

UX CASE STUDY · COMMUNITY WEB APP · 2026

Words that move you, shared by people like you.

Designing a calm social network for inspiring quotes — with stories you tap through, an AI that explains and moderates, and gamification that rewards kindness over noise.



ROLE

Product · UX/UI · Full-stack

TEAM

Solo

PLATFORM

Responsive web · PHP +
SQLite

LIVE

inspire-me.life

01 — OVERVIEW

A social feed that leaves you feeling better.

Endless scroll, endless noise. Social feeds are optimised for outrage because outrage keeps people scrolling. What would a feed look like if it were optimised for feeling better instead?

Inspire Me began as a request for "a blog with moderation for an admin". It grew into a community where members share the quotes that move them, discover a quote of the day, heart and save favourites, and tap through quotes like stories.

I designed the product, built it on my **Air Design System v2.0**, wrote the PHP + SQLite back end that installs as a single file on shared hosting, and designed the AI, moderation, gamification and paywall flows.

THE CHALLENGE

Build an engaging community that stays kind — moderated by one person, private by design, and sustainable without ads.

THE ANSWER

A focused feed with four lenses, AI-assisted moderation, retention built on positive actions, GDPR from day one and a fair Gumroad paywall after 69 visits.

TIMELINE

Sep–Oct 2026

AUDIENCE

Readers & sharers, 16+

STACK

PHP · SQLite · Groq AI

MODEL

Free 69 visits → Gumroad

4

Feed lenses: For You, Trending, Following, New

6

Quote-card themes in light and dark mode

69

Free member visits before subscribing

0

Ads, trackers or third-party fonts

02 — PROBLEM SPACE

Inspiration is easy to find and hard to keep.

Proto-personas from the brief and the admin's needs — assumptions to validate, not interview findings.

**Ana, 27**

Reader · morning routine

"I want one good thought before I open email."

GOALS

- A daily quote, fast
- Save the ones that matter

**João, 34**

Sharer · keeps a notebook

"Someone else should see this line."

GOALS

- Post in seconds, look good
- Know it reached people

**Webmaster**

Admin · moderates alone

"I can't read every comment at 2 a.m."

GOALS

- Keep the tone kind
- Stop bots at the door

Toxic by default

Open comments drift negative quickly, and one moderator can't keep up with a growing community.

Scroll without memory

Quote sites are one-way: people read, feel something, and leave with nothing saved and no reason to return.

Privacy debt

Typical stacks leak visitor data to font CDNs, analytics and captcha providers — a GDPR problem in Europe.

How might we make a feed people **return to because it helps** — and keep it kind with a team of one?

03 — PRINCIPLES & PROCESS

Five rules, then fast build-test loops.

01

Calm over compulsive

No infinite outrage loop: four clear lenses, a quote of the day, stories that end.

02

Reward positive acts

XP comes from sharing, hearting and streaks — not from arguing.

03

AI as a moderator's ally

Approve, block or queue comments automatically; the admin decides the edge cases.

04

Private by construction

Self-hosted fonts and captcha, essential cookies only, export and delete built in.

05

One-file install

Upload index.php to shared hosting and the setup wizard does the rest.

Air Design System v2.0

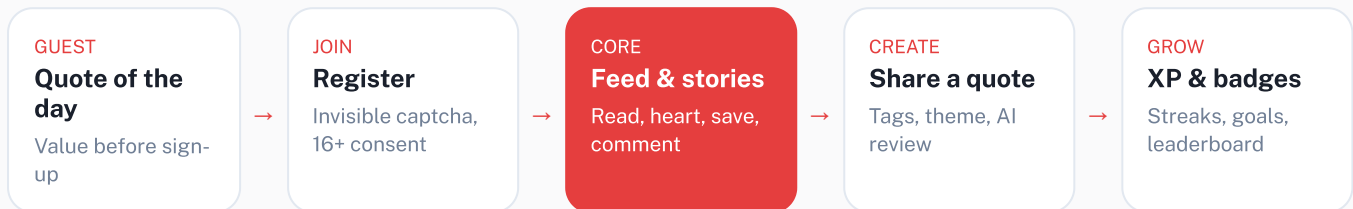
Red, Public Sans, Material Icons — one coherent language across every screen.

ITERATION LOG — WHAT CHANGED AND WHY

Blog → community	CHANGED Admin-moderated blog became a member-driven quote feed.	WHY Quotes are short, shareable and easy to moderate — ideal for a community.
Tap & play	SHIPPED Stories mode, double-tap to heart, XP, levels, streaks, daily goals, badges, leaderboard.	WHY Retention needed a reason to open the app daily, not just a feed.
AI layer	SHIPPED Quote explanations and comment moderation via Groq, key kept server-side.	WHY Context deepens reading; moderation scales the admin.
Trust	SHIPPED Proof-of-work captcha, GDPR export/delete, 16+ consent, hashed IPs.	WHY Stop bots without a third-party captcha tracking visitors.
Post-launch	FIXED Theme/sound toggles and a hidden card menu; added self-serve password reset.	WHY Real use surfaced friction that tests missed — fixed and re-tested end-to-end.

04 — EXPERIENCE ARCHITECTURE

Discover, heart, share, grow.



MEMBER NAVIGATION

Five tabs, one red action

- **Home** — For You, Trending, Following, New
- **Discover** — tags like #growth, #courage, #stoicism
- **+ Share** — always centred, always red
- **Likes** — everything hearted or saved
- **Profile** — photo, level, badges, data export

ADMIN SURFACE

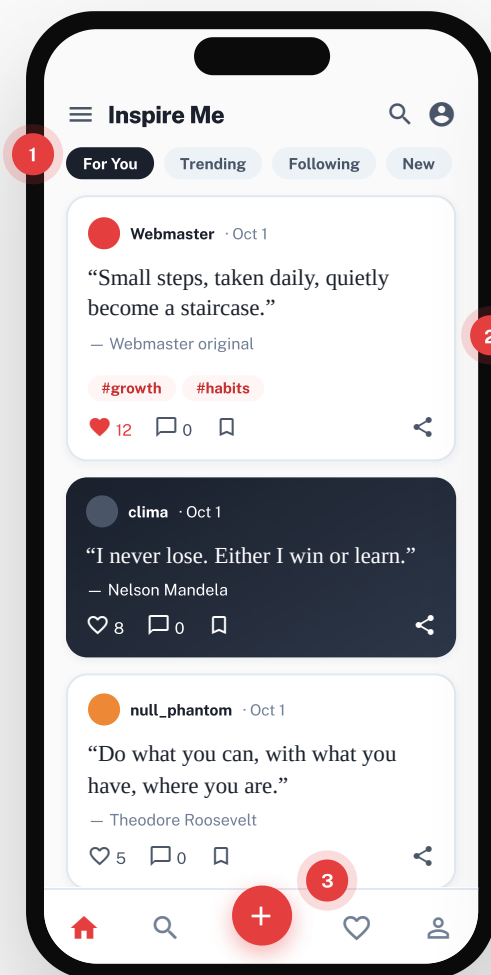
Moderation as a queue

- Quotes and comments waiting for review
- AI verdicts shown with reasons — override in one tap
- Settings for paywall, AI limits, SMTP and privacy text
- Featured quote and quote-of-the-day control

A guest sees something beautiful before being asked for anything — the sign-up prompt arrives after the first moment of value.

05 — KEY SCREENS

A feed and a story, built for the thumb.



- 1 Four lenses**
Pills switch the feed's intent — personal, popular, social, fresh — without new pages.
- 2 Quote first**
Serif quote, small attribution, quiet actions: the words carry the card.
- 3 Share is central**
The red + sits where the thumb rests.
- 4 Stories with an end**
Progress bars show how many are left — a finite, satisfying session.
- 5 Double-tap to heart**
A burst, a sound and +1 XP — the gesture people already know.
- 6 Tap zones**
Left goes back, right goes forward, hold pauses.

06 — DEEP DIVE · AI & MODERATION

An AI that reads deeper and keeps it kind.

EXPLAIN THIS QUOTE

“The soul becomes dyed with the colour of its thoughts.”

✦ **Marcus Aurelius** is saying that what we repeatedly think shapes who we become — so choosing our thoughts is a daily practice, not a one-off decision.

COMMENT MODERATION

"This changed my morning, thank you."

✓ Approved

"Only idiots believe this."

⊘ Blocked

"Check my profile for a better one ɹ"

⌚ Queued

AI does two jobs: it adds depth for readers, and it gives a solo admin the leverage of a moderation team.

Three verdicts, not two

Clearly kind comments go live instantly; clearly abusive ones are blocked; anything ambiguous waits for a human. Comments update live without a page refresh.

Key on the server

The Groq key lives in the PHP file, never in the browser, and members have a daily AI limit — so the feature can't be abused or stolen.

Disclosed, not hidden

The privacy policy names Groq as a data processor, and AI features disappear entirely if no key is set.

BOTS STOPPED AT THE DOOR

PROOF OF WORK

Registration solves a small computation in the background — invisible to people, costly for bots.

SELF-HOSTED

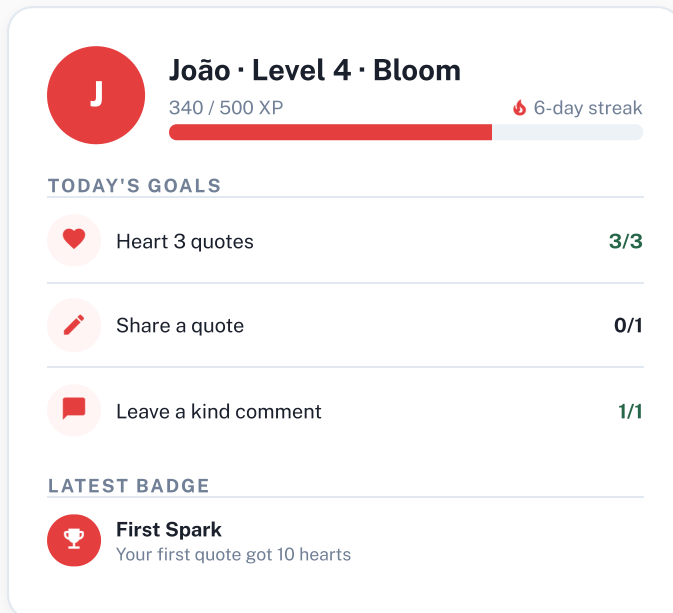
No third-party captcha means no visitor tracking and no puzzles to solve.

HASHED IPS

Login attempts are rate-limited with hashed IPs that purge automatically.

07 — DEEP DIVE · RETENTION

Gamification that rewards kindness.



The "tapping" brief was read as an Instagram-style story mode, then wrapped in a light progression system.

Levels from Seedling to Legend

Names grow like a plant rather than a rank, keeping the tone gentle.

Three daily goals

Small and achievable — heart, share, comment — so a daily visit always ends in completion.

Weekly leaderboard

Resets every week so newcomers can compete with long-time members.

Celebrations with sound

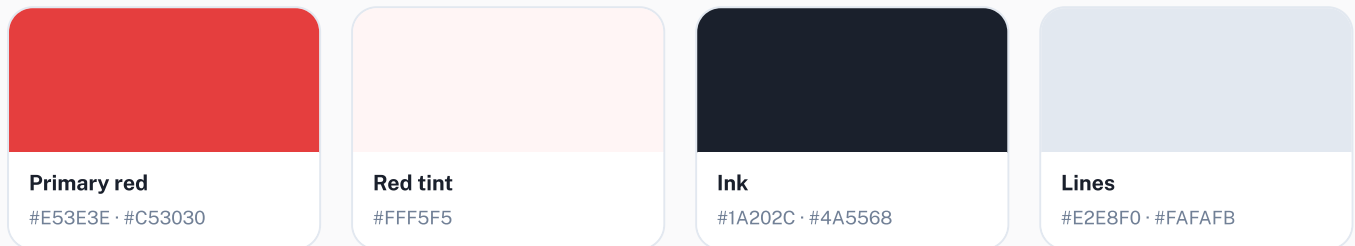
Level-ups trigger a short animation and a procedural sound; both can be muted from the menu.

Every point comes from adding something positive — there is no way to earn XP by arguing.

08 — DESIGN SYSTEM

Air Design System v2.0, applied.

One confident red for action and love, a cool grey neutral scale, Public Sans for the interface and a classic serif for the quotes themselves — the words get the warmth.



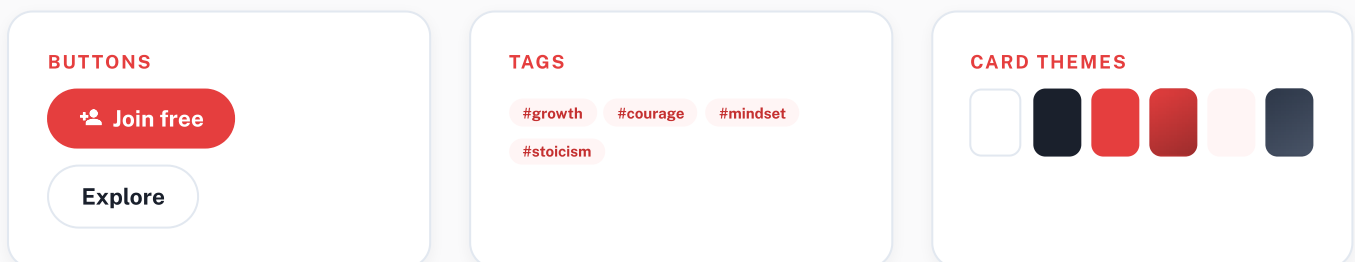
INTERFACE
PUBLIC SANS 800

Words that **move** you.

QUOTES
SERIF

“Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

ICONS
MATERIAL ICONS



09 — TRUST, OUTCOME & LEARNINGS

What shipped, and what comes next.

GDPR BY DESIGN

- Fonts and icons served from the site — no visitor IPs sent to Google
- Essential cookies only, with a short notice
- "Download my data" and "Delete my account" for every member
- Automatic cleanup of old data; Groq disclosed as processor

ACCESSIBILITY & QUALITY

- Dark mode and sound toggle in the menu
- Skip-to-content link, keyboard search shortcut (/)
- Self-serve password reset by email
- Every feature tested end-to-end in a real browser before release

What worked

Three-way AI moderation. Automating the obvious cases and queuing the rest made a one-person community feasible.

What I'd change

Show new members their progress toward the 69-visit limit earlier, so the paywall never feels like a surprise.

Hardest call

Balancing a paywall with a kind community — guests and admins stay free; members get plenty of value first.

Metrics to track next

DAU/MAU

Daily habit strength of members

Goals

Share of members completing all three daily goals

Queue

Comments needing human review, per week

Visit 69

Subscription conversion at the limit



Inspire Me

No ads. No tracking. Just inspiration.

Thanks for reading. Join the community and share the line
that changed how you see things.

PRODUCT

www.inspire-me.life

DESIGNER

clima-portfolio.net

STUDIO

subversive-symmetry.com
