

Nicole Hu (nsh64)

COMM 2450

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### Design #2: The Functional Design of Google Calendar

Google Calendar is an app that has become vital to many students and employees and is one of the most popularly used scheduling applications. While Google Calendar provides an excellent way for people to organize their agendas, there are a couple design shortcomings which create limitations on the app's purpose of providing convenient scheduling and task management.

One of the key purposes of the app is to create a place where people can map out their daily tasks, goals, or plans. It seeks to allow users to improve time-management and work efficiency through an organizational lay-out of all their relevant events. When I first started using Google Calendar, one of my primary objectives was to find a way to map out my assignment and project deadlines. While the application provides many ways to create events, I could not figure out a way to create and integrate deadlines of specific tasks into my calendar. The first problem with this, is the lack of **discoverability**, which helps users determine what actions are possible. In this example, I was unable to find what feature would allow me to create task lists. After a bit of searching, I was able to find the button which would allow me to create tasks: a very small icon in the upper right corner which lacked any labelling or **signifiers**, which ensure discoverability. The second problem is that even once I create the task, I was unable to integrate these deadlines into the calendar; Instead, the tasks and deadlines remained in a sidebar. In other words, this application does not have the **affordance**, or capability, to display the deadlines in the calendar. In order to fix these problems, I would first make the icon for creating and editing tasks more visible, either by increasing size or changing the position of the icon so that this function will be more discoverable. Secondly, I would create a way to display task deadlines in the calendar, potentially by having a labelled bar at the appropriate time and date.

Another shortcoming of Google Calendars is that the app does not **afford** to scroll or transition smoothly between the calendar date displays. To demonstrate, Google Calendar allows users to view the calendar in increments of a day, 3-days, one week, or a month. For the weekly view, the user is able to see Sunday through Saturday. But what if I wanted to start my week on a Tuesday and see the week from Tuesday through Monday because it aligns better with my work

schedule? This application does not have the proper affordances to allow this functionality. Furthermore, it can be categorized as a **physical constraint** because it limits the actions the user can take with respect to the shape and display of the calendar. An additional physical constraint of this problem is that users can only switch between weeks by pressing a tiny button at the top left corner. My suggestion to fix this problem would be to create a scrolling interface, where users could scroll from side to side and view the days in the next week as they continue to scroll. If the users can scroll up and down to see the hours in the day, why are they unable to scroll side to side to view other days? This change would allow users to preview their schedules beyond the current week with more ease.

All in all, Google Calendar is my go-to app for scheduling and task-management. However, these are just a couple changes I would make to the design which I believe would help increase usability and organization.