
Organizer: To-Do+Cal+Grocery Lists+Alerts User Experience

Expert review #1

By Megan Gerace of Florida State University, LIS4930
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INTRODUCTION

This report represents my expert review of the user experience for the Organizer: To-Do+Cal+Grocery Lists+Alerts iPhone app; build version 2.3.

I based my review off of the traditional usability review methodologies depicted in Steve Krug's *Rocket Surgery Made Easy* and the example provided by the instructor of LIS4930, Farhood Basiri. After the initial download, I spent a great deal of time using and inspecting the application, all the while taking notes and screenshots of the issues encountered. I used the application sporadically over the next couple days, and evening integrating the tool into everyday life as the user would try to do for keeping track of important dates, making grocery lists and even setting various alerts. This was all in hopes of seeing how the typical user would view the application, along with any errors in the functionality of the various tools included in the application.

Usage periods relevant to this review:

- January 31, 2012- evening in Tallahassee, FL: calm dorm setting
- February 1, 2012- morning in Tallahassee, FL: busy dining hall
- February 2, 2012- night in Tallahassee, FL: shopping center
- February 4, 2012- afternoon in Tallahassee, FL: busy sporting event
- February 5, 2012- morning in Tallahassee, FL: calm library

I then organized my notes and findings into the following sections:

The Out-of- box experience (OOBE) focuses on the first contact with the app. The OOBE is key to retaining users and getting a chance to convert them to regular users. Without a good OOBE the application will have a lot of one-time users, and the success as a result will be minimal.

Next, the actual functionality and implementation of the key features of the application will be reviewed. It is impertinent that these features are at the highest standard, because without proper functionality users will become distraught and search for other applications that have the same tools as your own.

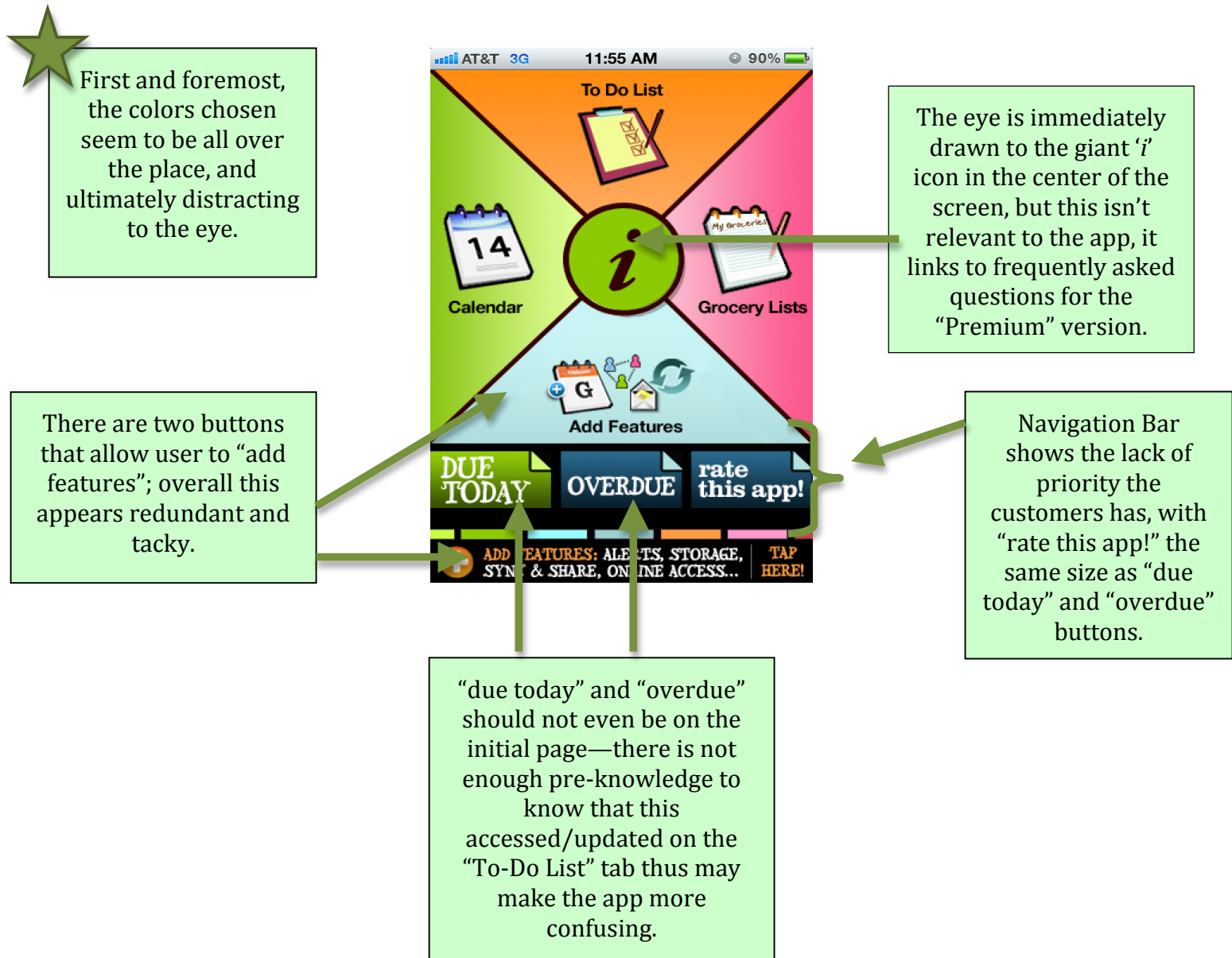
Then followed by the crippling affects the push for the premium package may have on the possibilities that first time users will continue to use this application.

Each section presents one or two major issues and possible solutions and lists several other points that need to be considered or worked on.

1. OUT-OF-THE-BOX EXPERIENCE

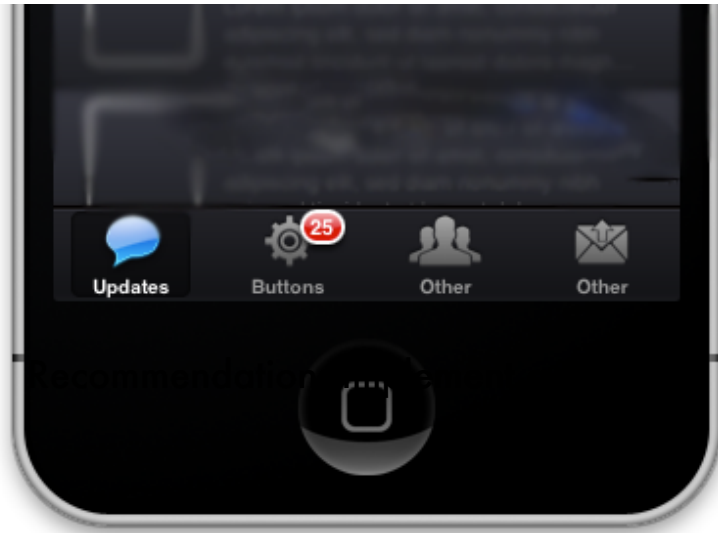
Top issue: First Viewing Screen is frustrating, confusing and unorganized.

The user experience at first launch is key for retaining users— a positive first impression is crucial. The current application utilizes an unconventional colorful graphic design for introducing the tools to users, which would seem logical to set your application apart from other ‘organizer’ apps, but this can become confusing to users if not done right.



Recommendation: Implement a tab bar.

The more efficient method is to implement a tab bar ([as recommended by iOS HIG](#)) allowing users to jump immediately from any page to the main page of a corresponding tab.



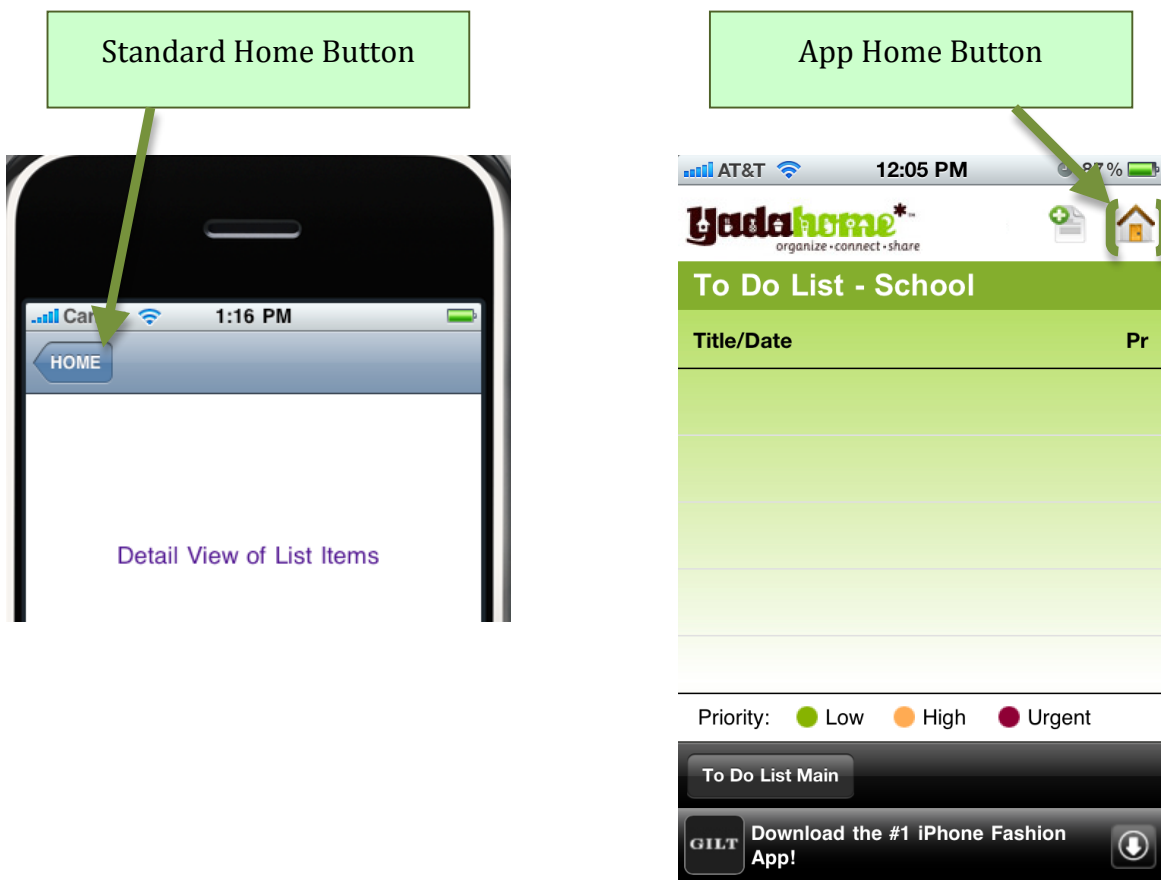
From Apple's iOS HIG: "A tab bar is well-suited for use in the main app view because it's a good way to flatten your information hierarchy and provide access to several peer information categories or modes at one time."

Most logical suggestion for the tab bar would be to include the four main features listed in the description of the application, one for each "To-Do Lists", "Calendar", "Grocery Lists" and "Alerts". And if absolutely necessary a fifth tab can be added where the additional information, such as "Frequently Asked Questions", "Adding of Features", etc., can be housed.

Also, it may be the interest of the user to implement an actual function of the first viewing of the application for practicality reasons.

Second Issue: Navigation is inconsistent, redundant and insufficient, causing it to be confusing at times.

Navigation throughout the application does not follow the traditional navigation methods [as recommended by iOS HIG](#), and as it is brought up numerous times through out Apple's HIG you should "think twice before you redesign a standard control". Thus bring to the issue of navigation in this application. The 'home' icon has been replaced with an actual graphic of a house, rather than the signature text button utilized in numerous applications. Also the location has been changed from the standard top left position, this icon is now housed in the top right corner of the screen.



Recommendation #1: Utilize the standard method, and placement of the 'home' button.

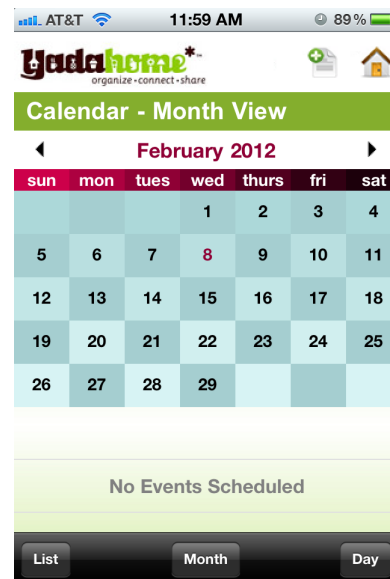
Second Issue: Navigation is inconsistent, redundant and insufficient, causing it to be confusing at times. (Con't)

As you navigate through the pages and tabs of this application, one can see that there is some inconsistency in terms of how one would travel from page to page. Consistency is important in order to ensure the user that the application is easy to use, as well as successful in the job of keeping oneself organized.

Some Variations between navigation is as follows:

From the Calendar Page:

If you are trying to access any other page you first have to click the home button on the top right corner and then access any other feature from the home page.



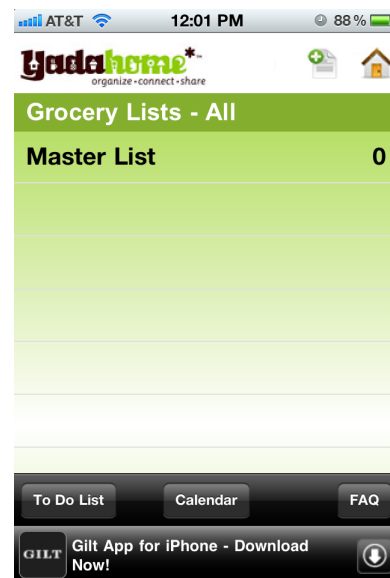
Whereas:

From the Grocery Lists Page:

If you were trying to access any other page you could again click on the home button to access the other features

OR

you could go to the bottom navigation bar and chose from the other features there.



Second Issue: Navigation is inconsistent, redundant and insufficient, causing it to be confusing at times. (Con't)

Whereas:

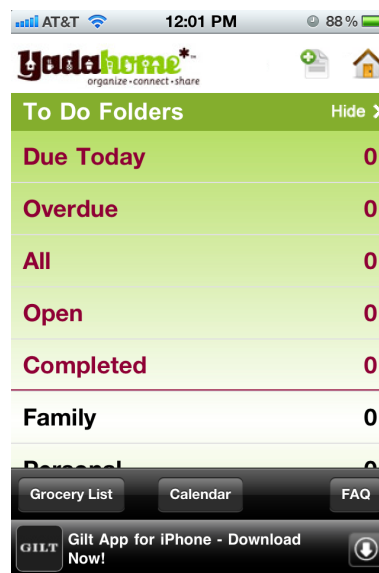
From the To-Do List Page:

(Similar to Grocery List Page)

If you were trying to access any other page you could again click on the home button to access the other features

OR

you could go to the bottom navigation bar and chose from the other features there.



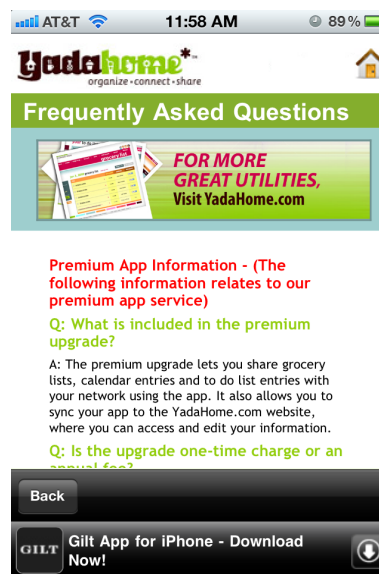
Whereas:

From the Frequently Asked Questions Page:

If you were trying to access any other page you could again click on the home button to access the other features

OR

you could go to the bottom navigation bar and chose the back button which will also take you to the home page, where you could access the other features there.



Recommendation #2: Design and Implement a navigation pathway that is consistent and will be utilized on all pages.

2. Functionality of Key Features

Top issue: Calendar

Right off the bat users view the calendar as a dilemma. Users want to be able to utilize this application to its fullest capabilities, but at the same time feel that without some sort of linkage to the native calendar of the iPhone, iCal, it just serves as a redundant feature. Also the fact that it can link to a Google calendar puzzles many users—forcing them to have to learn a whole new system in order to allow for them to fully exploit the app.

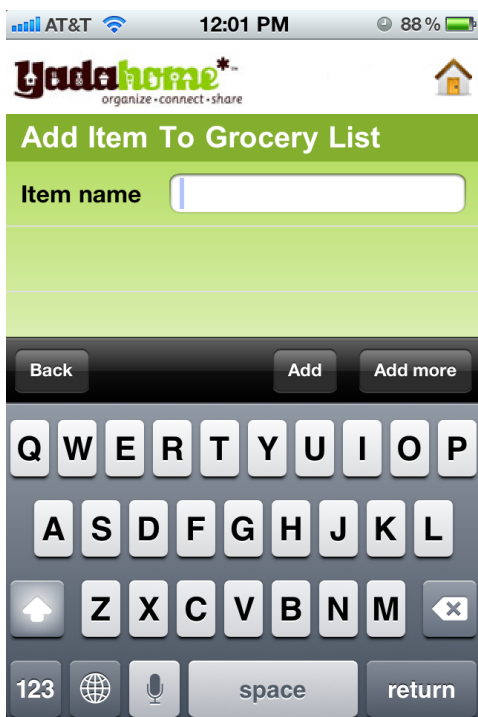
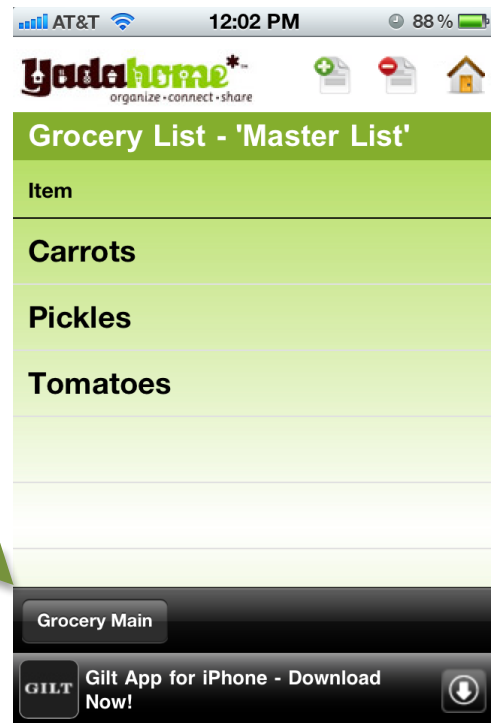


Recommendation: Link the iPhone's native calendar application with the Organizer application for greater efficiency.

Another Functionality Issue: Grocery Lists

This feature as a whole has a confusing layout, upon opening the tab for 'Grocery Lists' the user encounters the last list edited, and not the main page that houses all the lists. So the user must go back to the main list page and choose the appropriate list that they were originally looking for.

Recommendation: Format so that it opens to main grocery page at first for greater efficiency.

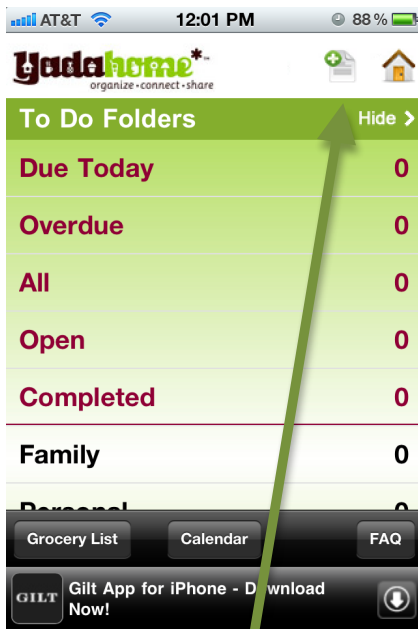


Also another 'downfall' to this application, may be the lack of specifics that can be entailed while making a grocery list.

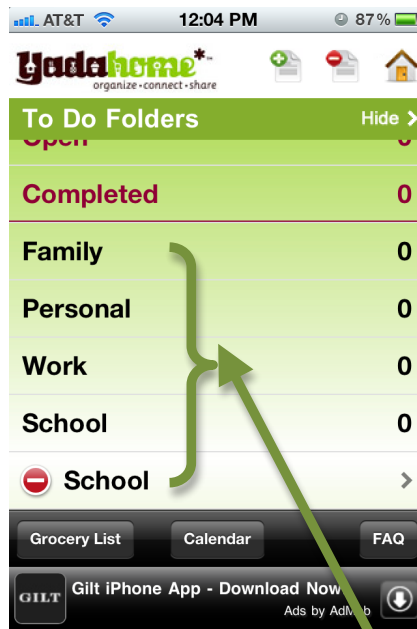
Recommendation: Add the ability to categorize the items in a list based on the store sections (produce, dairy, etc.).

Another Functionality Issue: To-Do Lists

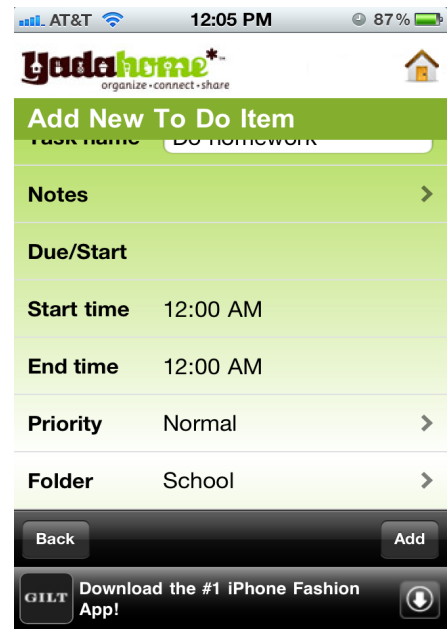
These feature house one of the four main components to the application, so this should be as easy to use as possible. However due to the nature of the 'To-Do List' Page it is quick



From the first screen you would think that the button next to the home button would allow you to add a new To-Do, but that adds a folder to the preexisting list, instead.



To add a 'To-Do', a user must go into a folder, and then the information regarding the new task, allowing them to be group accordingly.

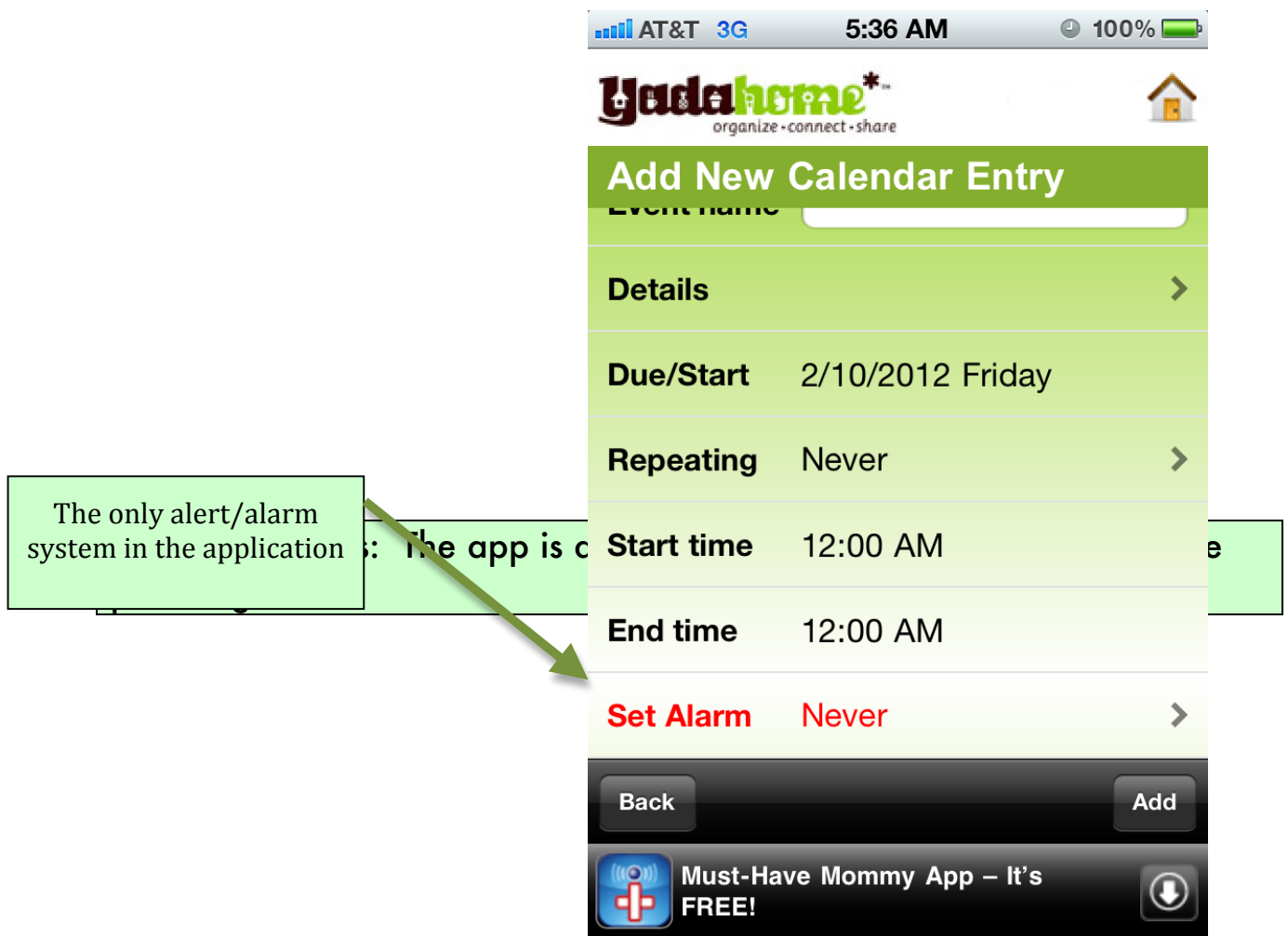


Also, nowhere in this feature is the ability to put an alert or a reminder to the task.

Recommendation: Create a button that allows 'To-Do's' to be added from the main page, and implement a system where users can add alerts/reminders to various tasks.

Another Functionality Issue: Alerts

Alerts is listed as one of the main functions of this application, however after careful examination it has come to my attention that the only feature that you can truly make use of the alert system is in the calendar section of the application. This may make the user feel cheated and less apt to be a reoccurring user of the application



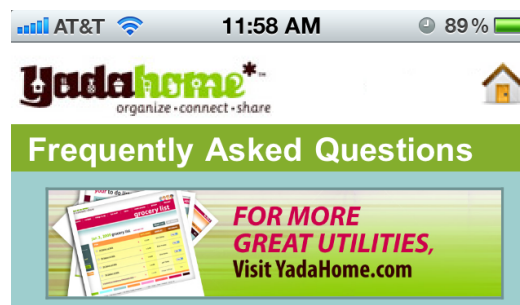
Recommendation: Either reduce the emphasis of the alert system or incorporate it into the other key features as well.

3. Excessive Pushing of the Premium Package

Top issue: Frequently Asked Questions

The user may be lead to believe that they can search for helpful tips and hints to make the user experience of this application more fluent, however the user may feel duped or even tricked at the point when they realize that this page in fact is not about this application, but its \$4.99 counterpart the “Premium App”.

This is completely irrelevant to the user of this application



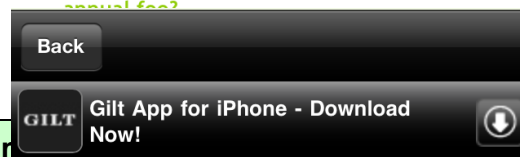
If the FAQs are that important it should be questions about this particular application

Premium App Information - (The following information relates to our premium app service)

Q: What is included in the premium upgrade?

A: The premium upgrade lets you share grocery lists, calendar entries and to do list entries with your network using the app. It also allows you to sync your app to the YadaHome.com website, where you can access and edit your information.

Q: Is the upgrade one-time charge or an annual fee?



Recommendation: Implement a section of questions and tips pertaining to the actual app, but you can still include the 'premium app information'.

Second Issue: Multiple Buttons Pushing for the “Adding of Features”

Redundancy and excessive advertisement does not only annoy the user of the application and diminish the amount of repeat users, it can also play a major role in whether or not the application looks cluttered or not.



★ Three instances of advertisements for the premium package of this application may deter users from using this application more than once.

Recommendation: Implement a 'splash page' at the initial startup in order to eliminate all the cluttering affects of in-app advertisements

Closing thoughts: Ultimately this application revolves around the key premise of being organized, where the application itself is unorganized. With the recommended restructuring and added features I believe this application can be a success.