

Transforming Global Guidance: How We Re-Engineered Engagement for Millie Group

My Role: UX Researcher & Designer | **Duration:** 3 Months | **Project Status:** Completed

1. The Challenge: A Disconnect Across Time Zones

Millie Group has built a reputation as a premier provider of SAT preparation, university counseling, and career events. However, they hit a critical roadblock: **student participation was dropping drastically.**

Millie Group relied almost entirely on email campaigns to promote their offerings. While their team pushed out valuable content, these messages were swallowed by cluttered student inboxes. This created an frustrating operational loop. International school counselors were left stranded, spending hours trying to manually coordinate event links, while students missed life-changing career workshops simply because they didn't open an email.

Our team was brought in to uncover the root causes of this communication breakdown and build a digital ecosystem that could bridge the gap between global counselors and their students.

2. Discovery Phase: Uncovering Global Realities

We knew that to solve a global problem, we couldn't rely on local assumptions. We launched an intensive, round-the-clock research phase, deliberately structuring our outreach to capture a truly international perspective.

- **Coordinating Across Hemispheres:** Over the course of a single week, we managed complex schedules to conduct deep-dive user interviews with students and international school counselors located across multiple time zones worldwide.
- **The Counselor's Dilemma:** Counselors told us they felt overwhelmed. They were juggling highly mismatched regional academic calendars, tracking diverse student interests, and struggling to find relevant workshops. Without a self-service tool, they had to wait days for email replies from mentors, making event coordination an arduous, time-consuming chore.
- **The Student Reality Check:** When we spoke to students, the feedback was eye-opening. They openly admitted that email is a dead channel for extracurricular engagement. They viewed it strictly for formal school administration. Because they lacked a central hub, they remained completely unaware of Millie Group's career-related workshops.

To synthesize these global insights, we built an affinity map to group user frustrations, which naturally led to the creation of our target persona and user journey map.

User Persona: Camille Counselor

To keep our design decisions grounded in real user empathy, we modeled our target user: Camille, a 45-year-old dedicated school counselor at Wogharts International School in London, UK. Camille is a premium partner of Millie Group's program, but she is drowning in disconnected tools like ManageBac, Zoom, Teams, and Gmail. She desperately needs a faster way to connect her students to university guidance resources without the administrative bloat.

Mapping the Friction

We mapped Camille's journey as she attempted to schedule a custom AI career workshop for her students.

- In the **Decide Phase**, she felt anxious and blind, completely unaware of the full spectrum of available Millie Group events.
- In the **Schedule Phase**, her frustration peaked as she entered endless back-and-forth email chains to lock down mentor availability.
- In the **Communicate Phase**, she felt deeply annoyed by the manual labor required to download flyers, copy links, and push them to students, all while worrying that her efforts would end up ignored in a spam folder.

3. Defining the Mission

Armed with a clear map of our users' emotional lows, we crystallized our objective into a core problem statement:

Problem Statement: Students and counselors at Millie Group lack an effective, centralized way to communicate, leading to missed opportunities and unread emails. Without a dedicated dashboard to track schedules, discover events, and manage opportunities, users struggle to stay connected, which reduces engagement and slows down the counseling process.

How Might We create a unified dashboard that streamlines communication, simplifies scheduling, and increases student responsiveness?

4. The Design Evolution: Learning from Failure

With our problem statement as our North Star, we moved into the ideation phase, which quickly became the most rigorous part of our project.

The Critique & The Pivot

We kicked off the design process with a fast-paced Design Studio session to sketch out rapid UI layouts. However, our initial concepts failed their first internal review. Our early sketches relied on multi-layered navigation tabs and separate communication centers. When we evaluated these layouts against Camille's workflow, we realized they were far too complex—the interface was confusing and difficult for a busy counselor to interpret at a glance.

Instead of pushing forward with a flawed concept, we chose to pivot. We stripped away the administrative clutter and completely re-engineered the layout. We shifted the entire focus to a flat, highly intuitive dashboard layout built around two core pillars: immediate scheduling visibility and direct action.

From Wireframes to High-Fidelity Prototype

After refining our sketches, we built structural grayscale wireframes to lock down the new information architecture. From there, we scaled up the fidelity, developing a polished, end-to-end interactive high-fidelity prototype.

We designed a clean, cohesive dashboard system that serves as a single source of truth:

- **For Counselors:** The interface gives them a unified command center. They can view upcoming career opportunities, instantly review open slots on a connected school calendar, and schedule custom workshops without sending a single email.
- **For Students:** We designed a direct integration workflow that allows counselors to push event notifications straight to platforms students actually use (like ManageBac and Google Classroom), completely bypassing the email bottleneck.

5. Impact & Reflections

By dedicating ourselves to a rigorous research cycle and remaining willing to tear down our initial sketches when they didn't meet user standards, we delivered a comprehensive UX solution. The final high-fidelity dashboard completely reimagines the counseling experience for Millie Group. We transformed an arduous, multi-day administrative nightmare into an efficient, self-service platform—proving that user-centric design can bridge the gap between global communities.