

## HBO Max Profiles

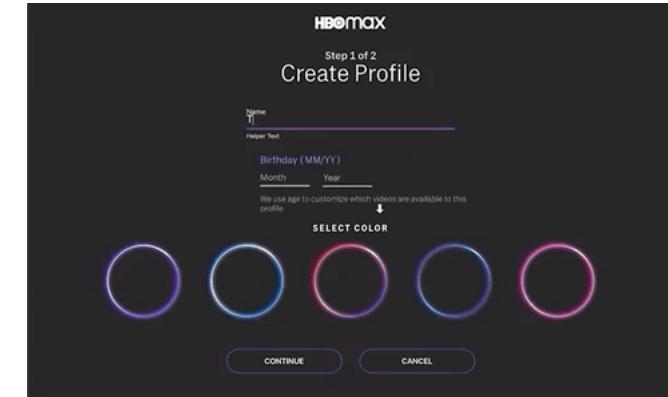
*Profiles are the key to a truly personal experience. They allow individuals to collect content, get recommendations, track their progress, and give parents the ability to cater each child's experience to their age and maturity. Profiles were the cornerstone for HBO Max to become a welcoming and personal place for our customers.*

**My Role:** Principal Designer. I was responsible for end-to-end UX and architecture and coordinated all research, ideation, visual design, and prototyping activities.

**Most Fun:** The transition to Profiles affected nearly every aspect of our product, which meant a lot of collaboration across teams I didn't often get to work with. I got to work closely with a lot of really smart people who I had previously only known casually. Our workshops and ideation sessions were invigorating and led to a strong sense of *esprit de corps* among us.

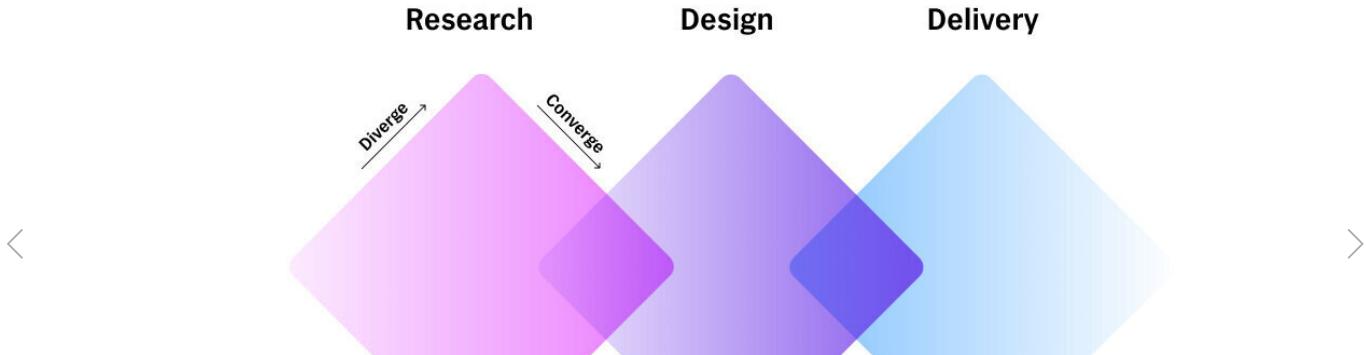
**Biggest Challenge:** This project kicked off right as AT&T began their acquisition of TimeWarner, HBO's parent company. This meant that we were undertaking this large and complex feature, right as our organization was being built up into its new form, without any formalized decision-making processes or even a product name or color-palette.

**What I'd Do Differently:** I wish that I would have had the chance to really push the envelope of what the entry page could be. The standard array of profiles is efficient, but doesn't take full advantage of the space available or facilitate getting straight to content in the way I think it could.



A Framer X prototype that we used in our final usability tests.

## The Process



### Triple Diamond

We strove for a good clean, double diamond approach (or triple, with delivery) to this process, but as is so often the case things got a bit more complicated.



### User Need

Households are made up of different people who have different tastes, maturity levels, and watching habits. Users need a place where they can manage their content and know that when we recommend movies and series we are considering them as individuals.

### Opportunity

Profiles open the door to a world of features that improve the usability and enjoyment of HBO Max. With profiles, we can give users highly-personalized experiences where they can easily find content they will love, return to things they have already started, and kids can have an environment that is safe and tailored to their age. Our research showed that users deeply valued and were very protective of their personalized content on other services, which illustrated the need for profiles at launch.

## Research

### Survey

Our first major research effort for the Profiles project was a large-scale (n=1372) Qualtrics survey that covered general Profile behaviors and preferences as well as kids and family specific scenarios. I worked with our research team to define the scope of the survey and identify areas where our understanding was limited. Major areas of focus were:

- What did users find valuable about profiles?
- Who in their household had profiles?
- In what scenarios did they create or edit profiles?
- What kind of parental controls do they use for kid profiles? Do they find those tools sufficient for their needs?

We got a lot of really good data from users with some clear patterns that we could use to prioritize our efforts:

1. Participants universally see value in profiles and more specifically profiles' ability to aid curation, personalization, and customization.
2. Profiles had a strong impact on continuing to subscribe to a streaming service, with a third of all participants ranked feature as "high importance".
3. Parents especially saw profiles as valuable since it gave them control over their children's experience and kept kids content from modifying their recommendations

*"(I like profiles) so my sister can watch Tinker Bell movies without clogging my recommendations with Tinker Bell S\*\*\*."*

### Diary Study

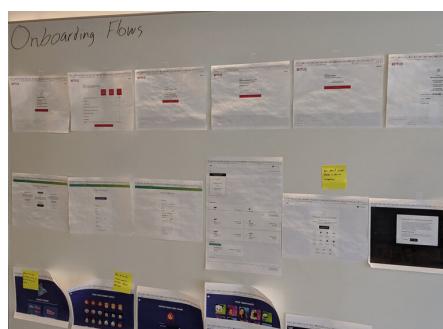
Our next research project was a diary study with 15 participants. We found that the survey gave us a lot of good general information about what users valued, but was light on details of the day to day use of profiles.

*"... profiles become quite limiting and recommendations become repetitive, redundant and/or we, the viewers are pigeon-holed into "liking" only a small number of genres."*

We had each participant do daily tasks on other services (Netflix, Hulu, etc.) that had profiles and had them fill in entries describing their experiences and preferences. At the end we conducted exit interviews with each participant to get additional qualitative feedback on what users liked and disliked about their Profile experience. Some main takeaways from the study were:

- Parents tend to set-it-and-forget-it with their kids profiles, so we should give them the tools they need at set up and not expect them to edit them later
- Users surprisingly preferred picking a profile instead of auto-loading the last one
- Participants looked at recommendation algorithms as a double-edged sword. They liked the personalization, but often worried that they were being pigeon-holed.

In the end, we took away the need to make the profile creation process as easy as possible and to give parents access to the parental-controls they would need to safeguard their kids from the outset. These two, somewhat competing, goals were central to our early explorations.



### Competitive Research

We looked at other services to see how they managed profiles and to figure out what was and wasn't working. I worked closely with another designer to collect screenshots of creating, editing, deleting, using, and setting parental controls with other services across desktop, mobile, and TV.

We printed out a small forest's worth of screenshots and arrayed them on the wall in the various flows, as well as comparing the same screens across different devices. Having it on the wall helped us frequently review and annotate what we liked and didn't like throughout our own design process.

WE TOOK MANY SCREENSHOTS TO HELP US SEE AND REVIEW THE APPROACHES OUR COMPETITORS USED FOR PRIMARY FLOWS AND SCREENS.

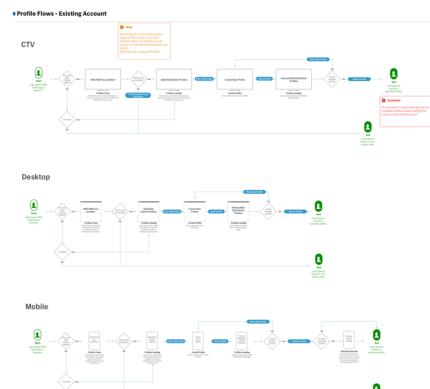
## Design

### Design Workshop

After the initial research and analysis, we kicked off active design by having a workshop with a cross-discipline group of collaborators, including program managers, product managers, engineers, writers and designers from the teams that would be working on aspects of Profiles. We loosely based the workshop on [Google Ventures' Design Sprints](#), though had to truncate it down to two 4-hour sessions due to time/availability restrictions.

It was a great opportunity to get a cross-section of project stakeholders together to define a shared vision of what the feature should be and to explore some blue-sky ideas to dig into during the design phase. In two short sessions we were able to come to a pretty solid agreement of what the MVP pieces were and some initial sketches of flows and screens that served as a starting point for our initial designs. Most importantly, though, it served as a great starting point for the relationships that made the project work in the long run. Those early discussions and decisions built the trust and collegiality that allowed us to work through difficulties and quickly swarm on problems that popped up.

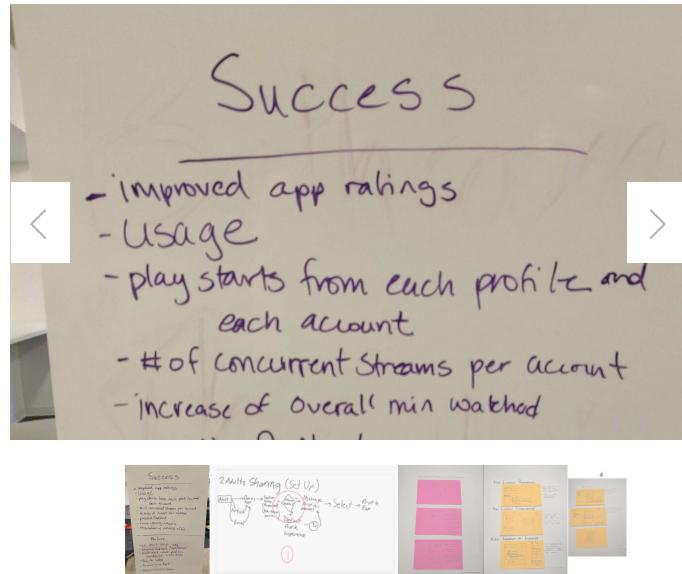
### Early Iterations



AN EARLY FLOW THAT HELPED US WORK THROUGH HOW THE FEATURE WOULD ULTIMATELY BE BUILT.

profiles would not provide enough value to make users do the work of deciding which profile should load on that device. Instead, we on mobile devices, which tend to be more personal, we default to the last-used profiles to get to the same end without asking anything of the user.

In the middle of this initial design effort, national politics and the legal system would throw our efforts into temporary disarray. AT&T's acquisition of TimeWarner had been held up for months, meaning we were still working on the project as an independent HBO. When the case finally came to an end, that meant we were now working on the project as a part of AT&T and would need to proceed while our teams formed around us with a whole host of new faces and levels of leadership coming aboard. It was equal parts exhilarating, confusing, and frustrating, but due to a lot of



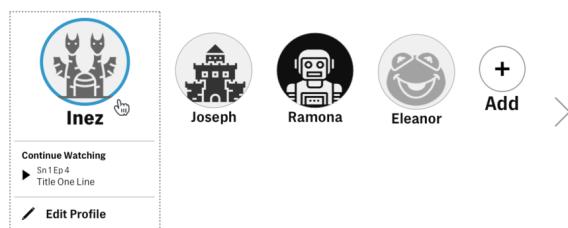
After getting the first survey results and having the workshop, I worked closely with another designer to start exploring the main flows we would have to support: create profile for adults and kids, editing profiles, entering profiles, and deleting profiles. We used what we had learned about user-behavior from the research and the aspects we liked/disliked about similar experiences as a starting point. We experimented with a variety of different ways to tackle these flows and went through around 3-4 iterations of each flow in the first couple sprints.

The biggest challenges were figuring out the right balance of simplicity and optionality. We knew that users wanted an easy path to creating and using profiles, but there were also things like privacy and device-specific default profiles that could be helpful or valued, but would necessarily involve additional complexity.

In the end, we decided that there was enough evidence in our research pointing towards the need to keep things simple that drove our prioritization. We thought hard about how to set smart defaults that would require the minimum input from users. For example, for Kids profiles we pre-set the parental control ratings to an age-specific default so most parents can easily finish profile set-up with a single click after reviewing the preset ratings. We also decided that adding additional management features to define default

**HBO NOW**

Pick your profile.



Always ask when app opens (best for shared computers)

smart and collaborative people, we were able to move ahead and quickly form into a cohesive team.

After finishing the first round of designs we did a low-fidelity task-based

usability session with 12 participants. We found that most of our assumptions were correct and the design as a whole was working. There were some clear patterns, though, of things that didn't work, including understanding of the PIN-lock feature for kids, switching profiles on TV, and understanding the age categories we were using (Little Kid, Older Kid, Tweens, Teens).

## Justice Department loses appeal to block AT&T-Time Warner merger, won't appeal again

Mike Snider USA TODAY  
Published 12:55 p.m. ET Feb. 26, 2019 | Updated 8:02 p.m. ET Feb. 26, 2019



USA TODAY

*“Some people might be more comfortable putting in age than D.O.B. For me personally, it makes me uncomfortable. Why do they need to know his full birthday, why can’t they know he’s 8? Or maybe instead of the date, month and year would be fine.”*

visual design team on styles and profile avatars.

### Final Design

We had the wireframes ~80% done months ahead of launch. The last 20% involved close coordination and input from our engineering teams. There were a lot of new components that had some unique requirements that our software framework hadn't had to support previously. We worked closely with the engineers to explore the possibilities and test out potential solutions. The last remaining items that we worked on were:

- Focus and selected states on TV devices
- Defining and naming the components
- defining the animations and page transitions

Beyond the wireframes and interactions, finalizing the designs needed to be put on hold while all of the HBO branding was being worked out. The biggest questions were:

- What will the updated type ramp be?
- What is the color palette?
- What are our rules around logo placement?
- Are we keeping the dark background from previous HBO apps?

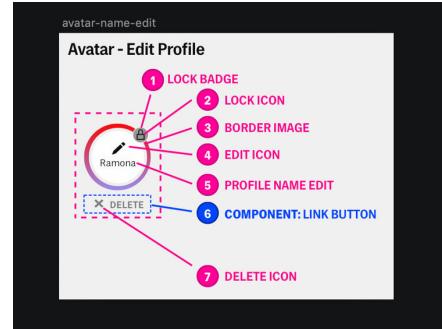
Once these open questions were answered we could quickly move from wireframes to final designs. However, one more late-breaking change in strategic direction led to a significant redesign before we got that far. That change was a move away from IP-based avatar images which meant a simplification of our create and edit profile pages. I made those changes and worked with the visual designers to create a compelling selection process that focused more on the name and colorful frame around the name.

With final designs in hand and limited time before launch, I and a couple other designers created a Framer X prototype to test. Even though we had tested our primary scenarios 1-2 times already, we believed that one last high-fidelity test would give us the confidence to release profiles with high



Those findings were really helpful in focusing us especially on the Create Kid flow. Since we knew that age groups weren't well understood, and in some cases not well-liked, we decided it would be best to split the flow into two pages to let parents focus on their ratings selection and kids-lock. We had been hoping to have a single page flow for all users, but in the end it didn't seem worth the sacrifice of users' understanding of what they were committing to or limiting parents' control over what their kids could watch.

I took 2 sprints to design 3 variations of the create kid's profile flow to do comparative testing. These variations were all premised on a 2-step flow with different approaches to age (birthdate, year, age-group), rating controls, and copy explaining Kids-lock. We wanted to make sure our approach to kid's profiles was sound before finalizing our wireframes and move onto final design. The tests reiterated that age groups were unsatisfactory and that parents generally agreed that year was too general and date of birth was too personal, which led us to MM/YY as the ideal middle ground for identifying a child's age for ratings suggestions, recommendations, and catalog curation. With this understanding, I was ready to finalize our wireframes and work with our

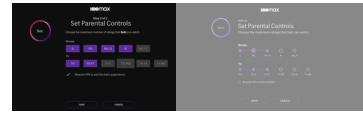


I DIAGRAMMED EACH COMPONENT AND CREATED NAMING TOKENS FOR OUR DEVELOPERS TO USE IN THEIR REACT COMPONENTS AND TO ADD TO OUR DESIGN SYSTEM



Original Design For Rating Selection

confidence. We spent several weeks putting together a TV prototype. There were numerous challenges, primarily related to managing focus, which is poorly supported in most prototyping tools. Fortunately, one of my design partners was a wizard. With his help we create a prototype that saved data, focused (generally) gracefully, had smooth transitions and animations, and covered all of the scenarios we wanted to test.



The results confirmed the overall usability of our designs, with one notable exception: ratings selection. We had used a simple button group originally, since it would reuse existing components and work gracefully on CTV, touch screens, and on computers. What we found was users didn't register that the ratings were a spectrum and selecting an a higher rating selected all ratings beneath them. Because of the buttons, they thought it was more à la carte. This meant that multiple users selected one rating at a time, which on touchscreens or with a mouse would be reasonably easy, but on a TV remote was very cumbersome.

We took the results and convinced our product and engineering partners that the additional scope was necessary for a redesign. We added connecting lines between each rating to better connect the ratings, which better communicated that they were all of a part.

