PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL

PHASE 1: FIRST BUILD OF A SUBSTACK NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE

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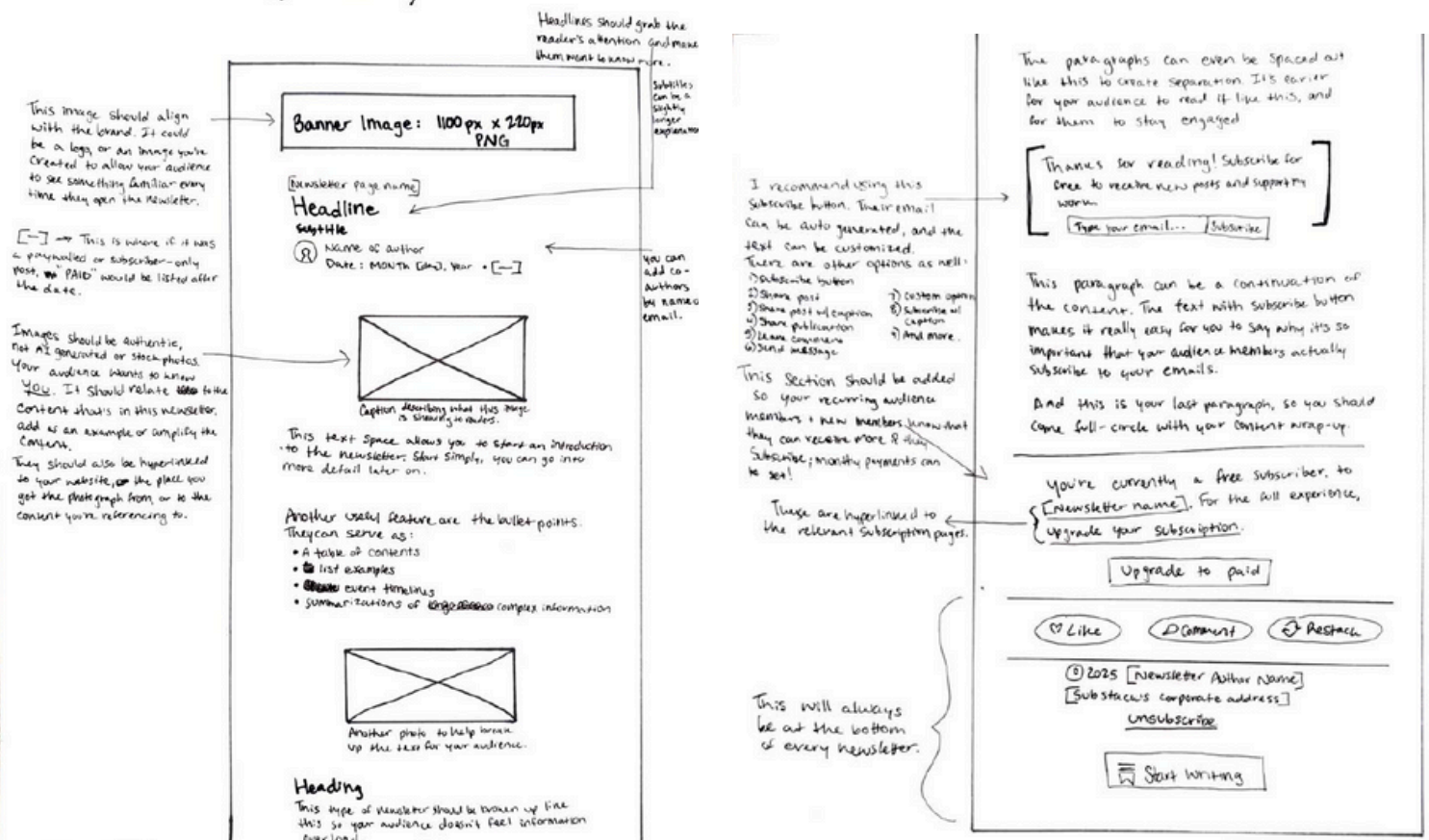
1 Progress Summary

COMPLETED THIS WEEK

This week was focused on creating the paper protoype, grabbing inspiration when it hit. A newsletter template was drawn, how it would be set up in a professional environment, and instructions & explanations as to why things are a certain way were written into the drawing.

PERCENTAGE OF PRODUCT COMPLETION

The product is 30% built, and essentially just needs to be refined and input into a digital atmosphere. More research needs to be completed to see what platform can host the digital product, but a leading source is a paywalled Substack post. Utilization of the backend of Substack is essential for this process.

2 Toolset & Workflow

WHAT PLATFORMS WERE USED THIS WEEK

Substack played an integral part in the creation of the paper prototype. Articles from farms, journalists, hobby writers, and authors were read, and the backend of creating a Substack newsletter was utilized in understanding workflow and style of the prototype.
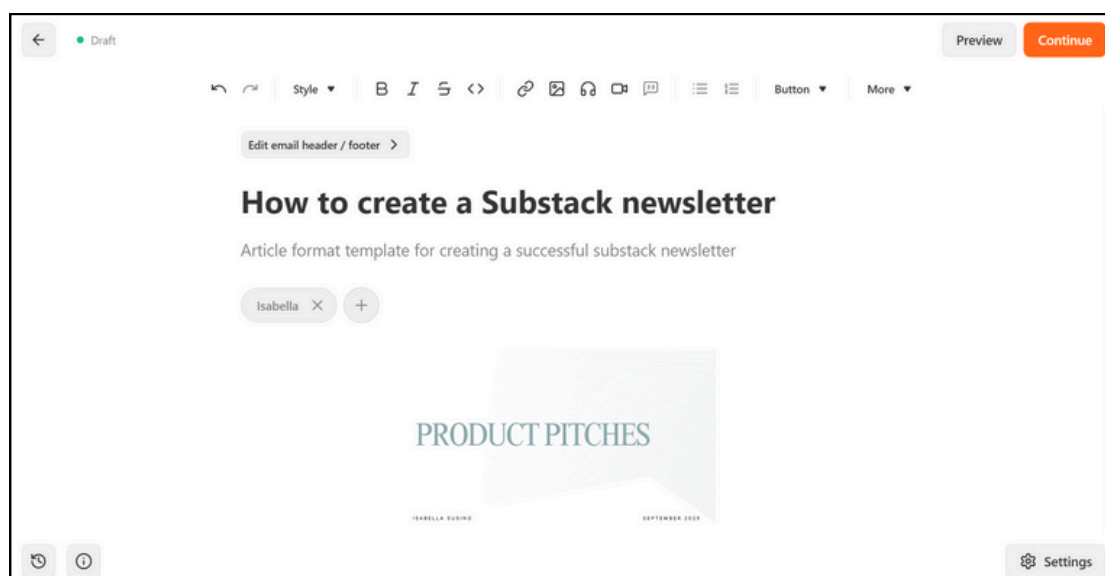
WHAT WORKED? WHAT DIDN'T?

The backend of Substack, the application that the digital product is focused on marketing toward, is very different from a traditional newsletter platform. The process of newsletter creation is simplistic and easy to follow.

NEW TOOLS OR TECHNIQUES

Originally when inspiration hit, a newsletter was designed that was for an application that supports highly customizable newsletters. Substack is limiting in which this cannot be done. What's customizable are the images, headings, bylines, footers, and the website page - which is just the newsletter's profile page.

The design of the newsletter template for Substack was a new experience for me because of this. I've also never written my own newsletter on Substack, only thorugh the "traditional" channels of newsletter application such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, Brevo, and others.

3 Challenges & Problem Solving

CHALLENGES

Learning the backend of the Substack application, even though it was easy, was still a new experience. There are a lot of trial and error processes involved, especially with finding what looks aesthetically best in a simplistic newsletter. It's hard to come to terms with the fact that the newsletter can only be as customized as Substack allows.

ROAD BLOCKS, OR NONE?

I haven't really hit any application road blocks in the development process yet, but I am finding that I am getting in my own way for this. I was expecting the newsletters to be more customizable, so I had to trim my ideas down.

After creating the initial newsletter paper prototype, I knew that there would be things I had to change. I am glad I went into Substack to make sure I was on the right track. In some ways, I was. But Being that the application isn't as customizable as I initially thought, I pivoted quickly and adapted.

4 Reflection

WHAT I AM MOST PROUD OF

This week I felt excitement over starting the process, and managed my time a little better than before. This report is keeping me on track for creating project files in my own brand and templates.

IMPROVEMENTS

Time management needs to improve more than it already has, as I am very burnt out and feeling anxious because of the festival I am planning. It's on the 20th, and it's going to be so much work to get the county fairgrounds ready.

UPCOMING OBJECTIVES

Phase 2 will consist of continuation of product development, focusing on quality for the target audience. The product will be 75% ready for market, and the product will be sent to three user testers who have Substack experience.

Phase 3 will be to collect the feedback from the three user testers, with a goal to see if they can implement the newsletter template in Substack. Their feedback will be applied to the product and it will be ready for market. If all goes well for this first template, there is an option for me to create other templates that market to other niche communities.