

Slacker Manifesto

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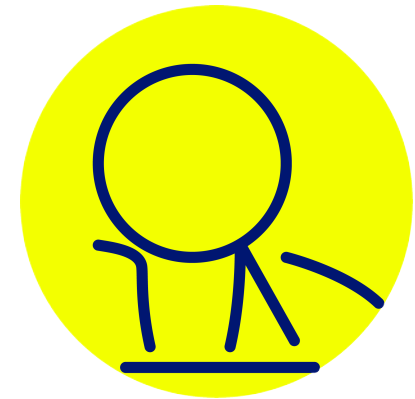
Test & Validation

My project is called Slacker Manifesto, it is an activist project that unpacks the current work scenarios of taking breaks and seeks to provoke thoughts on how rest at work should be treated.

This project starts from the globally common behaviour “slacking off at work”, by understanding how it is defined and varies in different cultures, what elements contribute to it and influence it, and what is the essential reason behind it, the project narrowed down to a more extreme “work-focused” culture to develop.

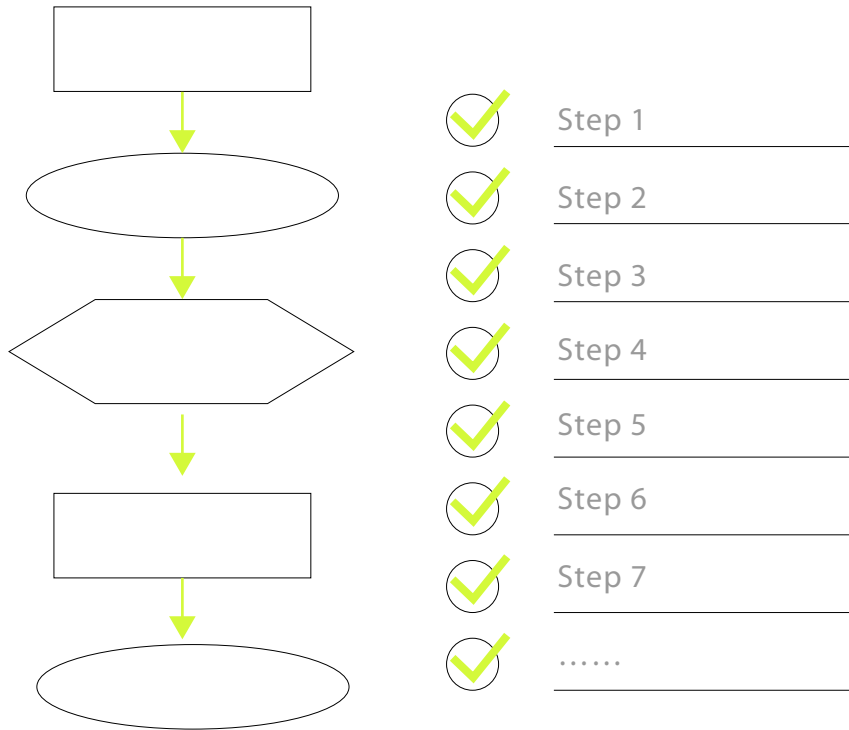
“Burning out” has become a global issue and it is listed in International Classification of Diseases by the WHO in 2019. Heavy workload and long working hours are commonly shared in many companies in countries like China, Japan, Korea, the USA, etc. Some corporations hold the value “Employees working longer hours means they are more committed, more accountable and more loyal ” dearly, which leads to an atmosphere that only working values and taking breaks are not encouraged. A pervasive phenomenon has formed under this situation - employees take breaks concealingly while pretending to be working.

By designing a workshop game for the employer and employees to play together in the office, in which multiple scenarios when employees feel not encouraged to take breaks and when the employer reckons their employees are “slacking off” at work will all be shown to both sides, this project seeks to create communication between the employers and the employees on how to define “a valid break” and enquires whether the attitude towards breaks in current work environment needs to be reconsidered and changed.



My Process

/ Overview



My Imaginary Process



My Actual Process

"Slacking Off" at Work

"Slacking Off" VS "Taking a Break"

/ "Slacking Off" at Work

Definition

Where is the boundary between "normal breaks" & "slacking off"?

People are comfortable drinking coffee, having small talks with colleagues in the kitchen, going to the restroom, walking around a bit... But not so when they check social media, watch youtube videos, message friends & family, etc. In another way, among all the methods to take breaks, those who fit the "common sense" that increase your productivity at work are more encouraged.

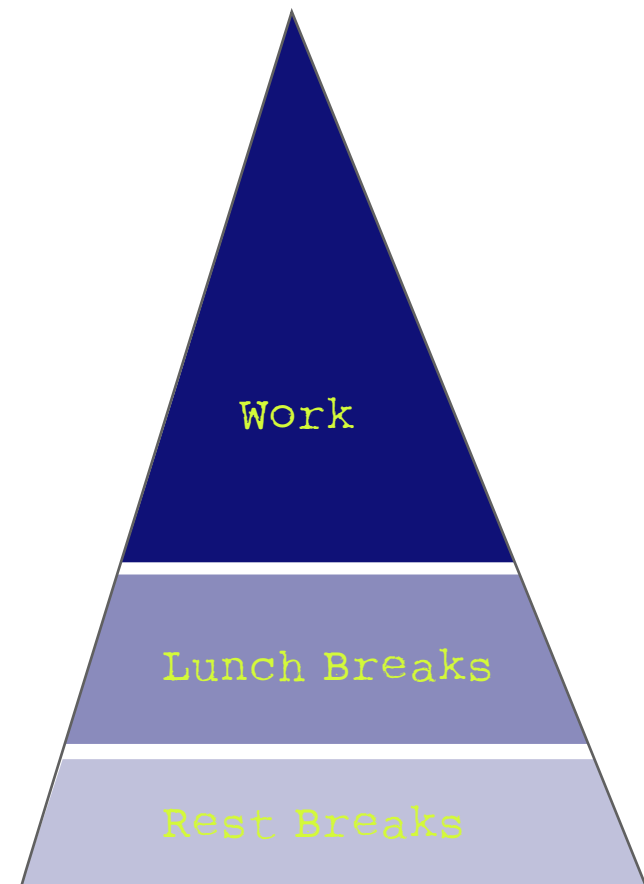
Normal Break

- 5 - 15min
- Don't require much focus
- Can increase productivity

Slacking Off

- Too long(> 20min)
- Too often
- Too entertaining

Some general differences are concluded from interviews and online research. However, there are still many situations that cannot be identified clearly by different people, may it be employees or employers, so a vague space is still there to be discussed, as rest breaks at work are not regulated or scheduled by any company yet.



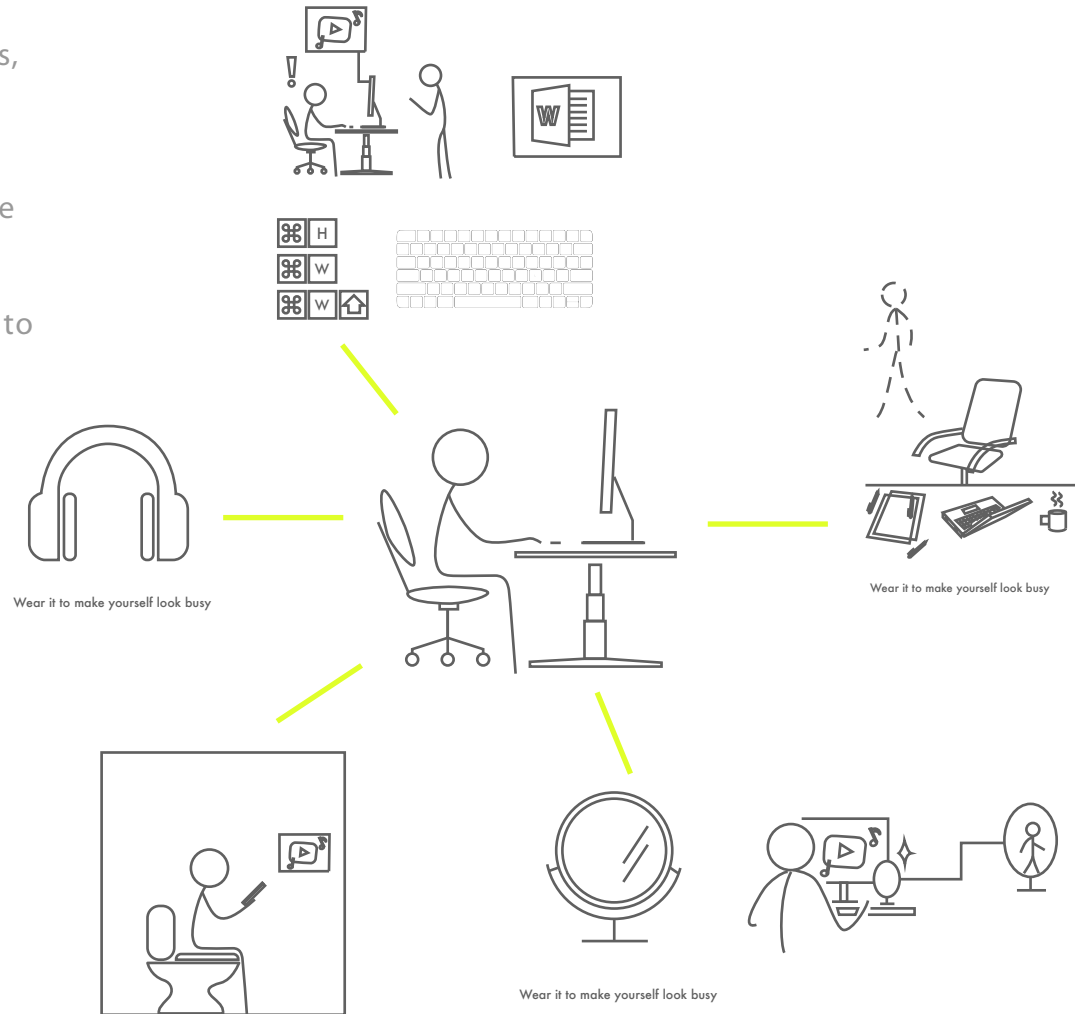
"Slacking Off" in the Office

/ "Slacking Off" at Work

Many office workers have the moments of pretending to be working while taking breaks. This phenomenon commonly exists in different companies, countries and cultures.

What is the reason behind it? Is it about avoiding more work, trying to look "dedicated", or are there deeper reasons one would not realize normally? And when they are doing so, are they actually taking breaks, or do they put extra effort in order to do so?

Methods of slacking off at work

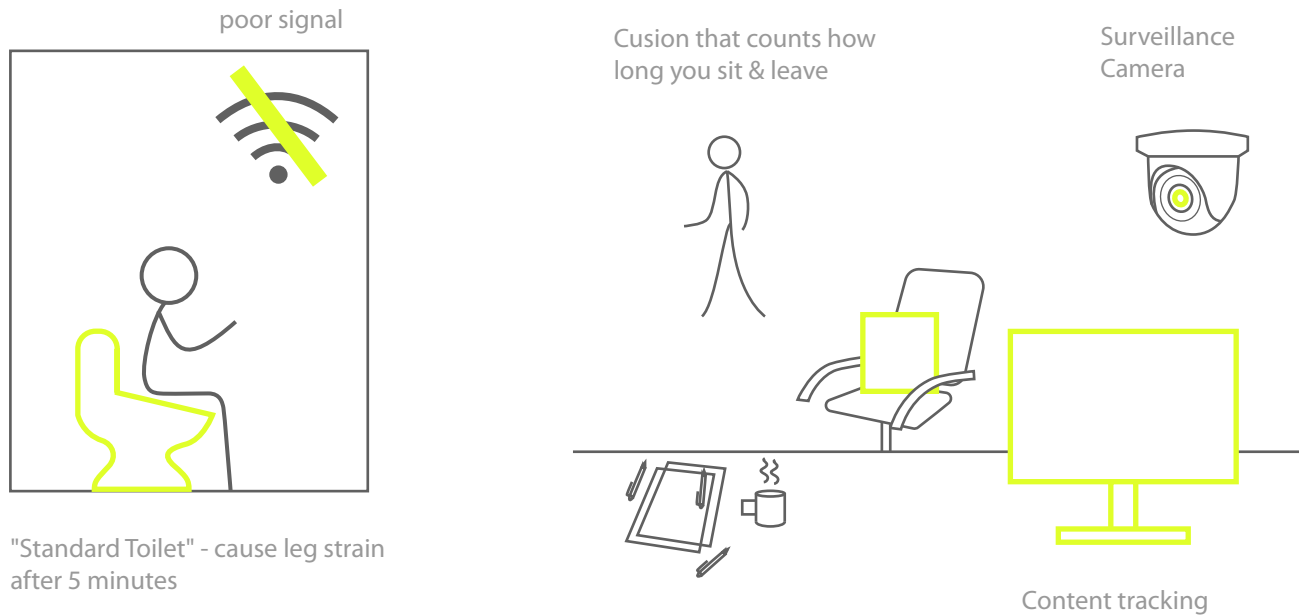


"Anti-Slacking Off" in the Office

/ "Slacking Off" at Work

While employees are trying to find ways to take more breaks, surveillance/controls have been added in some companies to "balance" the time their employees spend on non-work-related things. Extreme as these situations might be, many companies do have "mild" valuation on how much time you spend working VS spend resting at work, be it in a valid form like a camera or clock in/clock out system, or a more unobtrusive one like supervision from manager or boss.

Preventing Slacking Off at Work



"Work-focused" Culture

"Burning Out" - A Global Issue

/ "Work-focused" Culture

WHO Classification

Burn-out is defined as an occupational phenomenon in the International Classification of Diseases (the 11th Revision):

"Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:

- 1. Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;*
- 2. Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job;*
- 3. Reduced professional efficacy."*

[://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases](http://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases)



<https://www.ceotodaymagazine.com/2022/01/how-to-avoid-burnout/>

Examples of burn-out phenomenon:

"Karoshi", "Gwarosa", "996"

Terms like "Karoshi", "Gwarosa", "996" have been made to describe the work culture in which heavy workload and long working hours are pervasive under fierce competition among corporations. People in such "work-focused" culture had experienced and are still experiencing stress both physically and mentally.



Evolution of Working Hours

/ "Work-focused" Culture

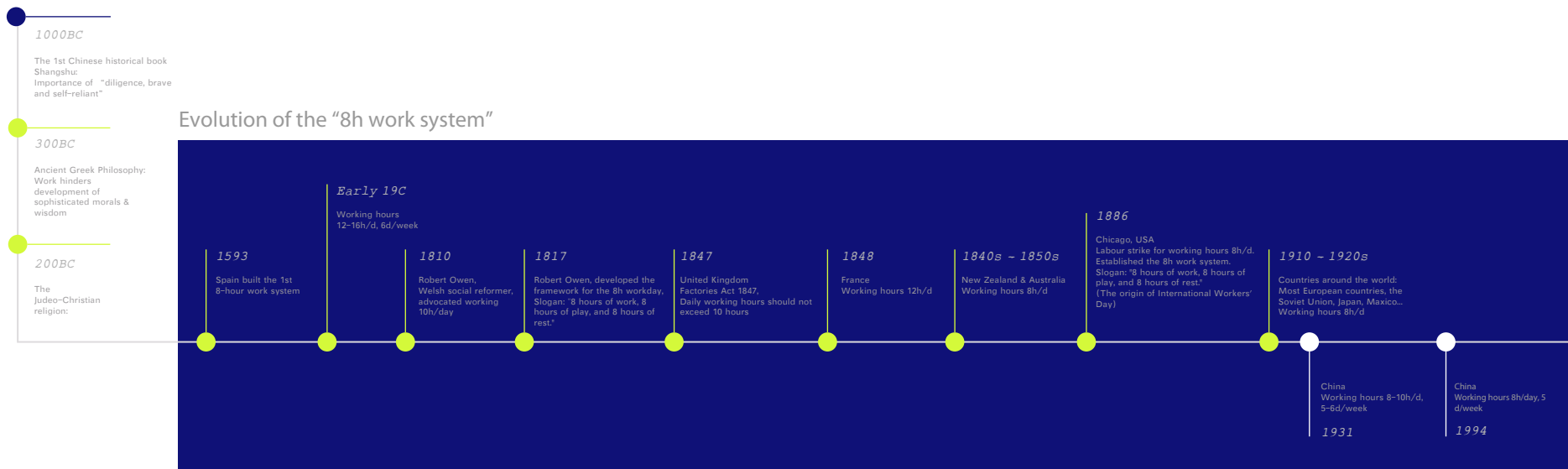
Evolution of Work Ethics

Work creates value, to work is divine – This seems a universally accepted statement today. Dedication to work has been regarded as a virtue pervasively, and people would judge themselves or others for not having a “job” or not “working hard” enough. Take China as an example, in Shangshu, the first compilation of China recording historical documents from 2500BC to 1500BC, many words emphasized the importance of being “diligence, brave and self-reliant” . And these characteristics are considered traditional Chinese virtues even today.

However, more than 2,300 years ago, work or labour was not considered virtuous, but completely the opposite in ancient Greece. What Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in Politics indicated that work was regarded as an activity that prevent individuals from developing their sophisticated morals and considering bigger-scale questions about politics, culture and philosophy.

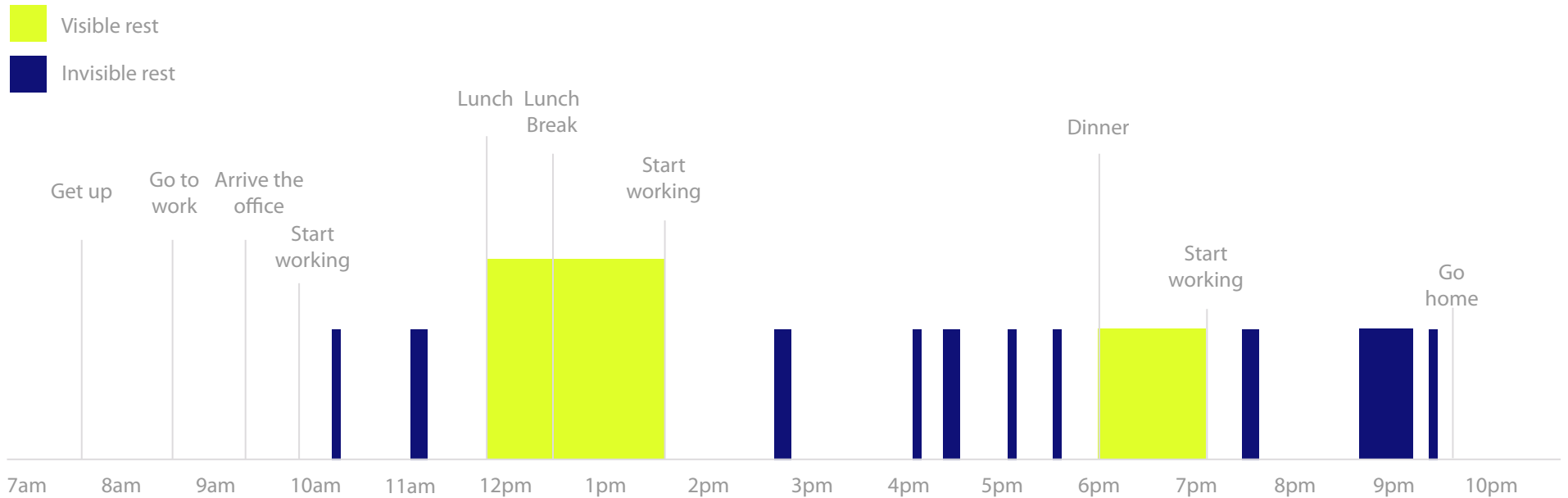
Evolution of Work Time Regulation

To discuss the shift of attitudes towards work in a historical view, USA, European Countries & UK, China are shown as case study examples.



Rest Breaks in a "996" Company

Journey Map of a tech employee working "flexible schedule" in China



"I want to take a small break but I just started working....."

"Lunch break! I can use social media/play games/take a nap and no one will judge me!"

"Back to work but not productive after an hour, I need to check my phone and relax"

"Almost dinner time, nothing urgent now"

"Ready to go home, but my boss is still here and no one leaves yet"

"Having worked for an hour and need a break, but others seem fine....."

"Cannot work no more, need a break"
 "
 "short break"

"Cannot work right away after dinner"

Process to take a break

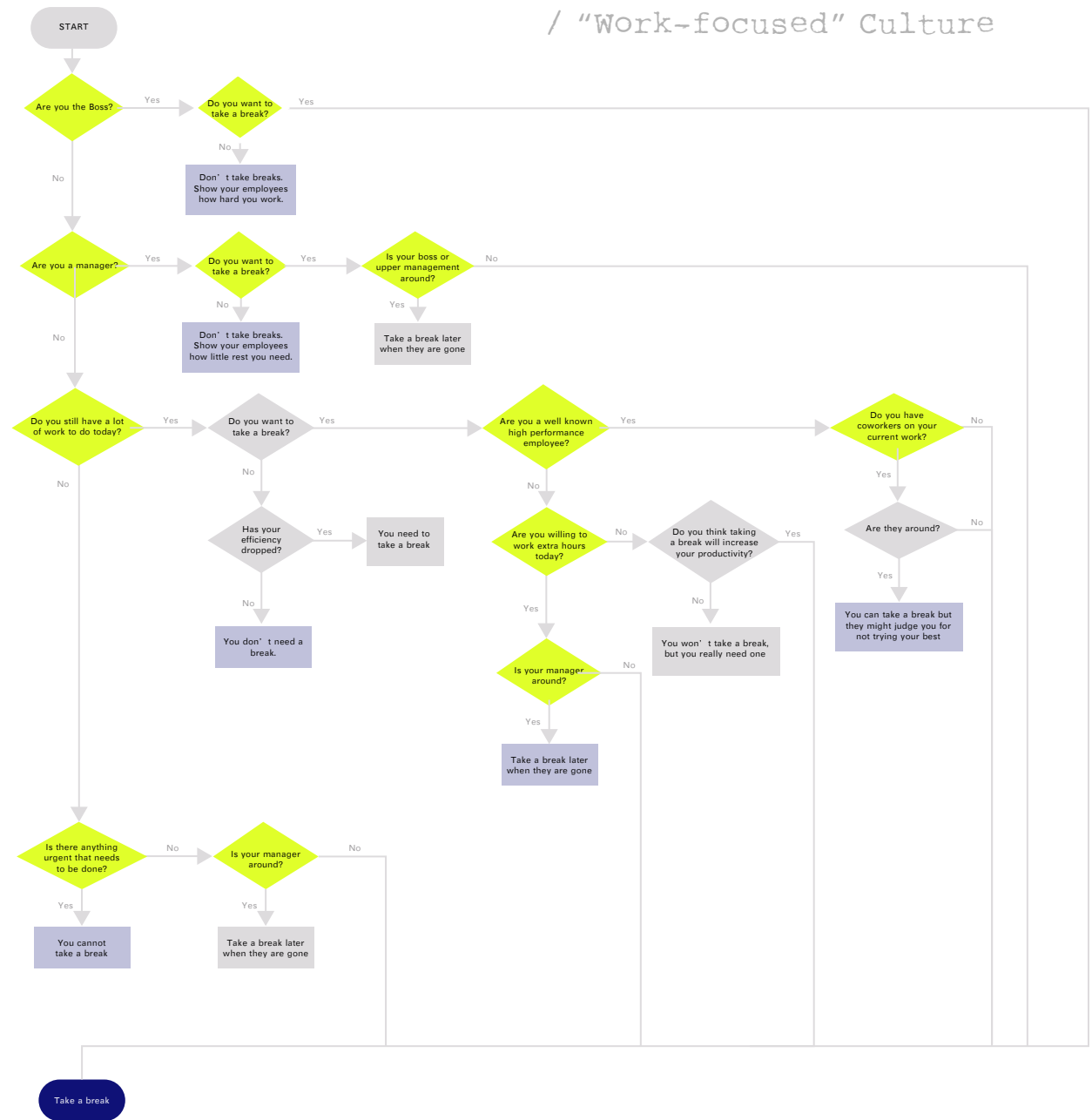
Based on interviews of office workers, a professor specialized in office management and data of online survey, this flow diagram shows realistic situation and factors that influence people's decision on whether they choose to take a break or not at a certain moment during work.

Among all the factors, employees' position and capability play 2 big parts in determining how easy you can take breaks. The higher your position and your performance are, the more advantage and freedom you have in choosing when & how you would like to rest at work.



Professor Kimberly Elsbach shared her study on factors that influence how employees' performance are perceived by management, the most powerful 2 are "Level of high performance" and "work philosophy of upper management".

/ "Work-focused" Culture



Slacker Manifesto

Slacker Manifesto

Manifesto of New Work Ethics

MANIFESTO
OF WORK ETHICS

"Working hard" is NOT A VIRTUE
when your life needs to be sacrificed
It is a virtue

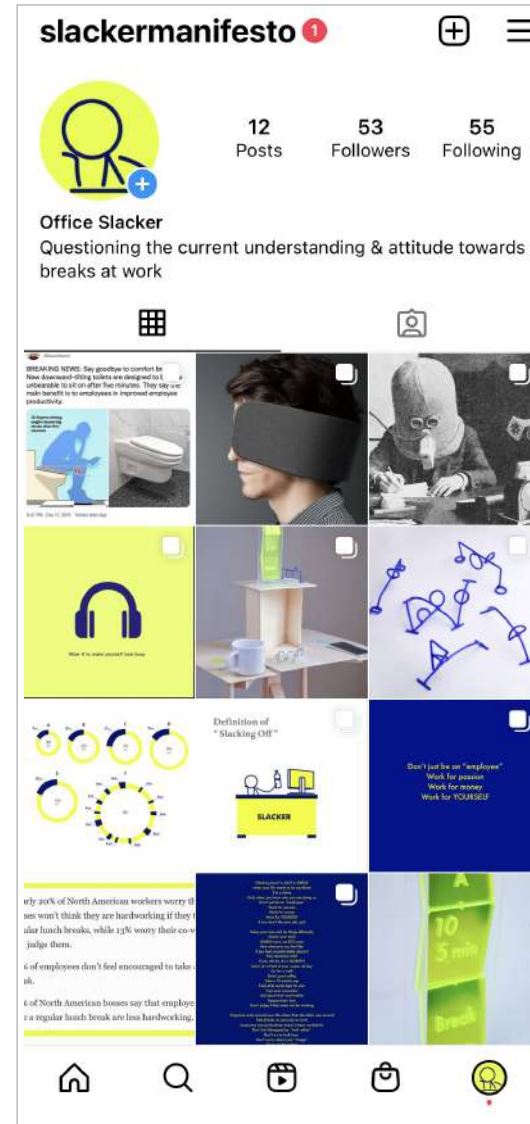
Only when you know why you are doing so
Don't just be an "employee"
Work for passion
Work for money
Work for YOURSELF
If you don't like your job, quit

Value your time and do things efficiently
Master your tools
LEARN more, not DO more
Rest whenever you feel like
If you feel uncomfortable about it
YOU SHOULD NOT
If you still do, do it SECRETLY
Don't sit in front of your screen all day
Go for a walk
Drink good coffee
Take a 10 minute nap
Find what works best for you
Trust your coworkers
Ask about their work habits
Respect their time
Don't judge if they seem not be working

Organize work around your life rather than the other way around
Take breaks as seriously as work
Autonomy and productivity doesn't mean workaholic
Don't be kidnapped by "work ethics"
Don't try to look busy
Don't worry about your "image"
Focus on the output
Don't look down on yourself
Don't doubt if you are good enough
Rest MORE, stress LESS

/ Slacker Manifesto

Slacker Instagram



While employees are trying to find ways to take more breaks, surveillance/controls have been added in some companies to "balance" the time their employees spend on non-work-related things. Extreme as these situations might be, many companies do have "mild" valuation on how much time you spend working VS spend resting at work, be it in a valid form like a camera or clock in/clock out system, or a more unobtrusive one like supervision from manager or boss.

Slacker Manifesto

/ Slacker Manifesto

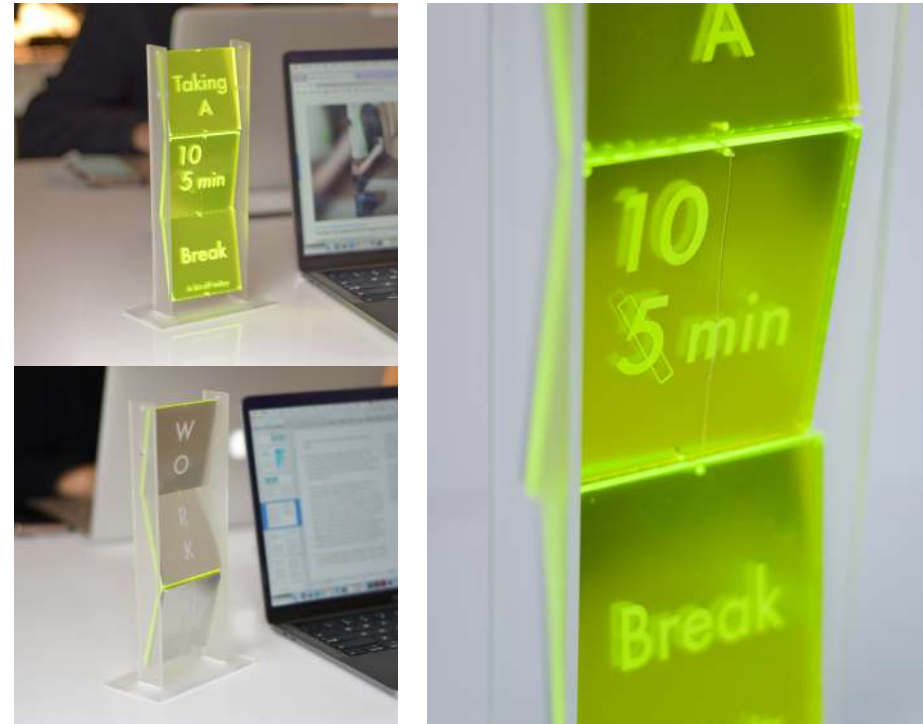
Slacker Toolkit

A Hand Accessory for Slackers



By placing the accessory on the keyboard and pressing a specific point, the accessory turns into a tool that helps one key down the shortcuts more accurately to conceal windows in the quickest way.

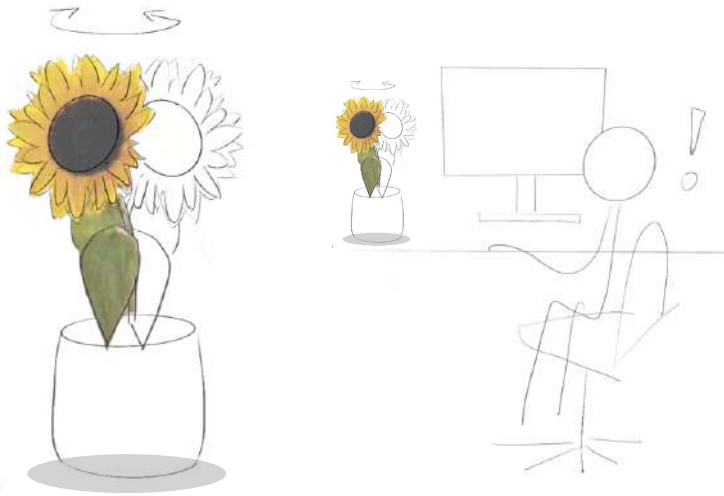
A Flip Board for Slackers



By flipping this board to switch between work/rest mode, but with more personalized information when taking a break, this board formed a self-directed work schedule while allowing others to understand better when seeing someone taking breaks instead of judging them intuitively.

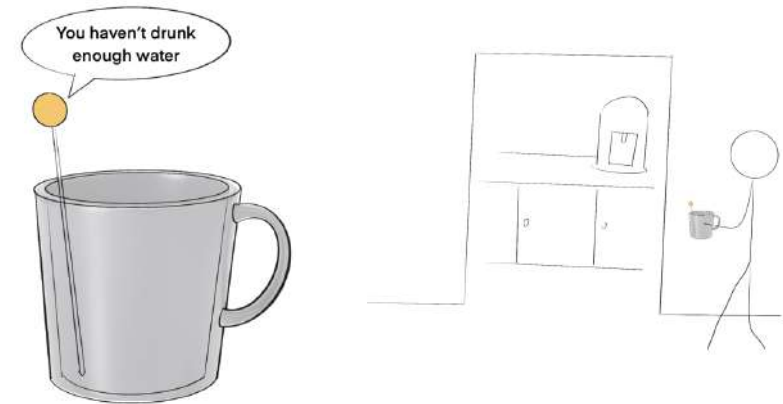
Slacker Toolkit

A Turning Sunflower Pot Plant

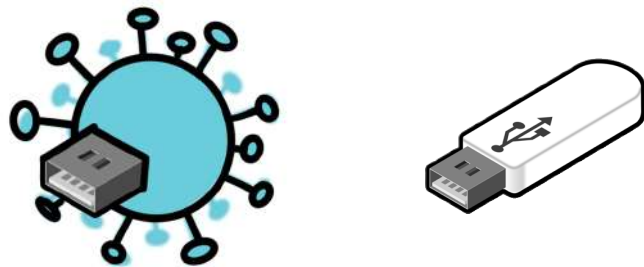


.A sunflower pot plant that can sense people behind and turn to that direction to notice you someone is behind.

A Mug as a "Health Assistant"



A voice mug that can be controlled to notice you to drink more water, so you can have excuses to go to the kitchen more often and take more "kitchen breaks".

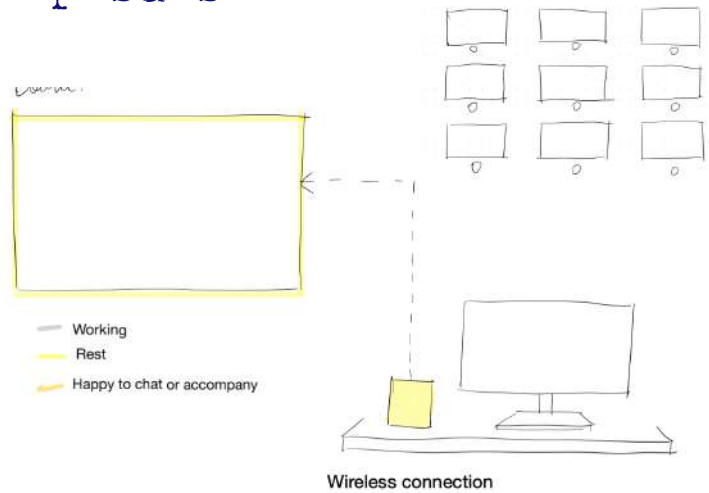


A USB flash drive that carries a virus which makes the computer freeze for 5-10 min every time it is inserted.

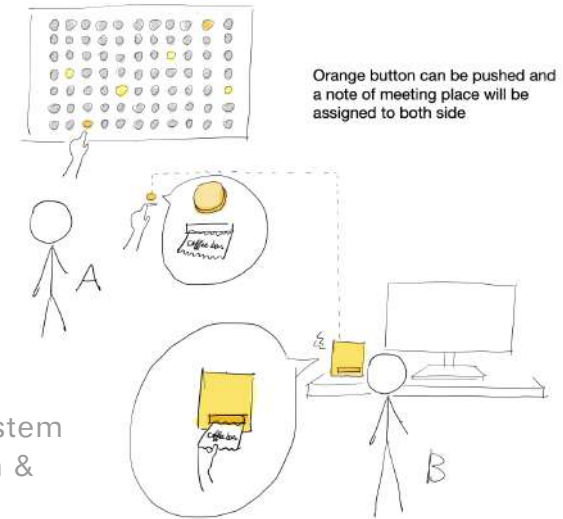
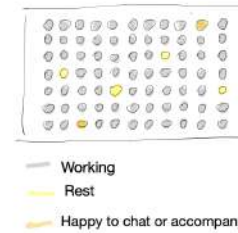
By making a series of half functional/half dramatic, half covert/half attention-grabbing office objects that help employees take breaks more easily, multiple scenarios when employees are not encouraged to take breaks are unpacked.

Workshop Game in the Office

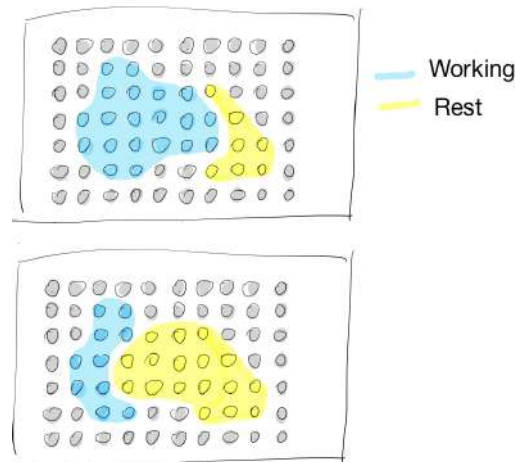
Proposals



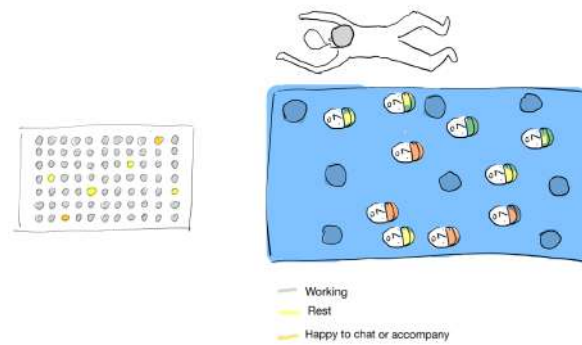
Proposal 1 Interconnected system



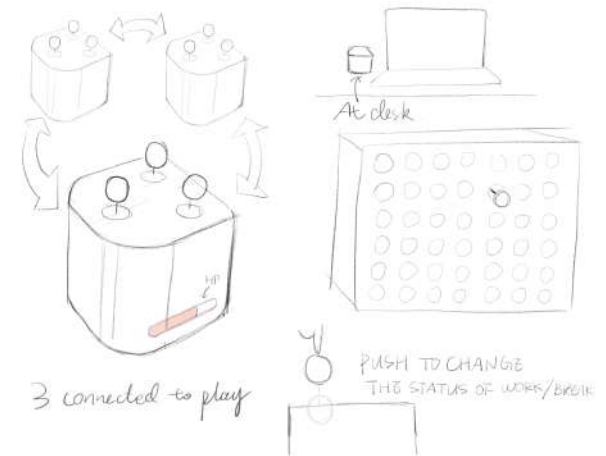
Proposal 2 Interconnected system for communication & socialization



Proposal 3 A competitive game between 2 teams (work & rest)



Proposal 4 A sharing board showing 2 work status in fun ways (work & rest)



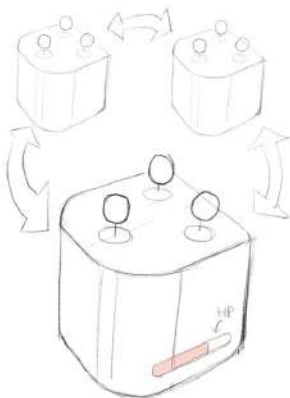
Proposal 5 A game of collaboration to take breaks & gain points.

Concept Development

/ Workshop Game in the Office

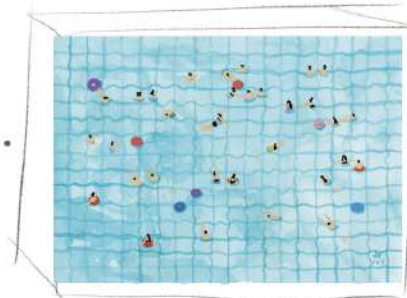
Game Concept 1 A Game to create a new way of taking breaks collaboratively

Individual Device



3 connected with each other with ESP32 (no need of wifi)

Main Board



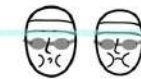
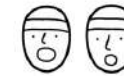
Connected with with ESP32 (no need of wifi)

All connected to

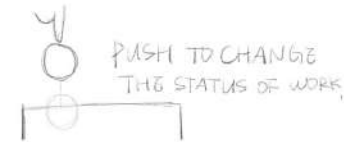
About the Game

Using "Swimming" as the metaphor of "Working"

Taking a breath (Breaks)



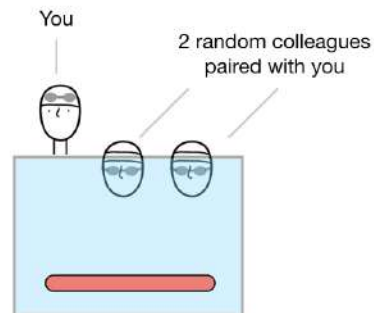
Diving (Work)



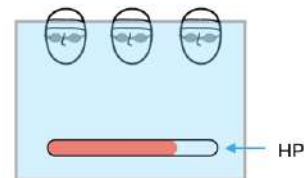
2 statuses in the game

The core rule is to **breath enough as a team** while **hindering other teams from breathing up**, but more details will be added.

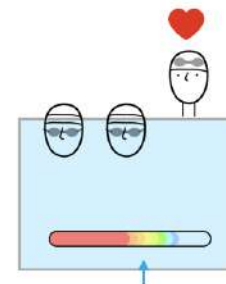
How to Play



3 of you can see each other's change of states



HP drops with time once all three "hold breath"



HP stops dropping and gradually goes up when someone starts "breathing"

Shown on the Main Board

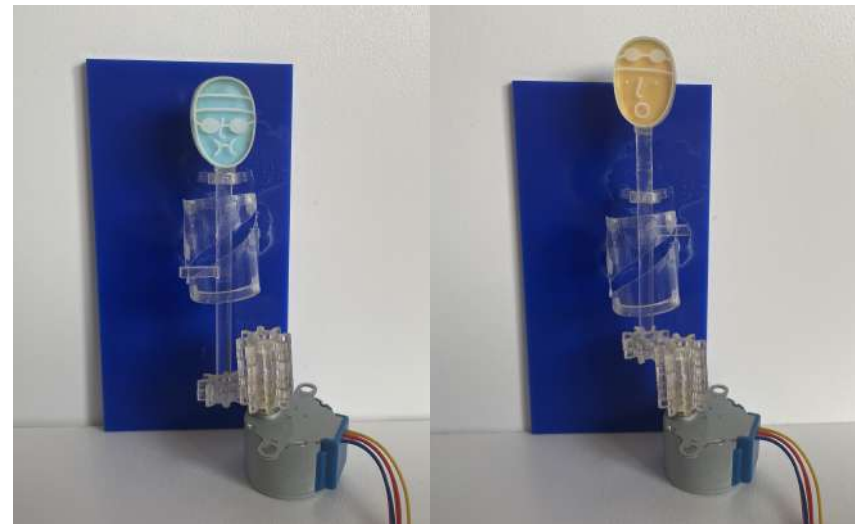


One can only guess which one is from other teams and push it back, as the game is anonymous

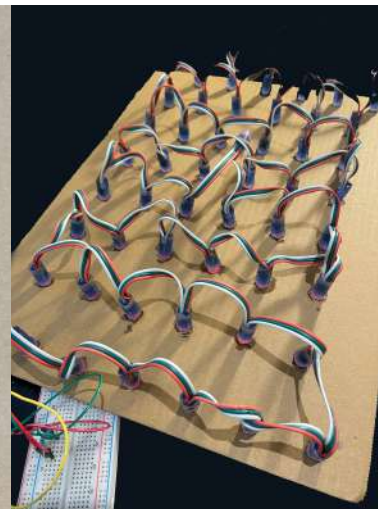
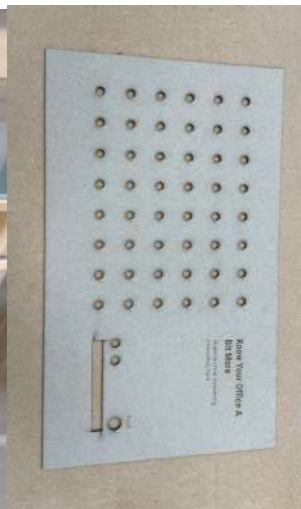
Prototype 1

/ Workshop Game in the Office

Individual Device



Main Board

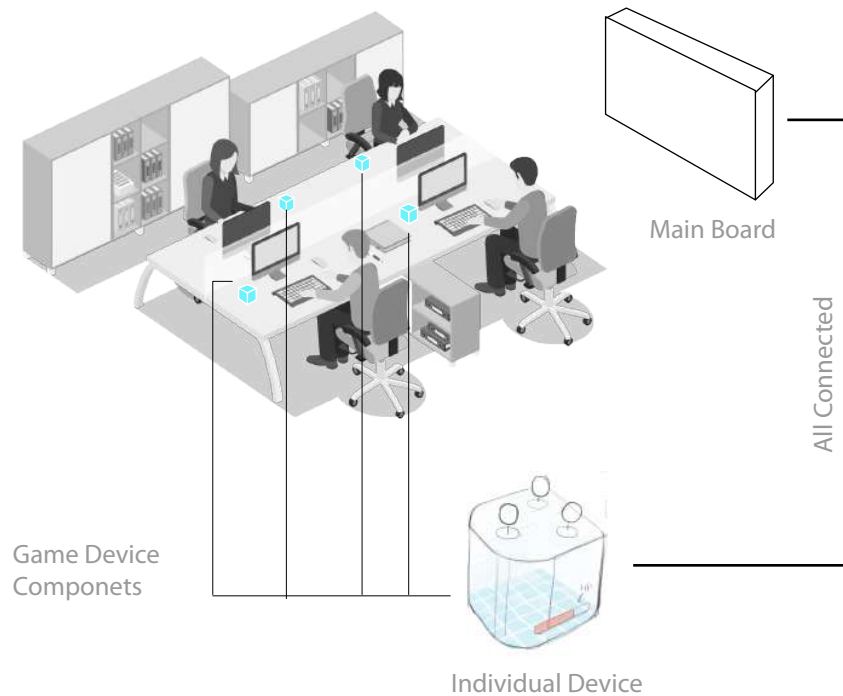


Final Prototype

Game Concept 2 A Game to encourage employees to take breaks

Scenario

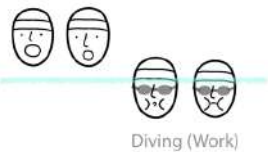
A game that could be played in the exhibition, but in "an office setting"



Visual Concept

Using "Swimming" as the metaphor of "Working"

Taking a breath (Breaks)



2 statuses in the game

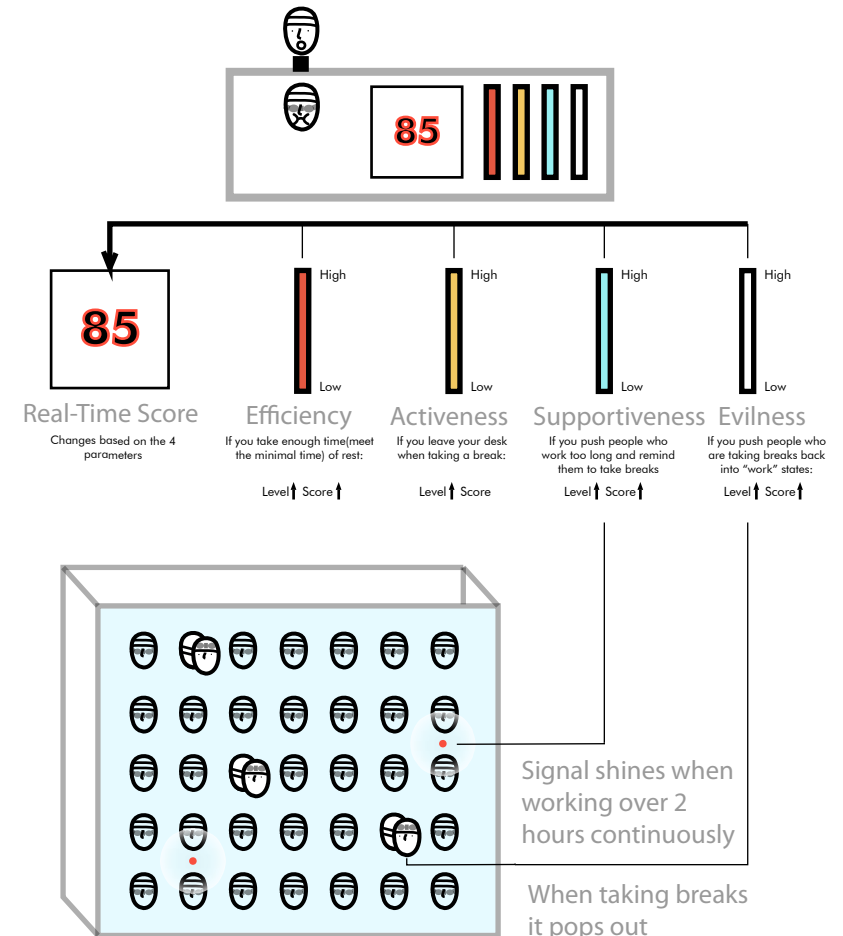


"Taking a break is like taking a breath when you swim, it is as important as swimming itself."

Rules of the Game

Individual Device:

1. One pushes to change their own "breathe" & "Dive" modes;
2. 4 bars show 4 different parameter levels (imitating parameters used to measure employees' work performance)

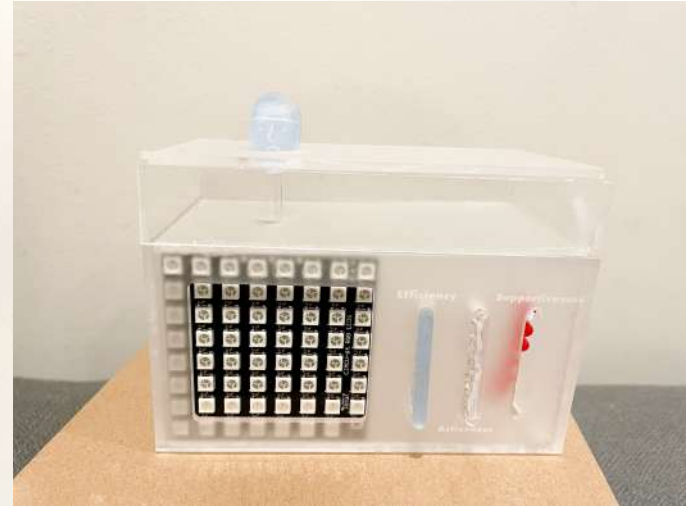
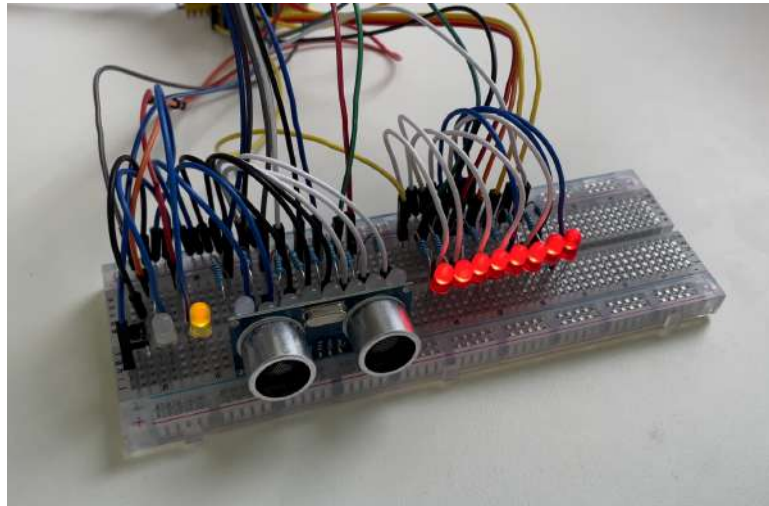


(The 4 parameters are quite straight forward and not very "objective", also the criteria doesn't fully represent the designer's view. But it is intended to do so to provide the space for discussion.)

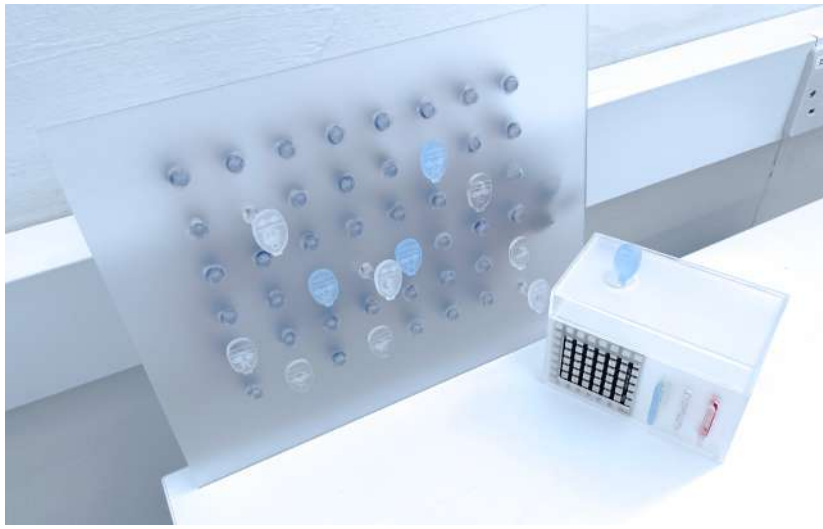
Prototype 2

/ Workshop Game in the Office

Individual Device



Individual Device

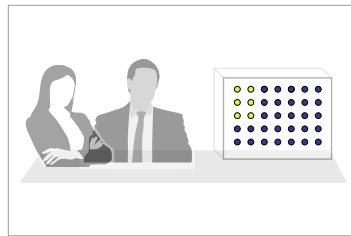
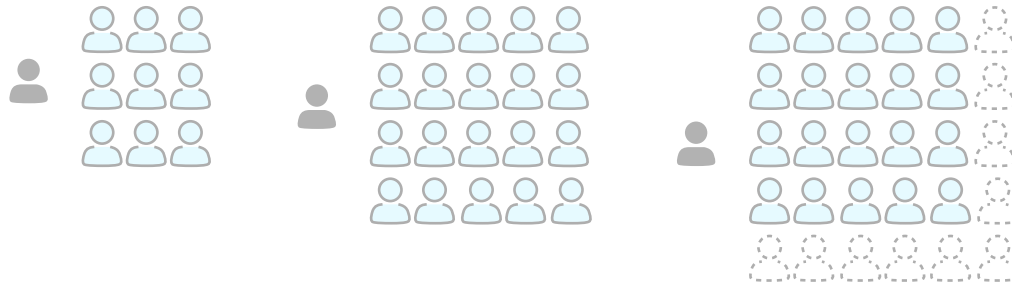


Final Concept

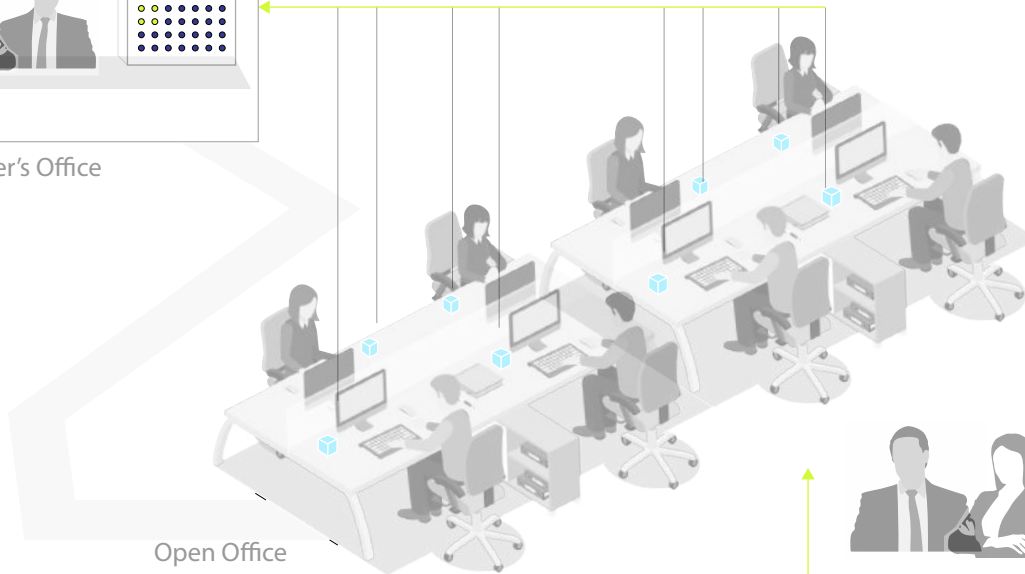
A workshop "minesweeper" game in the office to create communications between employees & employers on opinions about the current ways of taking breaks at work

Scenario

A workshop game for 10-20 people, or even more to play in the office.



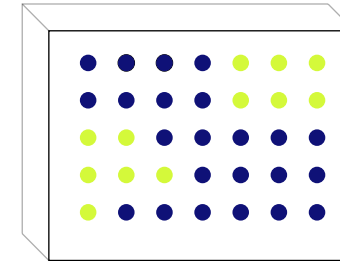
Employer's Office



Open Office

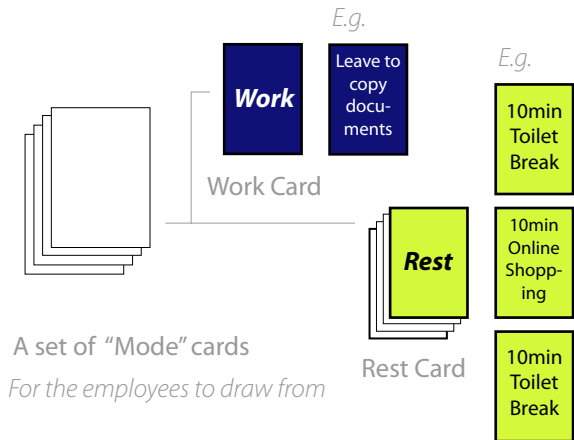


Game Components



A "Minesweeper" Board

For the employer to use



A set of "Mode" cards

For the employees to draw from



Message boards

For the employees to put/not put on the desk

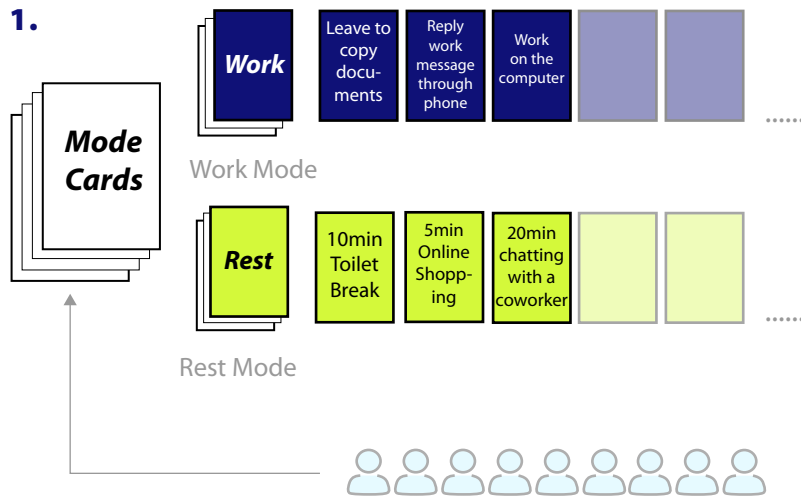


Mode switches

For the employees to send work/rest state to the "Minesweeper" board

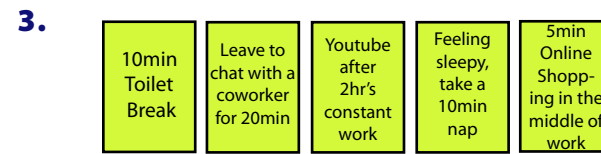
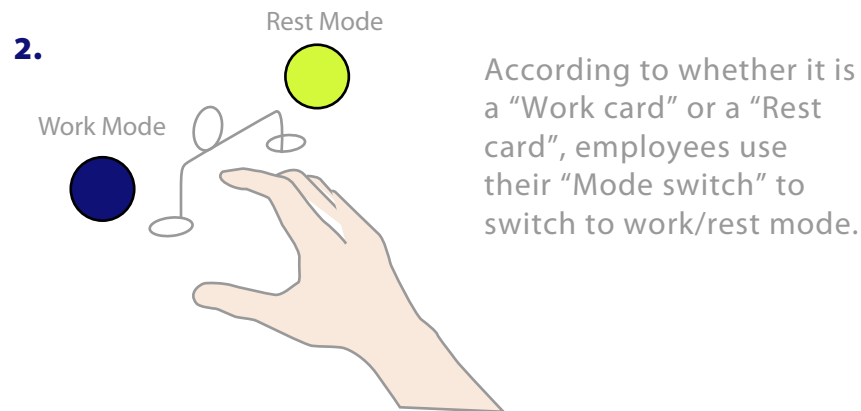
Rules of the Game

If played by 10 people (9 employees & 1 employer) :



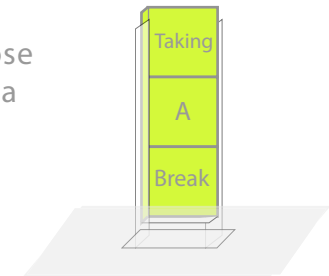
Each employee draws a card from the "Mode Cards"

According to whether it is a "Work card" or a "Rest card", employees use "Mode switch" to switch to work/rest mode.

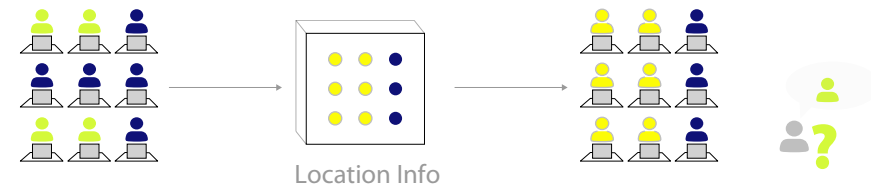


If it is a "rest card", they also need to choose whether the contents is a "valid break" or a "slacking off" behaviour in their view.

If it is a valid break, they put the message board on their desk.



4. Employees need to follow the instructions on the card. Once they are ready, the employer can start "minesweeping".

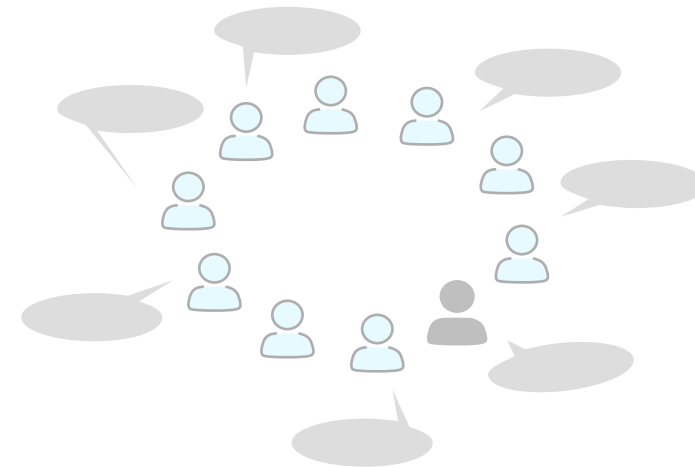
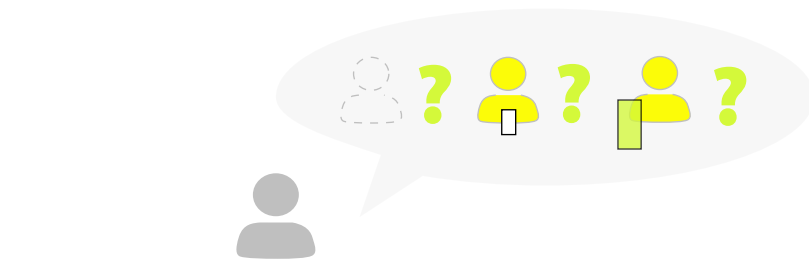


Using a similar mechanism of "Minesweeper", according to how "rest mode" employees are located, a wider notice area will be shown on the "minesweeper board", and the boss can head toward that direction to find people who are slacking off.

Rules of the Game

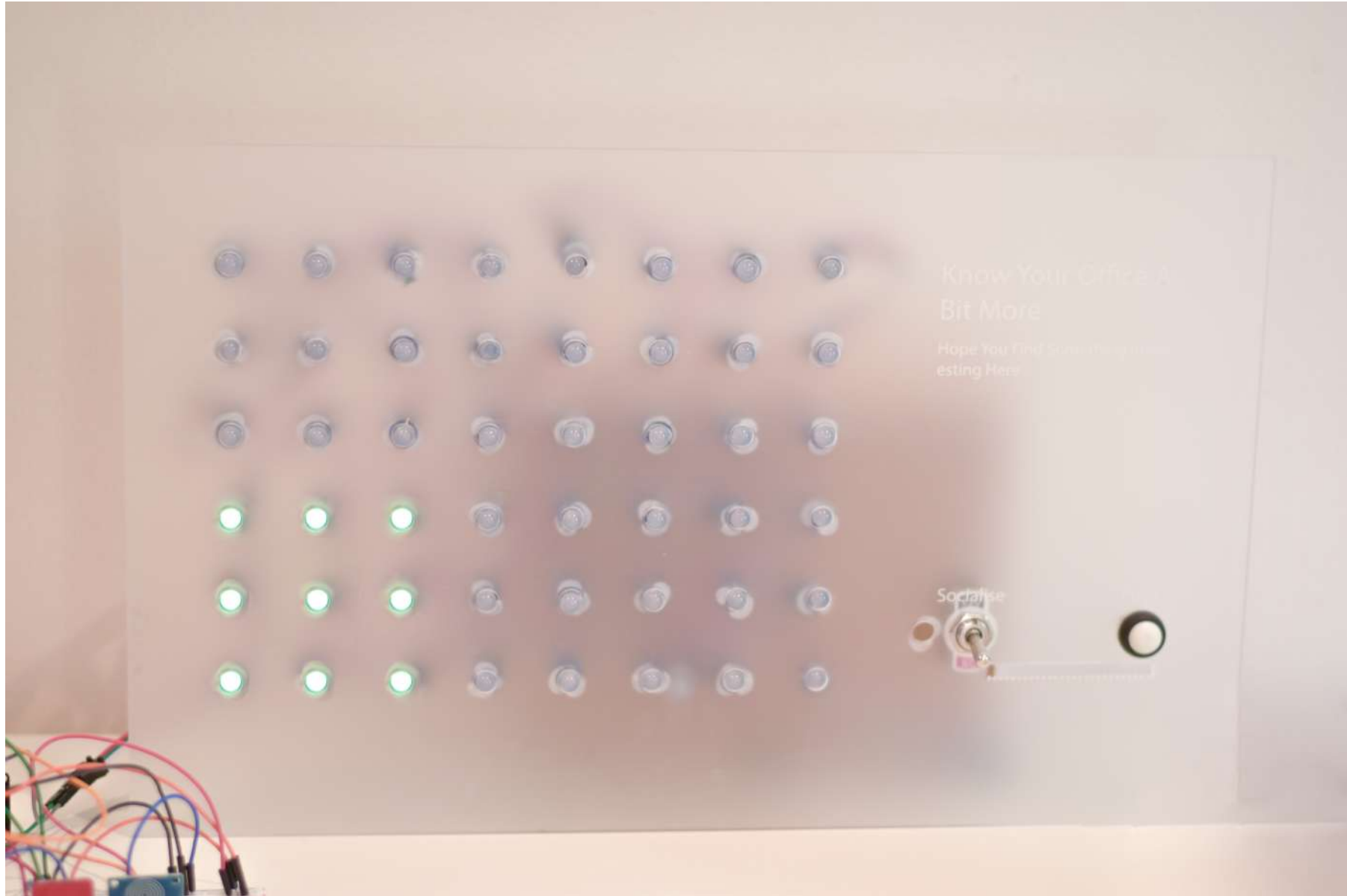
/ Workshop Game in the Office

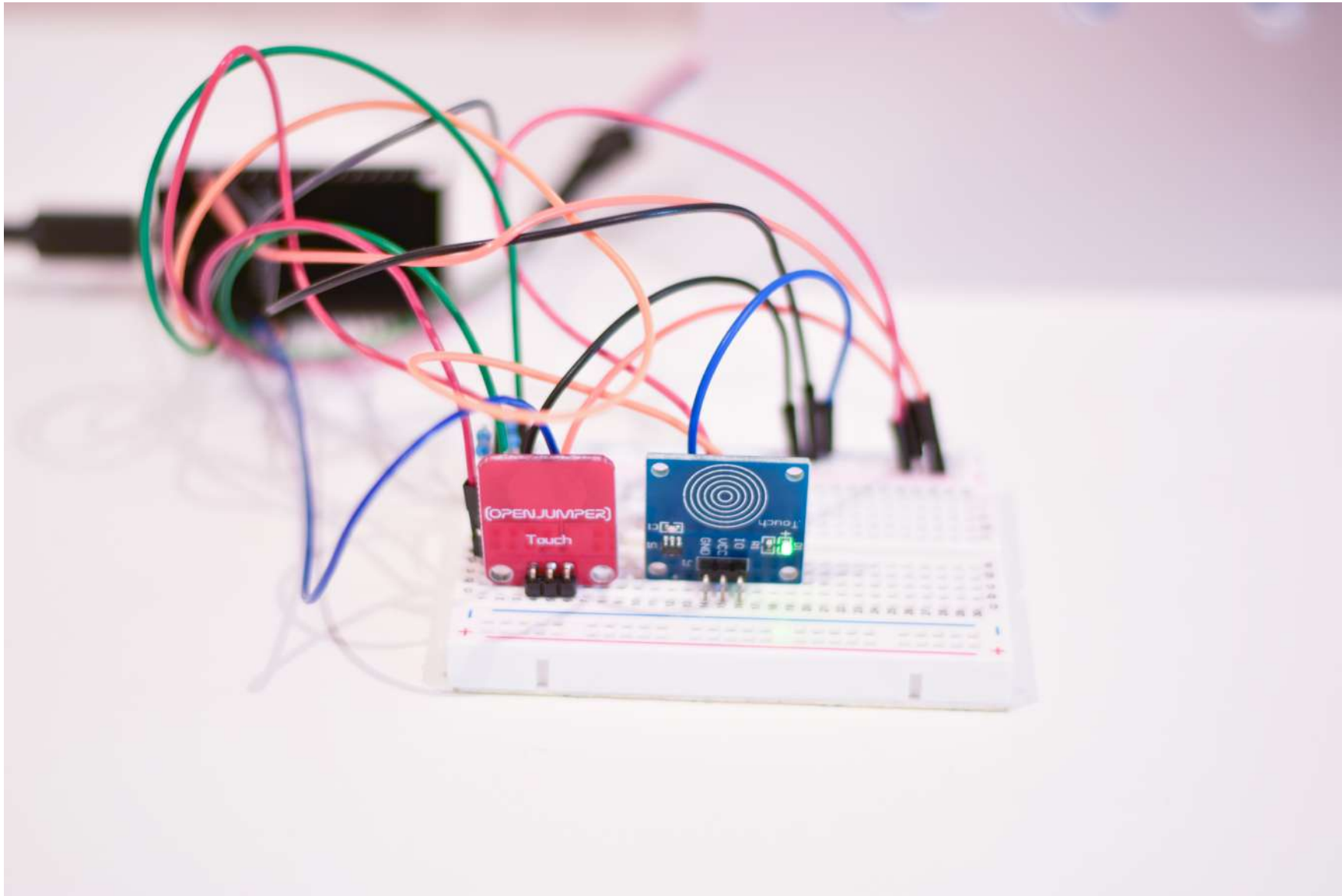
5. 
6. After each turn ends, everyone gather together and show all the cards, and have a short discussion on the game and what's their opinion on these contents, what's their definition of "slacking off" versus "a valid break".




The employer has 3 chances to identify a "slacker" by observing, every time after they choose 1 suspicious employee, the person opens up their card to show the contents to the employer. If the employer think it is a "slacking off" behaviour, this turn ends. If they used up 3 chances but still didn't find a "slacker", this turn ends as well.

There are various instructions in the cards to let employees' behaviours become more misleading, e.g. they may need leave to leave their seat or use their phone, but that could be either for work or for rest.






Product Prototypes




RESTING

You are **browsing web news.**
(10 min total)




RESTING

You are **leaving your seat** to have a toilet break. (15 min total)




RESTING

You had a cold and are **taking a nap** on your desk. (20 min total)



RESTING

You are **shopping online** after 2 hours of constant work. (20 min total)




RESTING

You are **leaving your seat** to drink coffee & chat with colleagues. (20 min total)



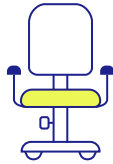
WORKING

You are **using your phone** to confirm a project progress with your client



WORKING

You are **making a slides** your boss needs for tomorrow's meeting



WORKING

You are **leaving your seat** to communicate with another department

SLACKER MANIFESTO

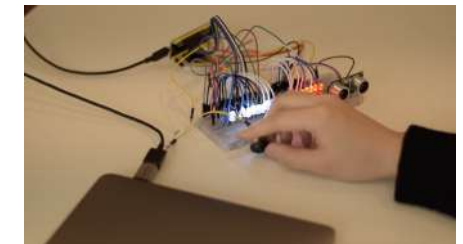
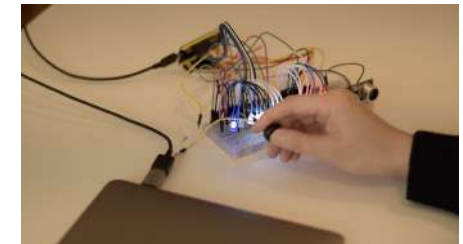
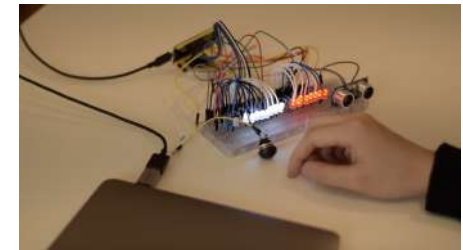


“Mode Cards” Design

Test & Validation

/ Validation

I joined a play test team and have game designers in areas of critical games and strategic board games played my prototypes and heard my complete concept. They think it is a good point to offer the chance to meet & chat with completely unpredictable people and promote socialising atmosphere. But the rule might be a bit difficult for beginners.





Slacker Manifesto

