

Usability Test Synthesis Report

New User Onboarding Flow · Two Hypothetical Participant Sessions

Version 2.0 · Tim St Clair, Senior UX Lead · July 2026

Method: AI-simulated moderated think-aloud · Segment A + Segment B · Prototype: Figma Make July 2026

01 Overview

Two hypothetical usability sessions were run against the FitFuel new user onboarding prototype (Figma Make, July 2026, 12 screens) using the FitFuel Usability Test Plan v4.0 as the governing framework. Sessions were AI-simulated using Claude. Participant profiles are novel constructions grounded in the FitFuel research corpus. Findings are directional — not validated conclusions.

Scope: Segment A (Returning Routine Builder) and Segment B (Time-Constrained Professional) only. Edge-case participant excluded.

Prototype note: Figma blocks automated access. Prototype behavior was inferred from 12 uploaded screen images and the design brief.

Status: Treat all findings as informed hypotheses until confirmed through live moderated testing with real participants.

02 Executive Summary

The onboarding prototype has a sound structure and a largely shame-free tone. The six-step profile flow is coherent, and the plan delivery screen communicates clinical credibility clearly. These are directionally correct design decisions.

The central risk is a gap between the personalization promise and the plan output. The flow collects data, but neither participant could trace plan elements back to their inputs. If users cannot see themselves in the plan, the AI intelligence claim reads as a marketing statement — not a functional feature.

Three additional failure patterns emerged consistently: account creation before any value demonstration creates an adoption barrier; the fitness background taxonomy forces lapsed athletes into ill-fitting categories; and the schedule screen reliably produces aspirational rather than realistic input regardless of the framing.

Headline: The onboarding collects data but does not yet demonstrate that it uses it.

Top priority: Make the plan output visibly reference specific participant inputs.

Sequencing risk: Account creation before value demonstration is a documented adoption barrier — evaluate deferring it.

03 Participant Profiles

Participant 01 — Marcus | Segment A · Returning Routine Builder

Age / Gender	38 / Male
Occupation	Regional sales manager — travel-heavy (~10 days/month)
Fitness history	Former rugby player. Three prior fitness eras (CrossFit, running, home gym). All ended when travel broke consistency. Currently walks occasionally.
Apps used	Nike Training Club, Strava, Fitbod, Whoop (returned). Deleted all after momentum broke.
Drop-off reason	Every app assumed a consistent week. Travel destroyed consistency with no recovery mechanism.
Personalization need	Wants the app to account for travel frequency and rebuild — not reset — after a disrupted week.

Participant 02 — Diane | Segment B · Time-Constrained Professional

Age / Gender	44 / Female
Occupation	Director of Operations, healthcare non-profit. Primary caregiver for her mother.
Fitness history	Active yoga practitioner through her 30s. Two failed restarts since caregiving began (gym, Peloton). Currently walks 20 min at lunch when possible.
Apps used	MyFitnessPal (deleted — calorie focus felt punishing), Peloton, Down Dog.
Drop-off reason	Caregiving removed available time. Apps kept serving the original plan without acknowledging her week had changed.
Personalization need	Wants the app to ask about caregiving demands, sleep quality, and stress load — not just schedule slots.

04 Key Findings

Organized by Core Issue (CI-01 through CI-08) per the Test Plan v4.0 synthesis framework.

CI-01 Account Creation Sequence

Result: FAIL — both participants

Screen: App Landing → Create Account

Both participants expressed friction at being asked for credentials before understanding the product's value. Neither found the privacy notice sufficient to resolve the trust gap at this stage.

“This feels backwards. The account is a commitment. I haven't decided I want to commit yet.” — Diane

Design implication: Evaluate deferring account creation. Options: plan preview before sign-up, or email-only upfront with full profile after the user has seen the output.

CI-02 Physical Data Trust

Result: PARTIAL FAIL — one participant

Screen: About You (1/6)

Marcus entered data without hesitation. Diane entered an approximate weight, noting she never inputs her real weight in apps. The contextual label ('Calibrates intensity, load, and progression — stays completely private') was placed below the section heading and not read before data entry.

"I saw the privacy note after I'd already typed. It should probably be before the field." — Diane

Design implication: Move the contextual rationale directly above the weight input. Consider making weight optional in V1 with a clear explanation of how it improves plan accuracy.

CI-03 Fitness Background Self-Placement

Result: FAIL — both participants

Screen: Fitness Background (2/6)

The most consistent failure in the flow. Both participants hesitated significantly. Marcus selected 'Experienced' with uncertainty, worried the plan would exceed his current capacity. Diane selected 'Some experience' and immediately qualified it — her years of yoga felt undercounted, but 'Experienced' felt dishonest after a two-year gap. Neither option accurately captured a lapsed athlete's situation.

"There's no option for 'I know what I'm doing but I'm starting from nothing right now.' That's what I am." — Marcus

"Some experience feels like an insult. Athletic background feels like a lie. There's nothing in between." — Diane

Design implication: Split into two questions: (1) prior fitness history, (2) current physical state. 'Starting again after a break' must be a first-class option — not a sub-label qualifier. This is the prototype's most direct failure against the brief's core positioning.

CI-04 Health Disclosure Safety

Result: PARTIAL PASS — with notable gap

Screen: Health & Access (4/6)

Both participants found the condition list more inclusive than comparable apps and disclosed without distrust. However, the contextual variables that most affect their capacity — Diane's caregiver sleep deprivation and stress load, Marcus's travel disruption pattern — had no disclosure path on this screen. 'PT-reviewed' was initially misread by Diane as a referral to a paid physio session.

"I selected the closest thing. But what I really wanted to say is that I'm running on five hours of sleep most nights, and that changes everything about what I can do." — Diane

Design implication: Add life-load signals alongside clinical conditions: stress level, sleep quality, caregiving demands, travel frequency. These are the inputs Opportunity 02 (context-aware scheduling) is built on. Spell out 'PT-reviewed' as 'Physical therapist-reviewed' on first use.

CI-05 Goal Vocabulary Adequacy

Result: PARTIAL FAIL — confirmed gap in one session

Screen: Your Goals (3/6)

Marcus found the taxonomy broadly usable but noted 'Reclaim athletic identity' felt too dramatic for a checkbox. Diane's actual goal — 'be able to keep up with my life without being exhausted' — had no equivalent. She selected two least-wrong options. Both participants understood that selection order set priority, but neither fully trusted the relationship between order and plan output.

"None of these are really my goal. My goal is to not feel like I'm drowning. I want energy back. That's not on the list." — Diane

Design implication: Add an optional free-text goal field after the fixed taxonomy. Low engineering cost; high signal value for the plan rationale copy. Add a one-line explanation of how selection order affects the plan at the point of selection.

CI-06 Schedule Realism

Result: FAIL — both participants

Screen: Your Schedule (5/6)

Despite the moderator's explicit instruction to use their actual current week, both participants entered aspirational availability. The sub-headline 'Built around the time you actually have' was read by both but did not change behavior. This is not a comprehension problem — it is an emotional input problem. Participants are inputting hope, not data.

"I know I'm supposed to be realistic. I just can't bring myself to put in what my week actually looks like, because then the plan will feel even smaller than what I already have." — Diane

Design implication: Reframe around a minimum commitment floor, not a target schedule. Consider: 'What's the minimum you can realistically commit to this week?' before the grid. Normalize a low starting point explicitly — 'One session a week builds real momentum.'

CI-07 Plan Personalization Credibility

Result: FAIL — both participants

Screen: Building Plan → Plan Home Page

The highest-priority finding. When asked to identify where they could see themselves in the plan, neither participant could do so clearly. The 'Fit Fuel Intelligence' rationale referenced 'experienced background' — but Diane had selected 'Some experience.' Marcus could not find his travel context or his strength goal reflected in the session descriptions. The loading screen checklist was positively received; the plan output did not match its implied promise. 'RPE-guided' was not understood by either participant — a direct failure against AC-09.

"I know it's supposed to be personalized. But I can't see where my life is in this plan. It feels like it could be anyone's starting program." — Marcus

"The loading screen said it was analyzing my health conditions. Nothing in the plan tells me what it found."
— Diane

Design implication: Rewrite the plan rationale to reference specific named inputs. Not 'your experienced background' — but 'the three days you set aside and your strength and mobility history.' Add a one-line loop-close per session card where health context is relevant. Replace 'RPE-guided' with 'You set the pace.'

CI-08 Personalization Gap Inventory

Result: Confirmed gaps — both sessions

Source: Warm-up Q5 + all task-level gap probes

Inputs named by participants as things they would want the app to know — with no current disclosure path:

Gap	Named by	Where it belongs
Travel frequency and routine disruption	Marcus	Schedule or Health & Access — life-context signal
Caregiving demands and energy impact	Diane	Health & Access — life-load, not a clinical condition
Sleep quality and deprivation	Diane	About You or Health & Access
Stress load as a session capacity modifier	Diane	Health & Access or dedicated screen
What the app should never say to them	Both	Onboarding — communication preference opt-in
Free-text goal in own words	Both	Your Goals — alongside fixed taxonomy
History and current state as separate inputs	Both	Fitness Background — two-part structure
Confirmation that health disclosures affected the plan	Diane	Plan delivery — visible input-output loop

These are not edge preferences. They are the contextual variables FitFuel's stated whitespace — context-aware scheduling, shame-free personalization, plan-life fit — is built on. Their absence is a structural gap between the product's promise and its current data collection.

05 Stakeholder Recommendations

Five prioritized recommendations, framed for product/business leadership and the design team.

R1 Restructure Fitness Background — highest priority design revision

Priority: HIGH · both segments · direct deletion risk

Findings: CI-03, CI-07, CI-08

Product / Business

FitFuel's market position is built on not treating lapsed athletes as beginners. The current screen does exactly that. Both participants selected the wrong option and were worried their plan would be miscalibrated. A plan

that starts too hard produces injury risk; one that starts too easy produces dropout. This is a plan-quality and trust issue — not a UI polish item.

Design Team

Split the question into two: (1) prior history — activity type and era, not a single tier; (2) current state — with 'Starting again after a break' as a first-class option. Use the second input for plan calibration. Use the first for AI rationale copy.

R2 Add contextual life-load inputs to the profile flow

Priority: HIGH · both segments · competitive differentiation gap

Findings: CI-04, CI-06, CI-08

Product / Business

No current competitor collects life-load signals during onboarding. FitFuel currently does not either. The data that would make the AI genuinely context-aware — travel frequency, caregiving demands, sleep baseline, stress level — is the product's stated whitespace. Not collecting it means the AI cannot deliver what the product promises.

Design Team

Add a life-load screen between Health & Access and Your Schedule — or extend Health & Access with three-option inputs (low friction, no text entry): travel frequency, caregiving demands, energy consistency. These inputs also give the AI a basis for a conservative starting plan regardless of the user's aspirational schedule entry.

R3 Close the input-output loop on the plan delivery screen

Priority: HIGH · both segments · core AI trust and retention risk

Findings: CI-07, CI-05, CI-04

Product / Business

The plan delivery screen is where the AI personalization claim is either proved or exposed. In both sessions it was exposed. A plan that looks generic will be deleted at the same rate as any other generic fitness app. This is the most critical revision before any live testing.

Design Team

Rewrite the Fit Fuel Intelligence rationale to reference specific named inputs: goals selected, health context flagged, days and session length chosen. Add a one-line note per session card where health context modified the session. Replace 'RPE-guided' with 'You set the pace.' These are microcopy changes — not feature additions.

R4 Reframe schedule input around a realistic minimum, not a target

Priority: MEDIUM-HIGH · Segment B primary · upstream of retention failure

Findings: CI-06, CI-08

Product / Business

Both participants entered aspirational schedules despite instruction to be realistic. A plan built on aspirational inputs breaks in the first real week — and that break is the documented deletion trigger for both target segments. This is cheaper to fix in onboarding than to recover through a lapse-recovery flow.

Design Team

Ask 'What's the minimum you can commit to this week?' before the schedule grid. Normalize a low starting count — 'One session a week builds real momentum.' Offer a target schedule as a separate field that the AI builds toward in Phase 2, giving users something to grow into rather than immediately fail against.

R5 Evaluate account creation sequencing as an adoption risk

Priority: MEDIUM · all segments · upstream of all other findings

Findings: CI-01

Product / Business

Asking for identity commitment before demonstrating value is a known adoption barrier. In a crowded market where competitors offer guest modes and free previews, this is a structural disadvantage. It is a product strategy decision with technical implications and should be evaluated before V1 go-to-market — not deferred to a later sprint.

Design Team

Evaluate three alternatives: (1) complete the profile anonymously, show the generated plan, then prompt account creation to save it — highest conversion potential, highest engineering cost; (2) name and email only upfront, full profile after a product preview — lowest-effort improvement on the current state; (3) add a value-demonstration interstitial before credentials are requested. Recommend prototyping Option 1 as a distinct flow variant in the next test round.

Research methodology note: The usability sessions in this report were simulated using Claude AI (Anthropic, claude-sonnet-4-6, July 2026). Participant profiles, behavioral responses, task reactions, and verbatim quotes are AI-constructed based on the FitFuel research corpus (user interviews INT-01–INT-05, practitioner interviews TRA-01–TRA-02, personas v4, journey maps v3, market landscape report, and design assumptions document), the FitFuel Usability Test Plan v4.0, and the 12-screen onboarding prototype (Figma Make, July 2026). All findings are directional hypotheses subject to further validation through live moderated usability testing with real participants. No real user data was collected or referenced.

Source basis: FitFuel Research Corpus (June 2026) · Usability Test Plan v4.0 (July 2026) · Prototype screens (Figma Make, July 2026) · Design Brief Opportunity 01 v1.1 · Market Landscape June 2026.