smart4sitter

A Comprehensive Management Platform for the Childcare Industry

SmartSitter is a Software-as-a-Service marketplace that matches families with child care providers. Using custom and complex workflows, families can schedule ongoing childcare or a one-off appointment for a date night.

Garcia Family
3912 Addison St., Kirkwood, MO 63122

APPOINTMENT #94931
THURSDAY, MAY 14TH
9:00 am to 4:00 pm (7 hrs)

📱 CALL MEMBER

Nelson
3 Years Old
Healthy

Nelson
3 Years Old
Healthy

PARUX

Total Childcare Solution

SmartSitter is a turnkey SaaS platform that provides a full suite of applications to manage a childcare business, in a modern, mobile-friendly cloud-based solution.
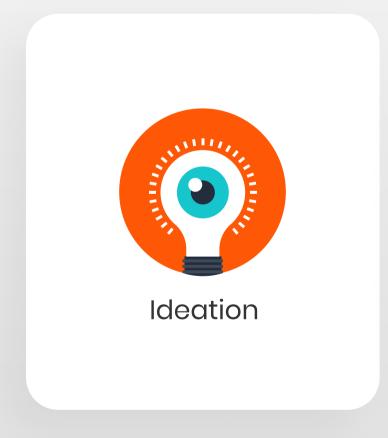
Childcare Services are Complex

Managing a childcare business is challenging, with multiple users, complicated scheduling requirements, and numerous and complex nested business rules. Current solutions were inadequate, insecure, and had a poor user experience.
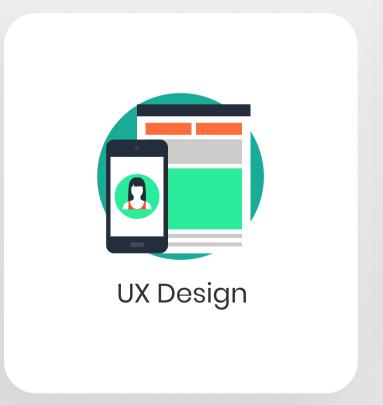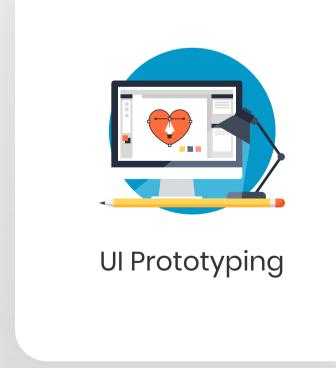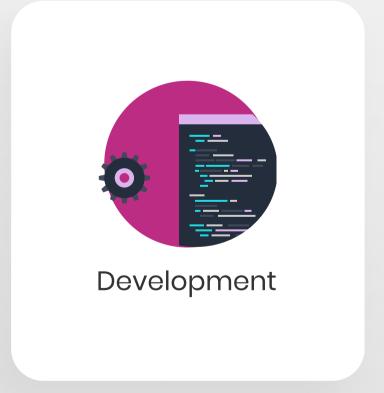
Smartsitter Teams with Parux to Build A Scalable SaaS Solution

Born out of a need to run and grow their local business (STL Sitter), the SmartSitter founders had struggled to find a modern, stable, secure, and easy-to-use platform for their industry. Realizing the need, and the opportunity, SmartSitter teamed with Parux to create a complete platform that is poised to scale to a nationwide network, and currently has multiple cities using the platform.

Ideation

UX Design

UI Prototyping

Development
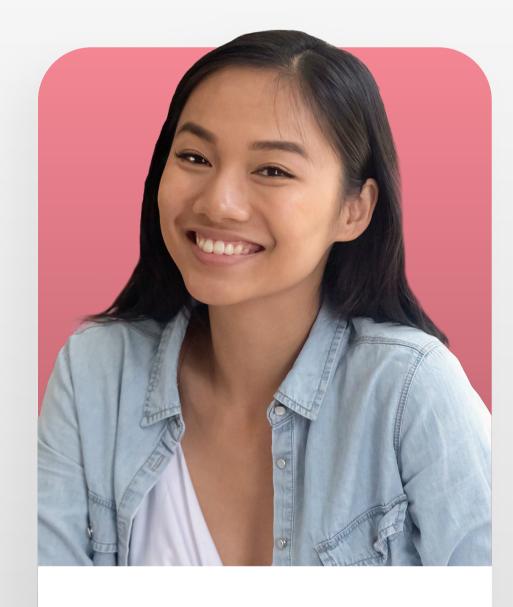
Three User Types to Discover

During early discovery it became clear the platform needed to accommodate three distinct user experiences. The families who need to book appointments, the sitters who need to accept appointments, and the internal staff that facilitate appointments with a concierge touch all have their own needs and requirements.
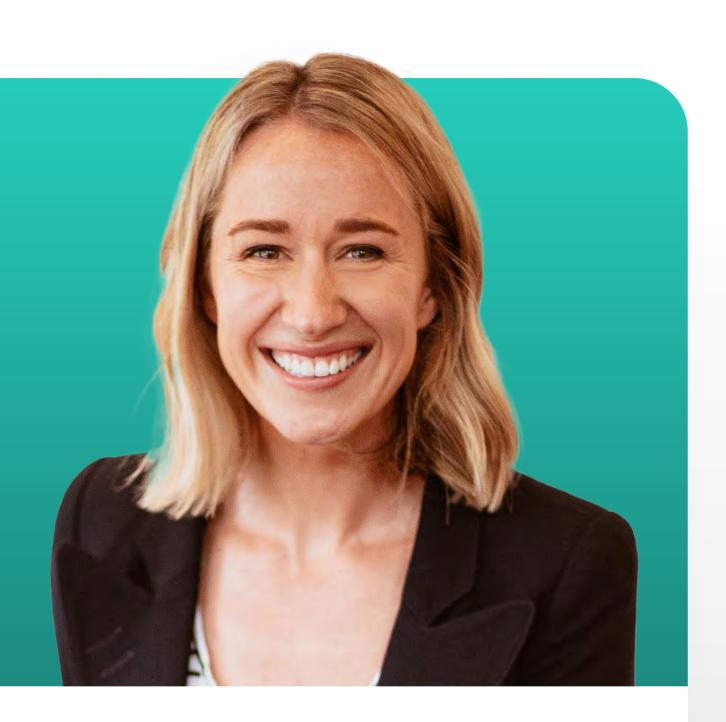
The Owner

The Family

The Sitter

Meet Morgan

Morgan is an entrepreneur at heart, with a passion for working with families. She has built a small business providing childcare services in her city but has been unable to scale effectively because of the complexities and challenges of running her business.

PERSONALITY

Tech Savvy

Analytics Centric

Open to Innovation

Organization

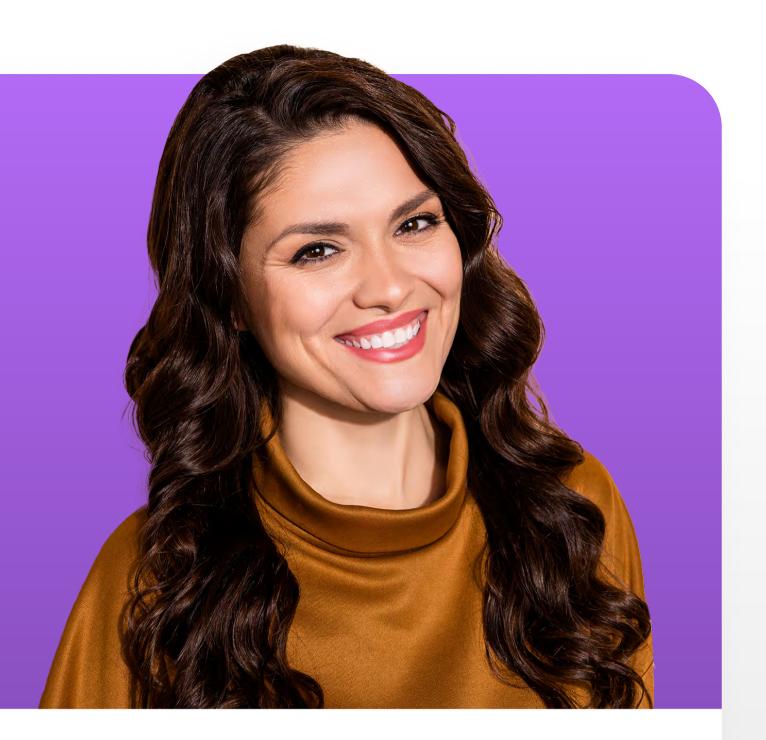## PAIN POINTS

- Scheduling sitters and families is complex and challenging.

- There is no efficient way to track performance and incidents.

- Communication with sitters and families is manual, and not efficient.

- Onboarding sitters and families is time-consuming and slow.

Meet Nicole

As a working mom with 3 children, Nicole juggles multiple work, school, and activity schedules, and still must find time for date nights and overnight trips with her husband. Also, she and her husband both occasionally travel for business, which complicates their already hectic schedule. For this family, professional childcare is a necessity.

PERSONALITY

Tech Savvy

Analytics Centric

Open to Innovation

Organization

PAIN POINTS

- Schedules change often, sometimes forcing last-minute sitting arrangements.

- Limited time to research sitters, and just needs help to fill appointments.

- Wants to know that her children will be cared for by certified, qualified, and vetted sitters who will provide her children with a safe and enriching experience.

Meet Jenny

Jenny is a nursing student at the local university. She loves babysitting to make extra income but she's from out of town and doesn't have a network of families. Being in control of her own schedule is important and wants to build relationships with great families.

PERSONALITY

Tech Savvy

Analytics Centric

Open to Innovation

Organization

PAIN POINTS

- Not having a good network to find families to sit for their children.

- Keeping track of multiple different appointments and worrying about missing one.

- Uncomfortable having discussions with families about sitting rates.

Managing a Childcare Business is Surprisingly Complex

The environment is extremely dynamic, and one that requires a concierge, high-touch approach. Existing tools were completely inadequate to serve their users.

SCHEDULING

Scheduling is extraordinarily complicated and time-consuming with multiple points of failures. The SmartSitter team is faced with the logistics of changing schedules, cancellations, managing special needs, transportation, urgent needs, and dozens of other factors. In addition, many families need to set up recurring sits on a schedule, but also need the flexibility to manage exceptions and outliers.

MANAGING SITTERS

Onboarding new sitters is a major challenge with training and certifications that need to be tracked for compliance requirements. Once onboarded these college-aged sitters have ever-changing schedules and can be hard to motivate to accept appointments. There is also a lack of methods to track sitter performance and incidents at appointments.

COMMUNICATION

Communication with sitters and families is manual, and not connected to any platform. The SmartSitter team can't automate communications and they use an unreliable hybrid of email and text messages to coordinate between sitters and families. This results in a logistical challenge to track when and what communications were sent so the entire team is up-to-date on appointments and issues.
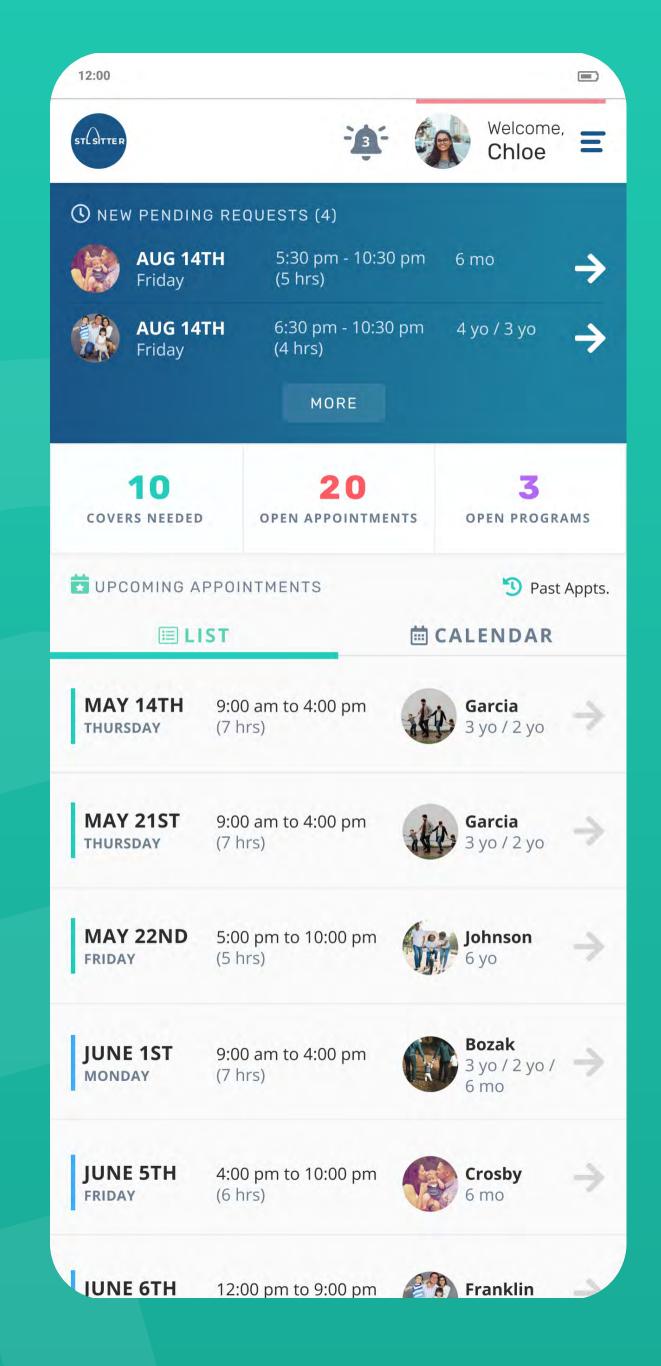
Introducing SmartSitter

smart sitter

SmartSitter is built from the ground up to meet the needs of the administrators / operators, the families, and the sitters. Workflows are intuitive, clear, and simple. Data and notifications are integrated into dashboards that give the right information when it's needed. And custom apps address key pain points such as long-term "bulk" bookings, which required spreadsheets in the past to manage.

Families and sitters are both youthful user groups, and a great mobile experience was critical. The system was built as a mobile-first architecture, which gives a great phone experience without the need for native apps.

Also, the platform supports their personal, "high touch" concierge model, but still provides self-service tools and automations to keep additional workloads for admins to a minimum.
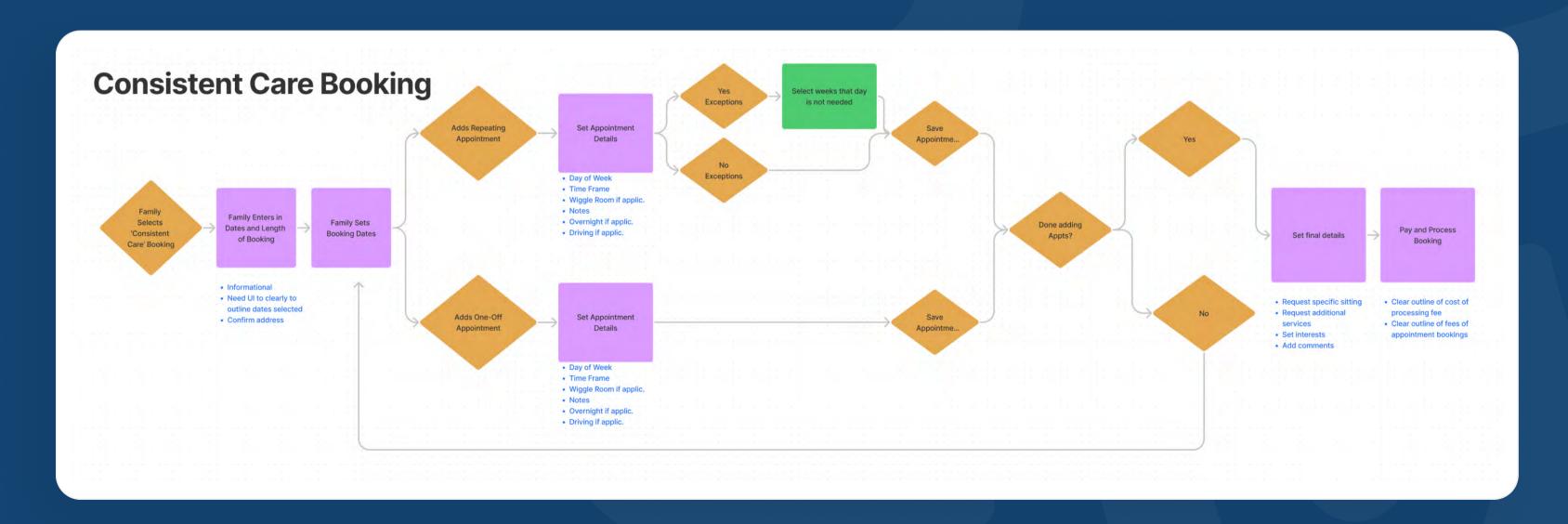

12:00

STL SITTER   Welcome, Chloe

NEW PENDING REQUESTS (4)

AUG 14TH Friday   5:30 pm - 10:30 pm (5 hrs)   6 mo →

AUG 14TH Friday   6:30 pm - 10:30 pm (4 hrs)   4 yo / 3 yo →

MORE

10 COVERS NEEDED   20 OPEN APPOINTMENTS   3 OPEN PROGRAMS

UPCOMING APPOINTMENTS   Past Appts.

LIST   CALENDAR

MAY 14TH THURSDAY   9:00 am to 4:00 pm (7 hrs)   Garcia 3 yo / 2 yo →

MAY 21ST THURSDAY   9:00 am to 4:00 pm (7 hrs)   Garcia 3 yo / 2 yo →

MAY 22ND FRIDAY   5:00 pm to 10:00 pm (5 hrs)   Johnson 6 yo →

JUNE 1ST MONDAY   9:00 am to 4:00 pm (7 hrs)   Bozak 3 yo / 2 yo / 6 mo →

JUNE 5TH FRIDAY   4:00 pm to 10:00 pm (6 hrs)   Crosby 6 mo →

JUNE 6TH   12:00 pm to 9:00 pm   Franklin

UX Research

The primary goal was to create a platform that supported all users including owners, admins, sitters, and families. Extensive interviews were conducted with users from each of these groups, and documentation recorded their needs and requirements.

Using the Design Thinking framework, we used tools such as Empathy Maps, Personas, and Journey Maps to fully understand the needs and pain points of each user.

From there, we built out a project plan using an agile methodology with Epics and Stories, and Acceptance Criteria for all major tasks. This development roadmap served as a consensus on what the platform needed to accomplish.
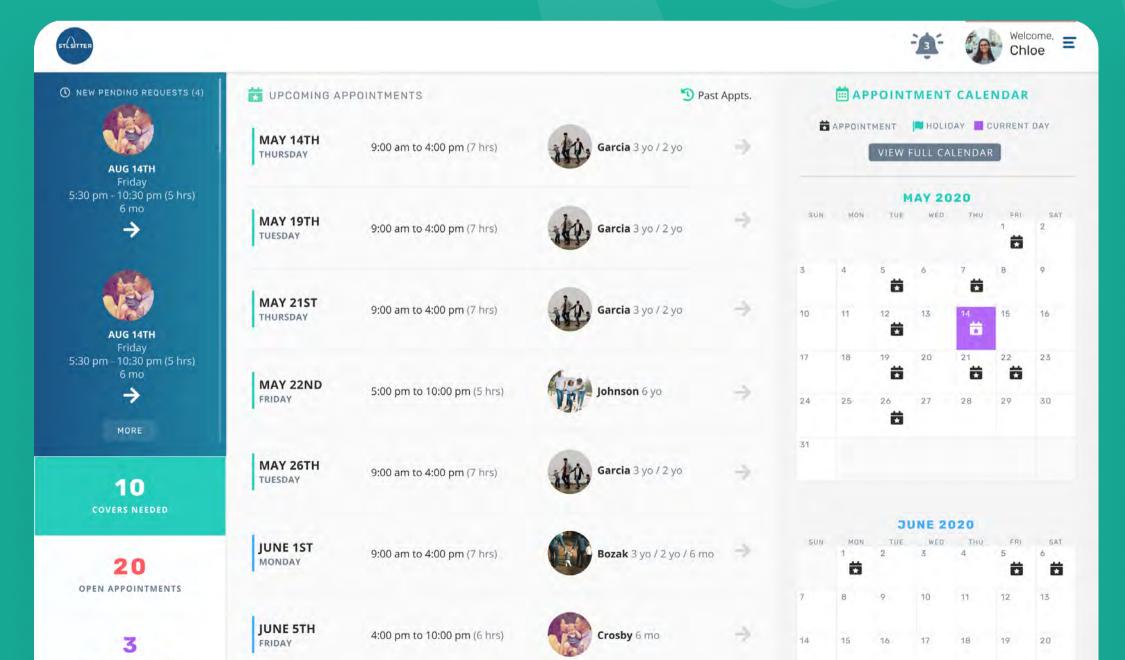
Consistent Care Booking

UX Flows & UI Prototyping

The previous platform used by STL Sitter had such a poor user experience that included bad interfaces, buggy code, clunky workflows, and serious security issues that exposed family data. Starting with a clean slate was in order.

We created extensive wireframes that mapped out key workflows and interactions to streamline processes and interactions to align with the discovery documentation. As mobile support was paramount, we started by creating high-fidelity responsive prototypes that simulated interactions, inputs, and UI states. These were extensively tested with all users to ensure that the workflows and user experiences were correct before moving to platform development.

This approach streamlined development to quickly build out the application and kept refactoring to a minimum.
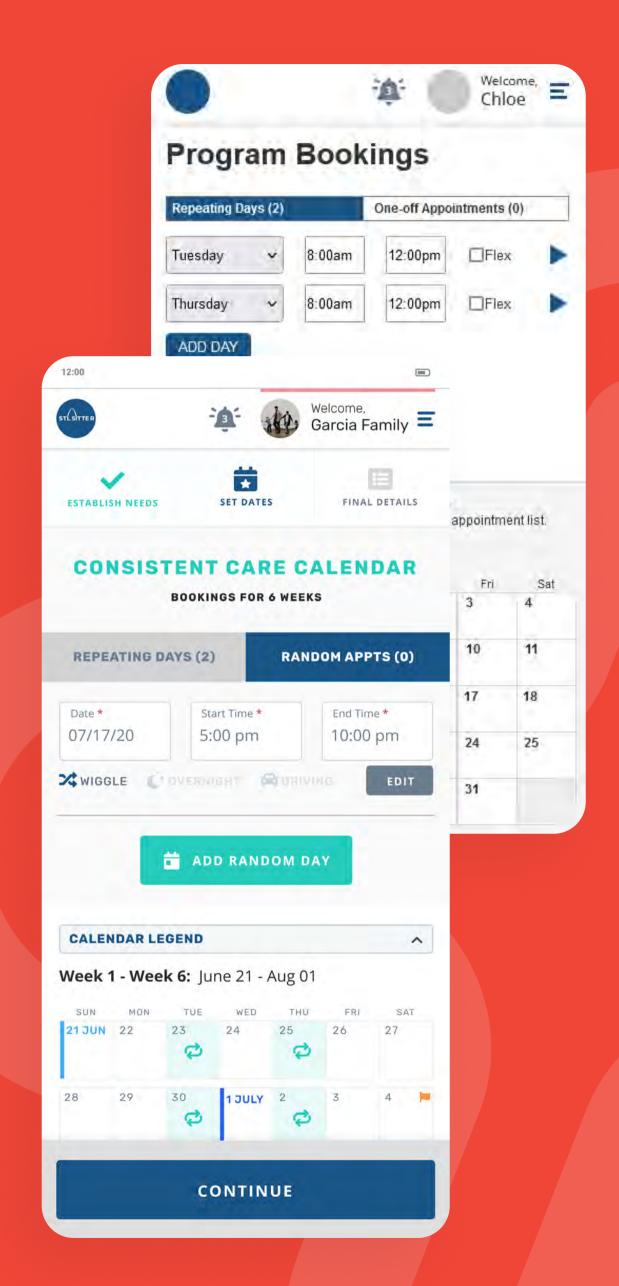
Consistent Care Booking

UX/UI Challenge

The biggest challenge SmartSitter faced was providing families with the ability to book recurring sitting appointments. Families were submitting a written narrative of needs that admins would then transcribe into a spreadsheet. Then admins coordinated with sitters via email and text to fill the appointments. It was a major, time-consuming undertaking.

How can consistent care booking be envisioned so families can dynamically add appointments, and allow for sitters to accept appointments with minimal admin intervention?

UX Solution – Flow Mapping

Working with stakeholders, we documented a user journey that allowed families to book their entire schedule on platform. A family could have dozens of appointments, so it was important to think through a flow would allow for quickly adding multiple sits but also support exceptions such as "we're on vacation during week 3." The flow also had to account for adding one-off appointments that do not repeat. This journey chart led to intensive end-to-end responsive wireframing and prototyping. It was key that the UI was intuitive and efficient to use.
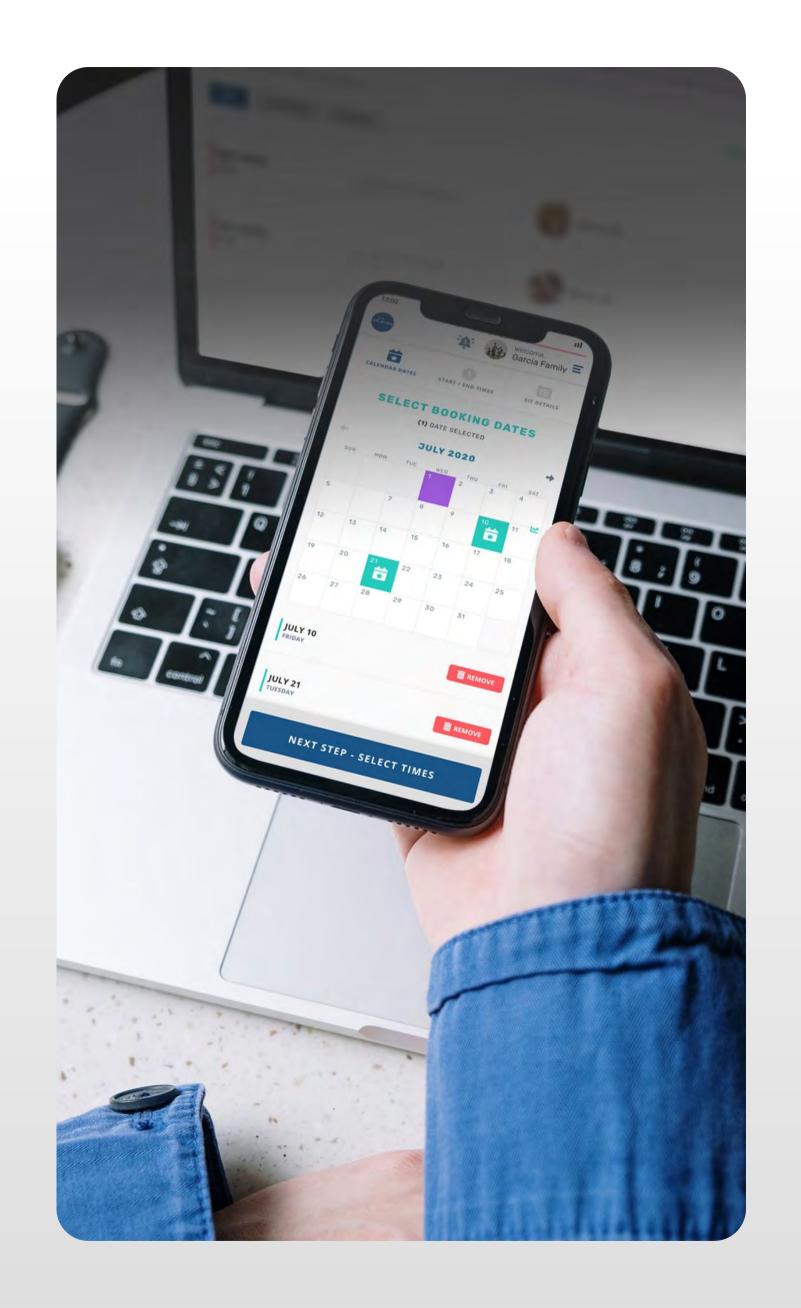
Development Thrives Through a Major Pivot

While the UX/UI team worked hard on their tasks, the development team began laying the framework for a robust and scalable platform. Utilizing an API-First methodology, the backend and frontend coders were able to work in tandem in development. As different sections of the platform got designed, the developers worked on turning the prototypes into real, working code. Those features were constantly showcased to SmartSitter, tested, and refined to maximize the user experience.

Everything was going as planned, until SmartSitter had a pressing and unplanned need to move up their first launch of the new platform by three months. The platform was only about 50% completed and the new launch date was less than a month away. We worked with SmartSitter to pivot the development roadmap for a quicker release. We determined the new roadmap was doable, though tight. In the following weeks, the development cranked out the final features and successfully launched on schedule.

A New Platform for a New Beginning

Backend and Frontend Development

The platform is built using an API-first methodology that connects the Laravel backend and React frontend. The platform is browser based but the goal was to give it an mobile app like feel. Every screen is responsive so the experience is great on a phone, tablet, or desktop. Modern front-end components push in and out to give seamless transitions between data.

Custom Onboarding & User Management

Families and Sitters have their own custom account onboarding flows. These ensure they are qualified and a good fit for SmartSitter. These onboardings are staged base and use a complex workflow of reviews and notifications to complete. For Sitters, the platform manages the end-to-end process including initial application, scheduling of interview, final training and more.

Secure Checkouts

The platform was developed to accept multiples complex payments for subscriptions and bookings. Appointment costs can vary based on variables such as peak days and times, overnights, and more. Smartsitter admins have a dedicated interface to mange these costs without the need to updating the code. The platform recognizes these managed rates as well as coupons, credits, and balances.

A Modern, Beautiful Platform

With its own scalable platform, SmartSitter is now expanding beyond St. Louis to include multiple cities as well as markets outside of childcare. The possibilities are enormous, and with Parux as their partner, the platform can evolve to support their new needs.

KEY RESULT

Since launching the new platform, SmartSitter has seen a steady rise in new and active subscribers as well as revenue from appointment bookings.

After successfully operating our business for five years, we had a unique set of SOPs, and a list of pain points to address. The solution was custom technology, with logic from three different perspectives. The process was undeniably intricate, each click was discussed and designed. The Parux team became our trusted partners throughout this journey, guiding us through every phase, with expertise and dedication. The end product, SMARTSITTER, not only met our current needs, but also holds the promise of scalable solutions for our future endeavors. We couldn't be more thrilled with the outcome.

Morgan Clark
SmartSitter CEO & Founder