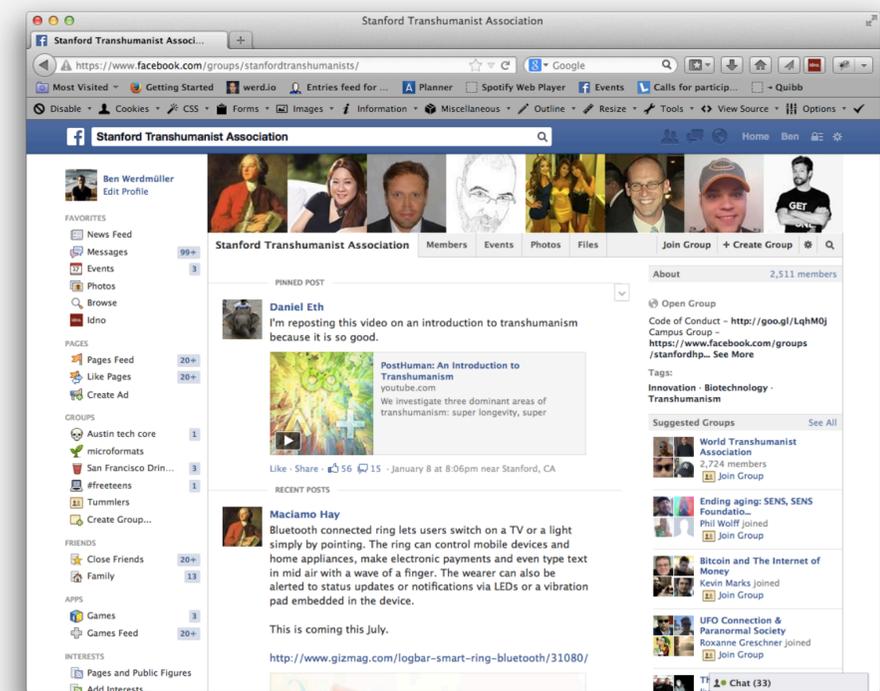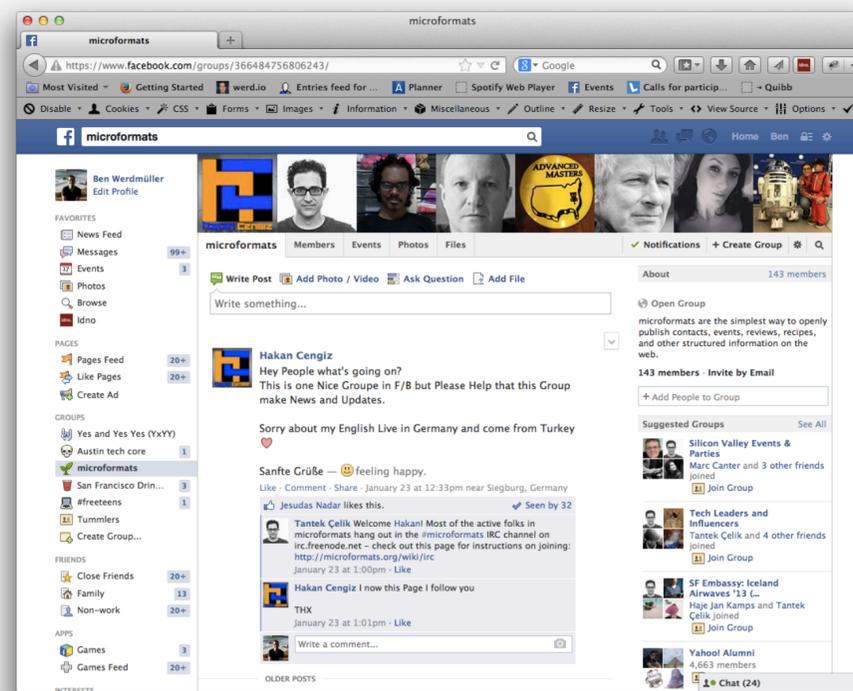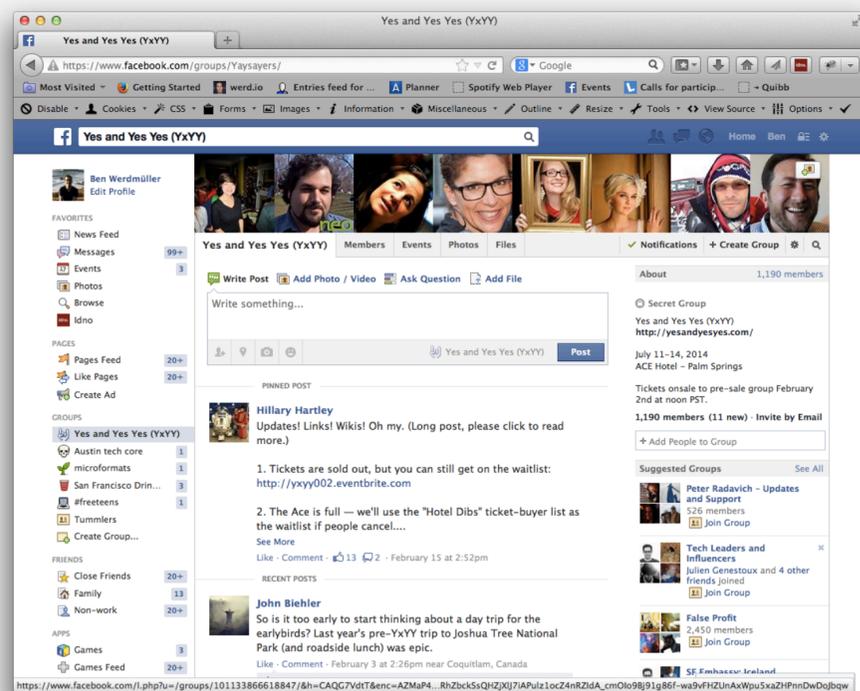
...but they're all identical.

The problem

Communities are not one size fits all, but group publishing platforms are all the same.
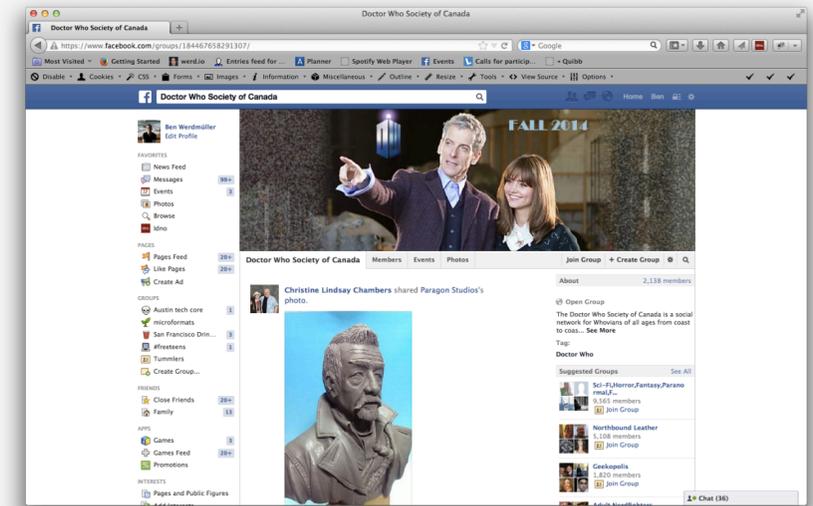
Fandoms
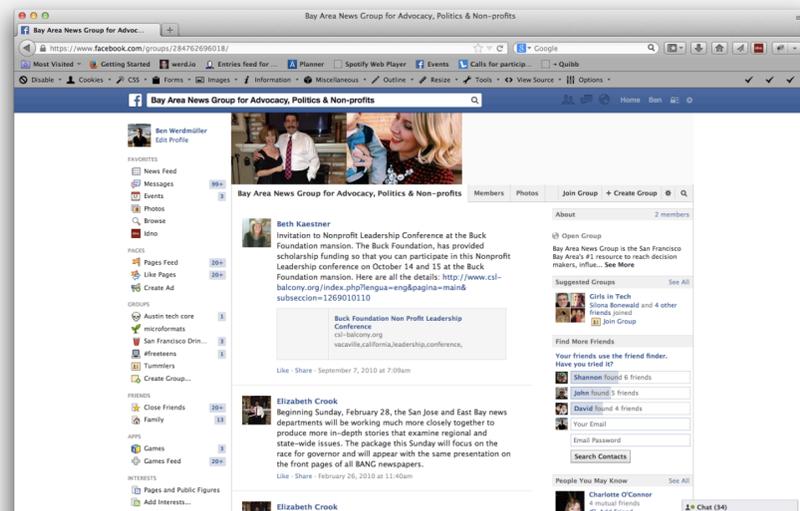
Local news
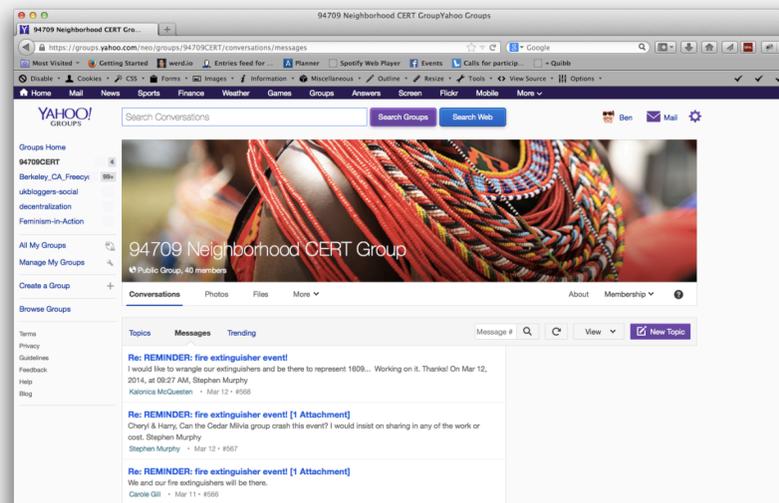
Community earthquake preparedness
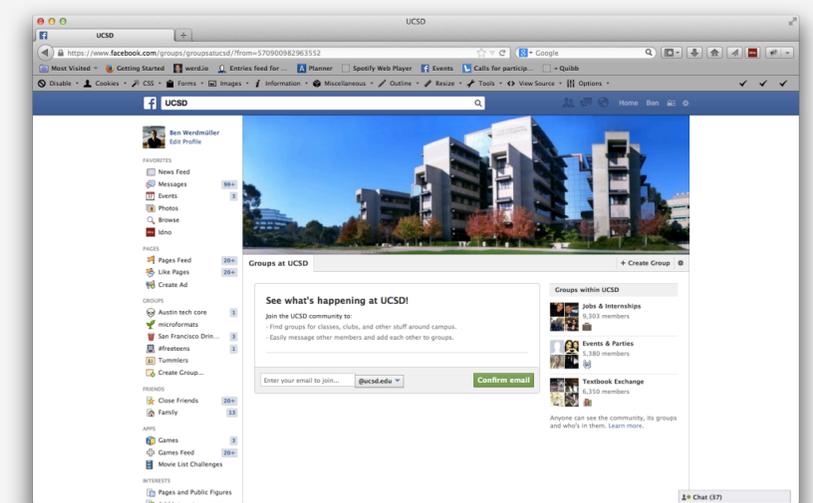
Campus societies

The problem

Other publishing and group platforms live on someone else's server. That company owns your content.

They allow few opportunities to own or download your data, and you have little or no control over the look, feel, and branding of your work and your site's identity.

They are often not built to showcase media types other than text. Images, videos, and audio are secondary to writing.

They are not optimized for real-time publishing, and they're not designed for people who publish from a wide variety of devices.

The opportunity

Meanwhile, personal storytelling platforms are rapidly transforming.

Wordpress alone runs 75 million sites around the world.
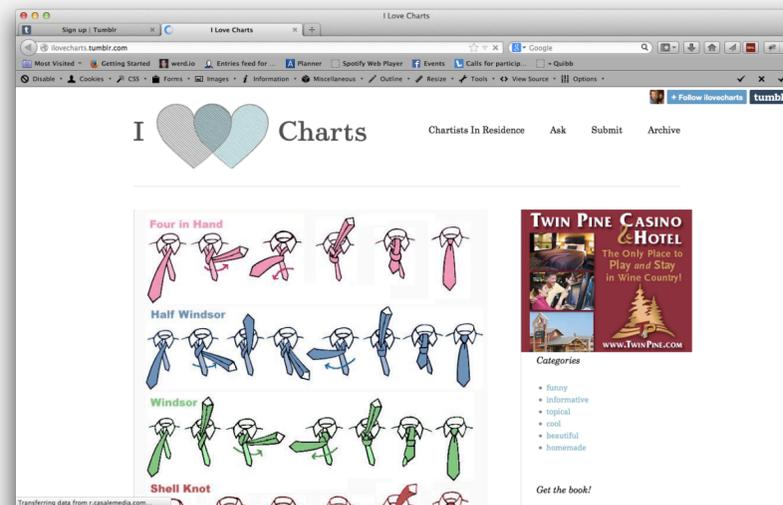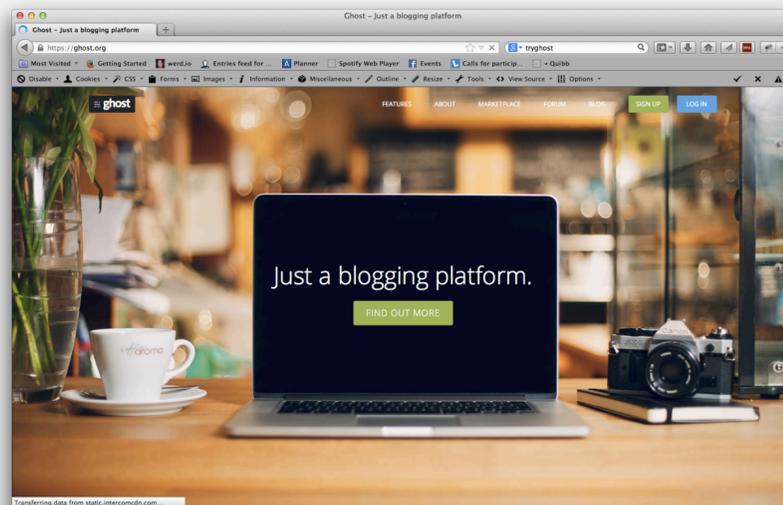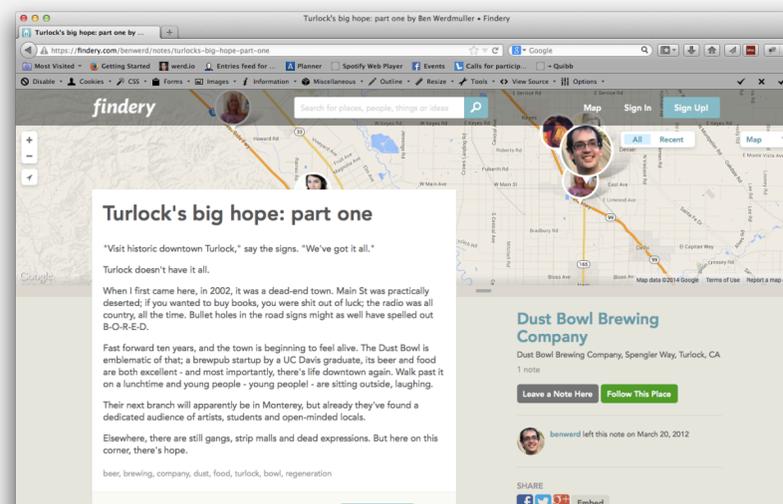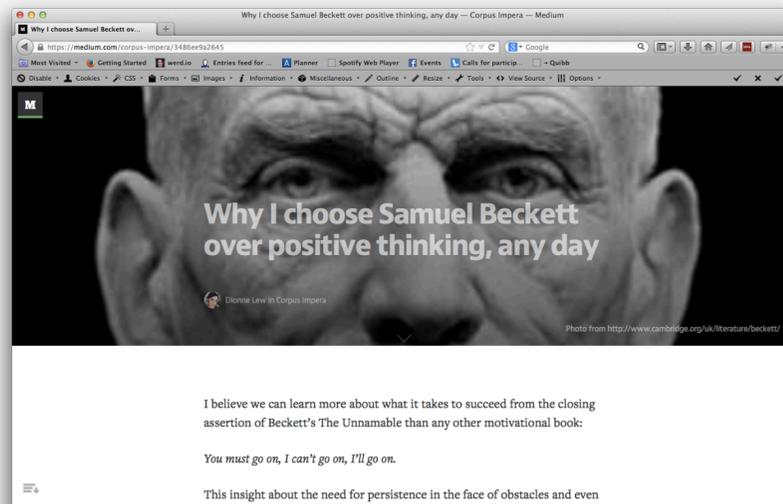
The solution

One platform for the diversity of the web

A place for groups to share their stories and converse.

It is a simple, beautiful way for to share your world and publish your story.
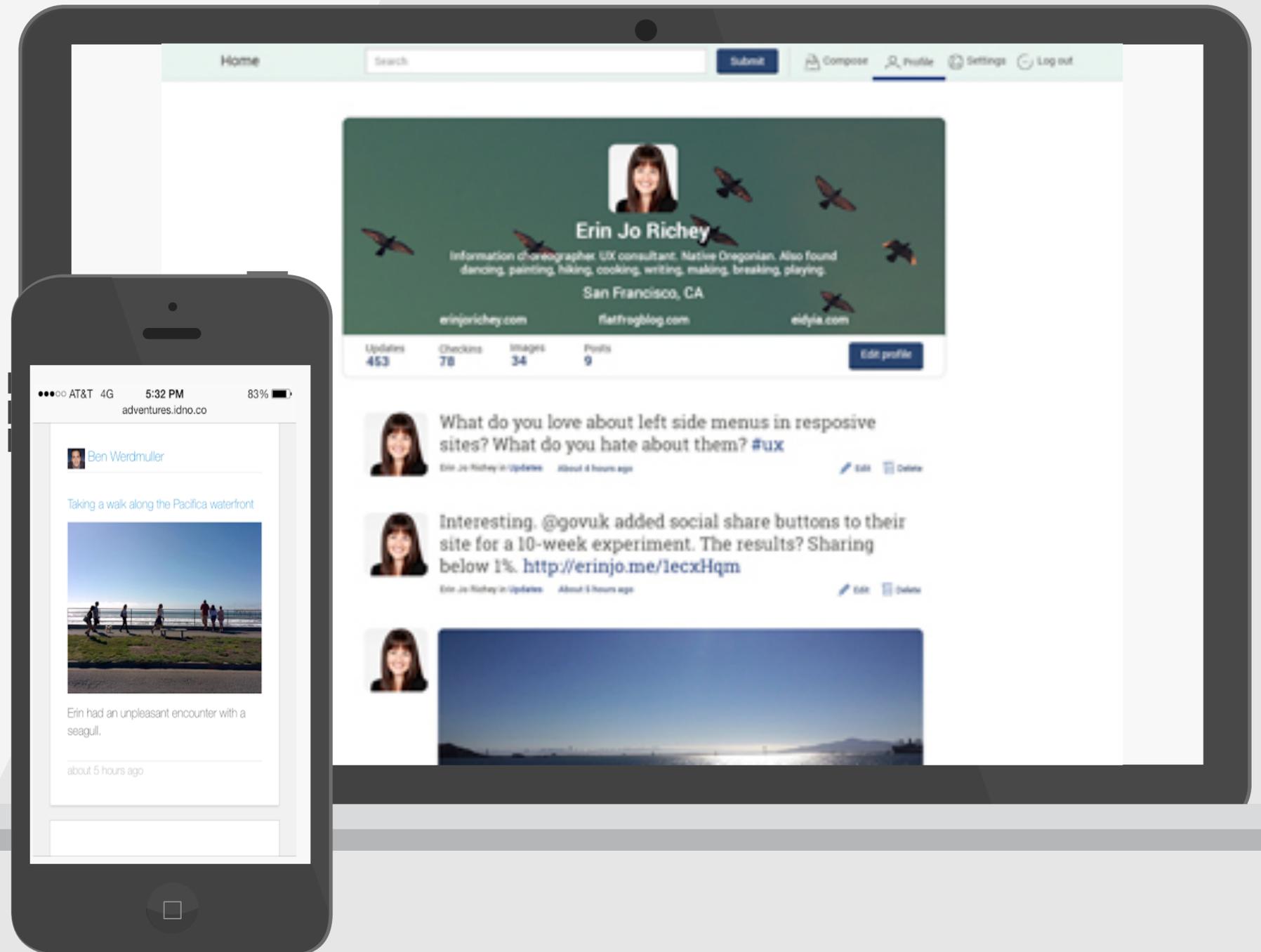
The solution

Idno is built from the ground up around the idea that authors should own their content and have complete control over their data.

Idno comes with nicely designed themes for those who don't want to customize the look and feel of their platform in any way, but it also allows users to host content on their own domain and customize with their own theme and branding.

Idno puts content first, no matter what form that content takes. Authors can tell their story with whatever medium they prefer – words, sounds, images, or videos.

Idno was designed to be mobile-friendly and responsive. Authors can publish from any device anywhere, as long as they have an internet connection.

The product

Our turnkey hosted service gives you full control and puts your content first.

You can sign up for our service quickly and easily, or install it on the servers you already own.

Full data portability means you can change your mind at any time.

A community edition is always available, helping us spread the word.
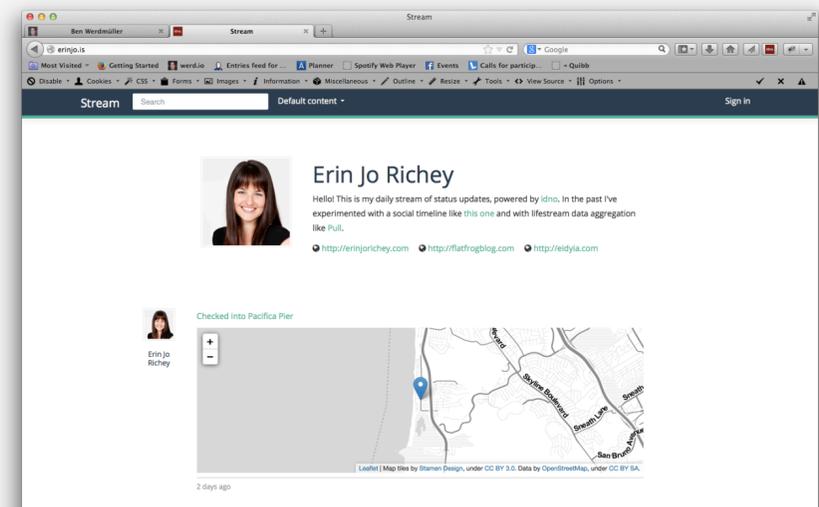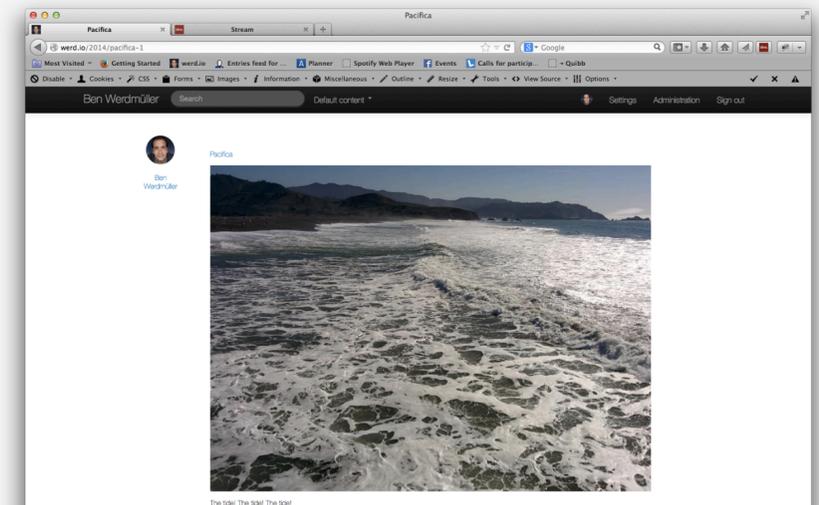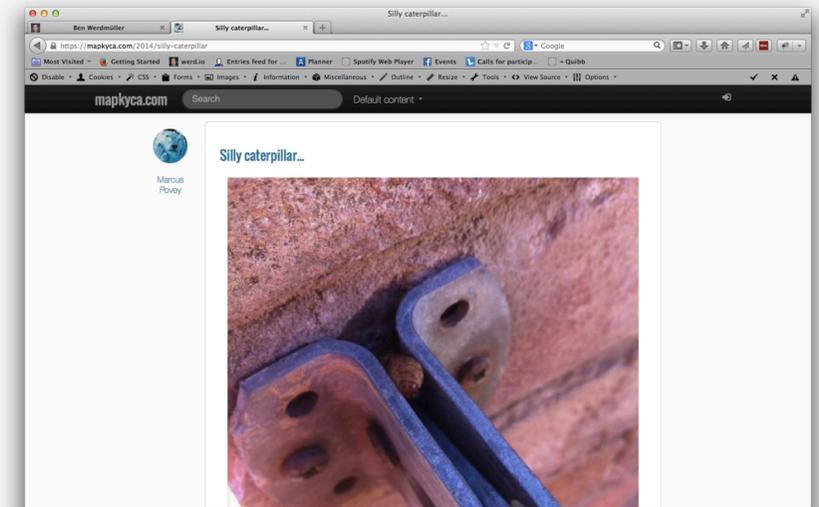
The users

Special interest communities can create spaces to share information about issues and resources

Newspapers can create group publishing spaces around news stories and ongoing topics

One platform, many stories

Agencies can create group spaces based on individual campaigns

Anyone who wants to publish as a group can create an Idno site in seconds

Our advantages

Choose the type of content you publish

Choose your theme and visual style

Choose where you host your platform and data

Publish your narratives from any device

Our progress

Eating our own dogfood since June 2013

Platform software under active development

Active open source community

User experience design effort underway

Active feedback from the community - have presented to IndieWebCamp, the W3C, Personal Cloud meetups, and more

Interest from groups, including technology early adopters, hostels, and art collectives

The team

Ben Werdmuller

werd.io

- Founded Elgg, the world's leading open source community platform
- CTO of latakoo, which powered NBC's footage from the 2014 Winter Olympics
- BSc (Honors) in Computer Science from the University of Edinburgh

Erin Jo Richey

erinjo.is

- Independent user experience consultant for companies like eBay, Microsoft, Intel
- Previous roles in digital marketing and analytics
- BA (Honors) in Cognitive Science from Occidental College

We want to work with Matter to accelerate our vision.

▶ Introductions to media companies

▶ Insight into the media space

▶ Focused, collaborative product development

▶ Seed capital

Idno Ethnographic Interviews
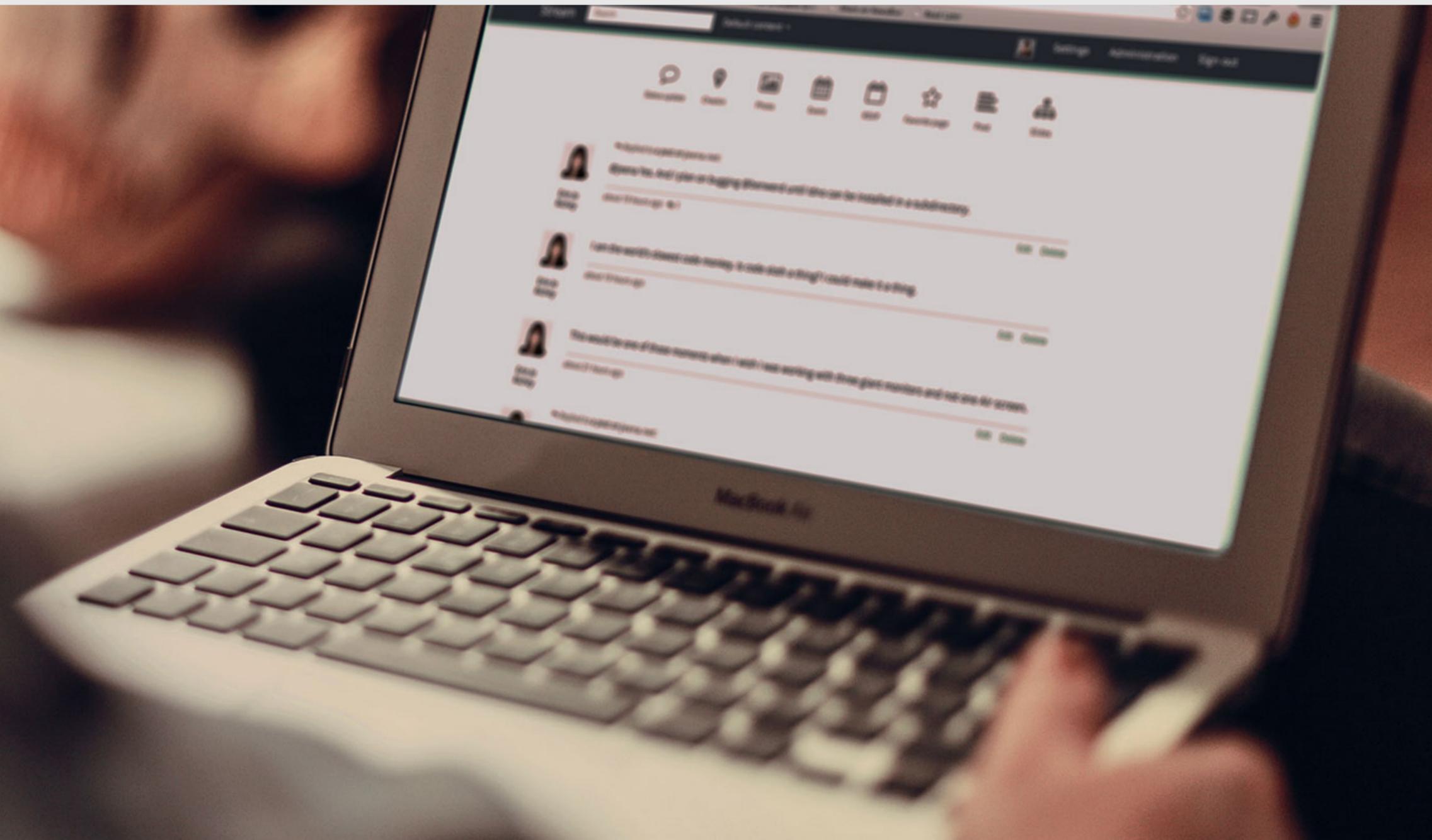
Summary

On March 29th-30th, we conducted ethnographic interviews with five individuals to explore the tools and technologies that our audience uses to communicate online. Participants were drawn from 290 people who had expressed interest in Idno. Discussions focused on the social networks, platforms, and personal sites that our participants use to publish and converse online.

High-level findings included:
- Participants want an easy-to-use platform that they control.
- People want to post on their own site & easily syndicate elsewhere.
- Very few people are happy with their current site platform.
- Many platforms don't yet support all the devices people use to post.
- Idno does not yet meet the technical requirements for all users.

Goals

We carried out semi-structured interviews with people curious about Idno and interested in personal publishing platforms.

We wanted to directly connect with people interested in Idno to hear first-hand their personal experiences, opinions, and attitudes related to tools and technologies for digital communication.

Goals

The interviews were exploratory, with flexibly structured questions that allowed the participants to talk freely about different areas important to them.

The focus of the discussions was on technologies that people communicate with and the social networks that they regularly use.

Hypothesis

If individuals are presented with an easy-to-use platform of their own, then they will choose to publish content there first and then share out to other platforms and networks.

Assumptions

- There are people who want the control of running a personal website using hosting space of their choice.
- There are people who care about owning their own data and content.
- Given the opportunity, people will choose to publish content on their own site and then syndicate it to social networks.
- People want a platform that's easy to use.
- People want to publish content types other than just text for blogs and status posts.

Hypothesis

If there's a DIY option and an option which includes paid-for features and support, then more technical users will choose something free that they do themselves, but organizations and less technical users might choose to pay.

Assumptions

- Less technical individuals might be willing to pay for a hosted solution.
- More technical individuals might choose to do it themselves with a free version.
- Organizations would be willing to pay for a hosted solution.
- Organizations would be willing to pay for extra features and customer support.

Hypothesis

If we build a responsive, web-based, mobile-friendly site, then it will be the best choice for the greatest number of people – it will work on the most platforms and devices.

Assumptions

- People publish from laptops, desktops, mobile phones, and tablets.
- People use a variety of devices and operating systems, from a variety of manufacturers.
- People will publish from many locations if the technology allows them.
- We're building the platform on the best technology for ease of use and adoption.

Participants

Participants	Age Range	Location	Social Network Use	Group Platform Use
Participant 1	25 - 34	Atlanta, GA	Multiple times a day	Multiple times a month
Participant 2	25 - 34	Chicago, IL	Several times a month	Almost never
Participant 3	35 - 44	Motherwell, Scotland	5 – 10 times a week	A few times a month
Participant 4	25 – 34	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Daily	Daily
Participant 5	35 - 44	Edinburgh, Scotland	Daily	2 – 3 times a week

Findings: ownership

"We just want something built more for our needs."
- Participant 5

All participants discussed wanting to own their site & data.

- Most discussed wanting visual templates, so they could create an interface that was right for them or their group.
- Most discussed wanting custom features that were tailored for their use case: for example, a directory of users for a publishing community.
- Everyone was in the process of moving their site, looking for the right platform.

Findings: conversation

"In an ideal world [...] I'd post on my site and it would automatically syndicate out to Twitter or wherever with some sort of reference back."
– Participant 2

All participants actively used Twitter & Facebook.

- All participants described wanting to syndicate conversation to these sites, and wished the process could be easier.
- Some wanted to syndicate on a per-post basis; others wanted to create rules. e.g., "syndicate all photos to Facebook".
- Most wanted to also bring these conversations back into their site, so their conversations would all be in once place.

Findings: technology

> "I have a laptop, a mobile and a tablet, and I'd say posting happens from all three […] pretty much equally."
> - Participant 5

Roughly half of the participants were developers, yet everyone posted in similar ways.

- Everyone posted from mobile devices at least as much as from their PCs.
- The device used depended on the context.
- The only constant was the ability to use the web. Participants used all major consumer operating systems (except Windows Phone).

Findings: technology

"Sometimes these plugins just break for some reason. It's just a messy process."
– Participant 4

Everyone wanted to self-host their sites, but found it an imperfect experience.

- Most used a shared host for their personal site (often on nearlyfreespeech.net). One participant used a virtual server (DigitalOcean).
- Some participants complained of unreliable hosting providers.
- WordPress was common, but everyone who used it struggled with managing plugins to support the functionality and interfaces they needed.

Findings: current product

Many features people asked for already exist in Idno, but there are some challenges.

- Idno supports templates, syndication & customized features.
- It also works from mobile devices & supports mobile content types, like check-ins.
- Problem: shared hosts typically don't support MongoDB, which Idno uses as its back-end data store. Every participant used a host that supported MySQL.

Hypotheses Revisited

"If individuals are presented with an easy-to-use platform of their own, then they will choose to publish content there first and then share out to other platforms and networks."

Based on the discussion we had, there is a group of more technical individuals who are very interested in this.

"If there's a DIY option and an option which includes paid-for features and support, then more technical users will choose something free that they do themselves, but organizations and less technical users might choose to pay."

This seems true for technical users. We need to do more work to talk to organizations and find out what they might be willing to pay for.

"If we build a responsive, web-based, mobile-friendly site, then it will be the best choice for the greatest number of people – it will work on the most platforms and devices."

The people we talked to do use a wide variety of devices and platforms for publishing. Given the right tools, they would publish from different locations and situations.

Recommendations

The self-hosted version needs to be very easy to install, and it needs to work on any shared-hosting space. Switch database back-ends to MySQL and create an easy installer plus clear documentation for those who will be doing it themselves.

There should be the option for two-way interaction with posts. This might include comments that happen directly on the site. It might also include bringing in interactions from other social networks. We need to explore different possible ways to allow conversation to take place on the original site, and we need to explore ways of bringing in conversations and interactions that are happening on other social platforms.

Recommendations

The people that we spoke with during these interviews were all fairly technical and expressed interest in managing or customizing their own site. We need to interview a set of less-technical potential customers and hear how their needs and frustrations might be different.

The individuals that we spoke with during these interviews largely didn't represent groups or organizations who might need a multi-author platform. Some had experiences using other group platforms, but most weren't decision makers at their jobs or within their groups. We need to speak with more decision makers from organizations looking for group platforms to hear what their needs are.

Next Steps

- Switch database from MongoDB to MySQL.
- Explore design possibilities around handling comments and discussions onsite.
- Explore design and development possibilities for bringing interactions from other social networks (likes, favorites, retweets, responses) in with the Idno original post.
- Start conversations with organizations and groups who might be potential paying customers.
- Perform further ethnographic interviews with people on topics related to privacy, identity, conversations, and data ownership.

Design Reviews & Demo Day
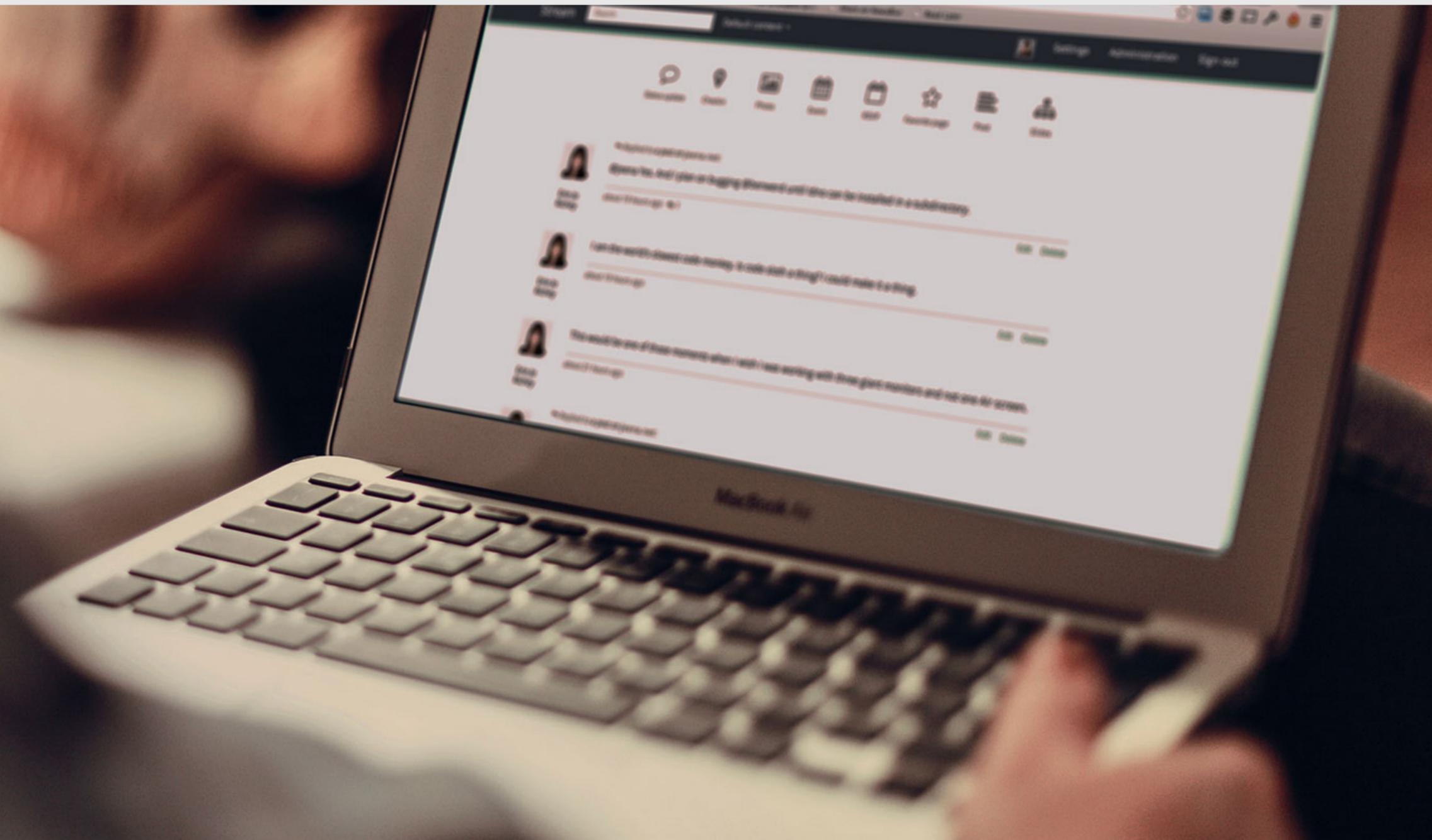
By demo day we will have:

▶ A developed product built by listening to users and advisors

▶ A beautiful, customizable user experience

▶ A fully-hosted turnkey service

▶ Customers and revenue

Our plan for the summer

Review 0

Review 1

Review 2

Review 3

Publishing & Research

Full Group Functionality & Customization

Commercial Service & Commerce

Product & Business Iteration

Design Review 0: May 20

Publishing & Research

Business Goals
- **Review Idno as a platform to-date (first public installation: May 30, 2013)**
- **Review our research findings in detail**
- **Begin to approach advisory board**

Product Goals
- **New pre-launch website for growing our subscriber list**
- **Revised posting UI**
- **Self-installable version outlined**
- **Database back-end migration underway**

Design Review 1: June 17

Full Group Functionality & Customization

Business Goals

- **Analyze customer research**
- **Set pricing structure**
- **Set up lead development & sales cycle**
- **Begin to form initial partnerships**
- **Gather feedback from early adopters on self-installed version**

Product Goals

- **User rights & management in place**
- **Beautiful templates created**
- **WYSIWYG editor implemented**
- **Customizations completed for specific scenarios**

Design Review 2: July 15

Commercial Service & Commerce

Business Goals
- **Set first partnerships**
- **Begin demoing to investors**
- **Test and refine hosted service**
- **Reach mailing list go of 1,000+ subscribers**
- **Invite first users to preview the product**

Product Goals
- **Invoices & payments are set**
- **Data visualizations for pro accounts designed**
- **Audio posting feature developed**
- **File attachment feature added**

Design Review 3: August 19

Product & Business Iteration

Business Goals
- **Engage with the community**
- **Reach out to investors**
- **Identify and fix UX and functionality issues**
- **Lock down a flagship paying customer**
- **Begin inviting users to a private beta**

Product Goals
- **Customer use analytics in place for internal use**
- **Product localization initiated, first translation likely Spanish**
- **Work through iterations based on user feedback**

Throughout This Process

Our Success Depends On Feedback

Throughout this process we want to:

- **Hold regular "Idno Meetups" in San Francisco and beyond**
- **Engage with wider events like YxYY, XOXO & IndieWebCamp**
- **Continuously research specific target markets**
- **Practice a philosophy of release early & often**

We will foster engagement with:

- **The investment community**
- **Technology advocates**
- **The media - through our existing contacts & Matter's contacts**
- **Activists, artists, educators, and other storytellers**

Demo Day: September 11

We will launch with a product that anyone can use on a hosted account.

By demo day we will have:

- **A fully working product built in collaboration with our active users**
- **Partnerships in place for template designs, custom development, and hosting**
- **At least one flagship customer**
- **A community with thousands of active members**
- **Revenue**

To further our company we will:

- **Begin the search to expand our team (including the Board)**
- **Seek further investment**

http://idno.co

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