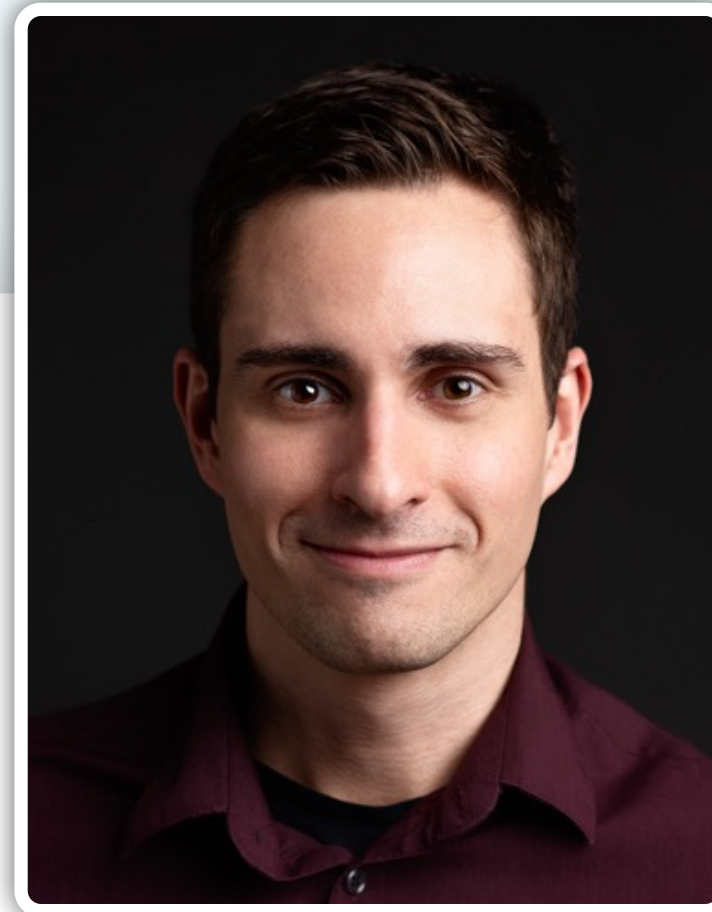


USER EXPERIENCE

A GUIDE FOR MARKETERS AND DESIGNERS

NICK KOLENDA

Hello...



I'm Nick Kolenda.

I wrote this guide for designers who want to improve their interfaces (e.g., websites, apps, software). Inside you'll find usability guidelines for any product.

It's free for everyone — share this PDF with your team or colleagues.

Download my other guides here:

www.NickKolenda.com

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2	GUIDELINE UNDERSTANDING	15
3	GUIDELINE EFFORT	27
4	GUIDELINE ERRORS	40
5	GUIDELINE COMPATIBILITY	51
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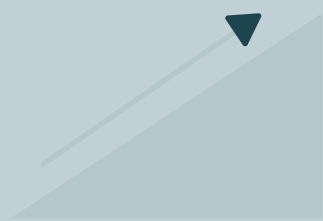
GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS



GUIDELINE 2

UNDERSTANDING



GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT



GUIDELINE 4

ERRORS

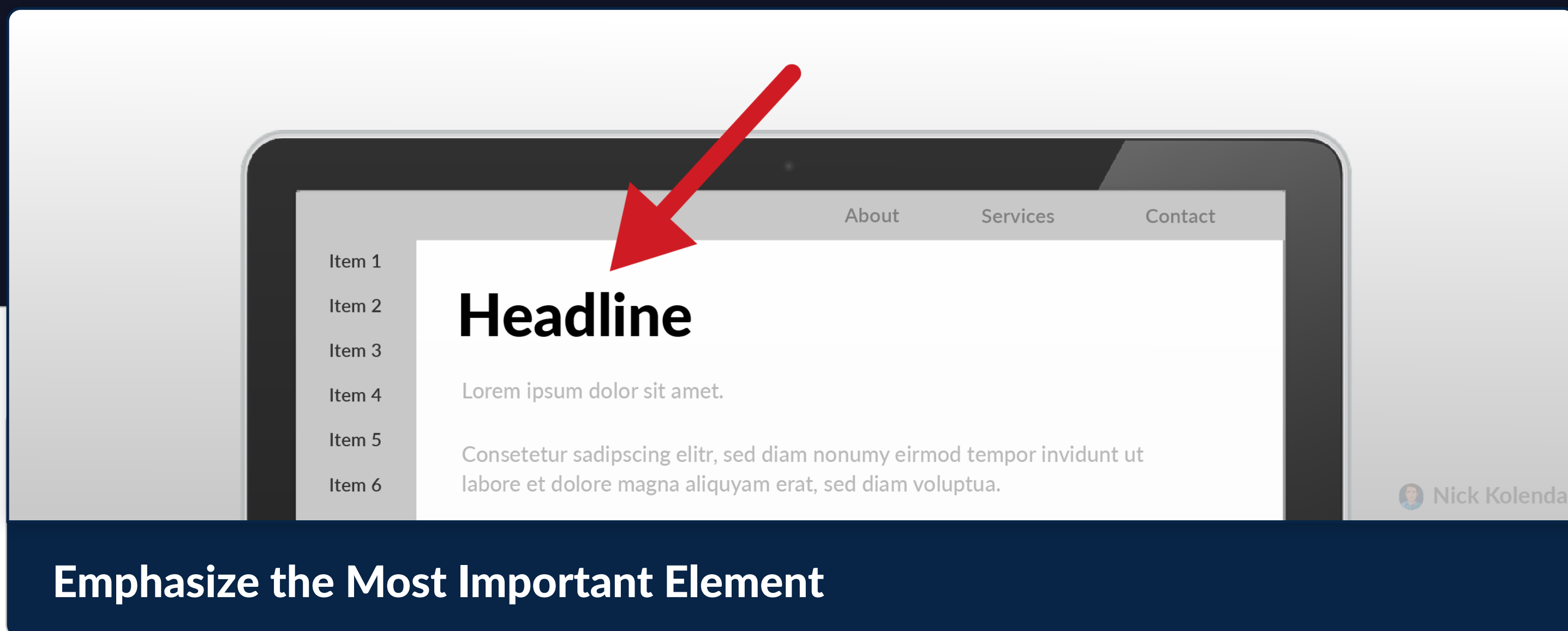


GUIDELINE 5

COMPATIBILITY

Create an Entry Point

Every interface needs a specific element that pulls the eye into the design.



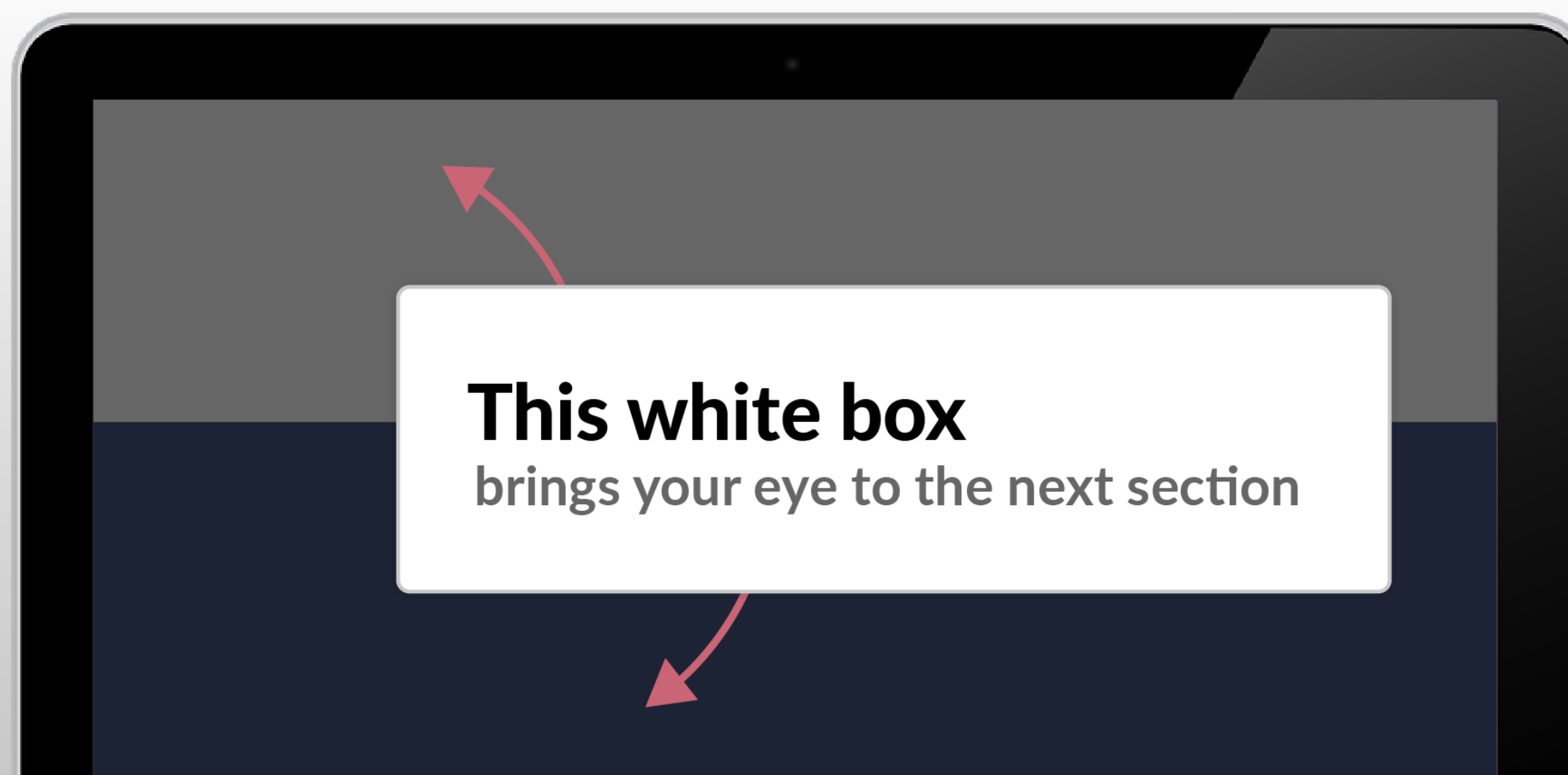
Guide Eye Flow

Once you capture attention, guide it throughout the design.



 Nick Kolenda

Obscure Background Details

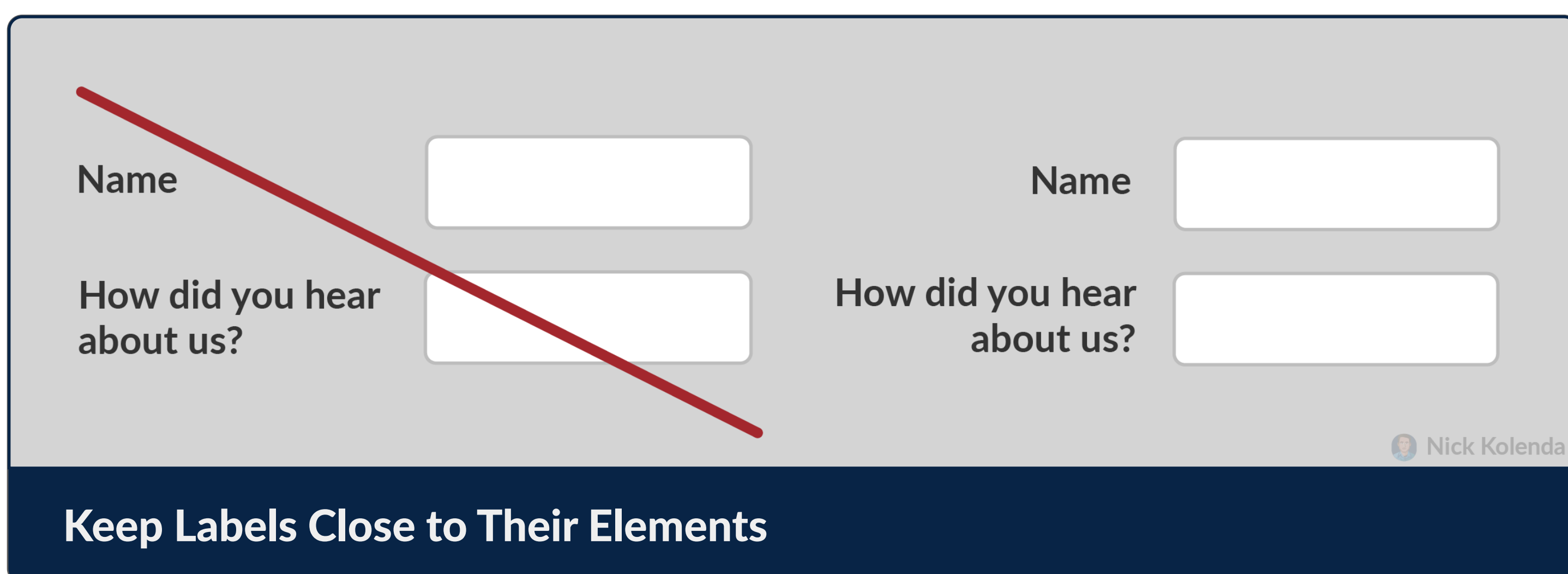
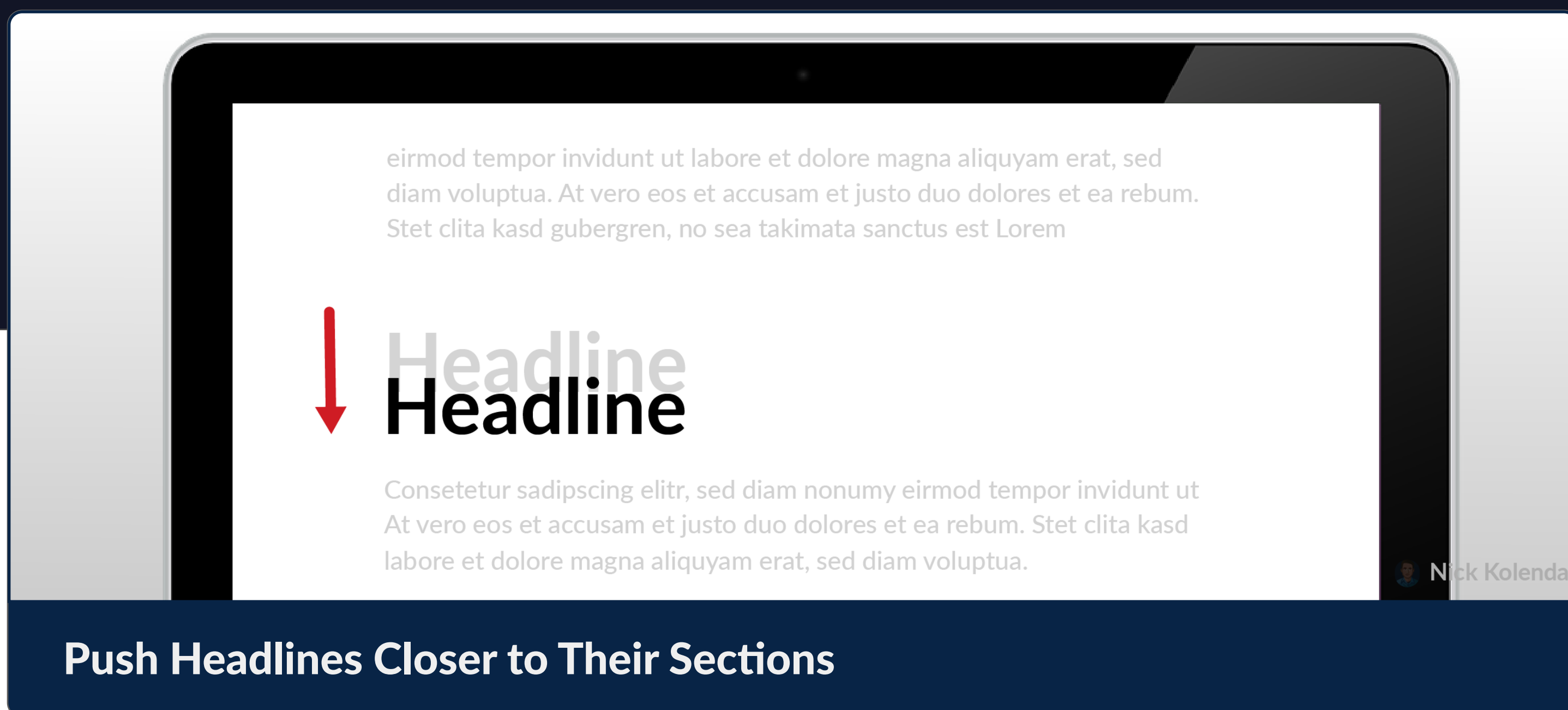


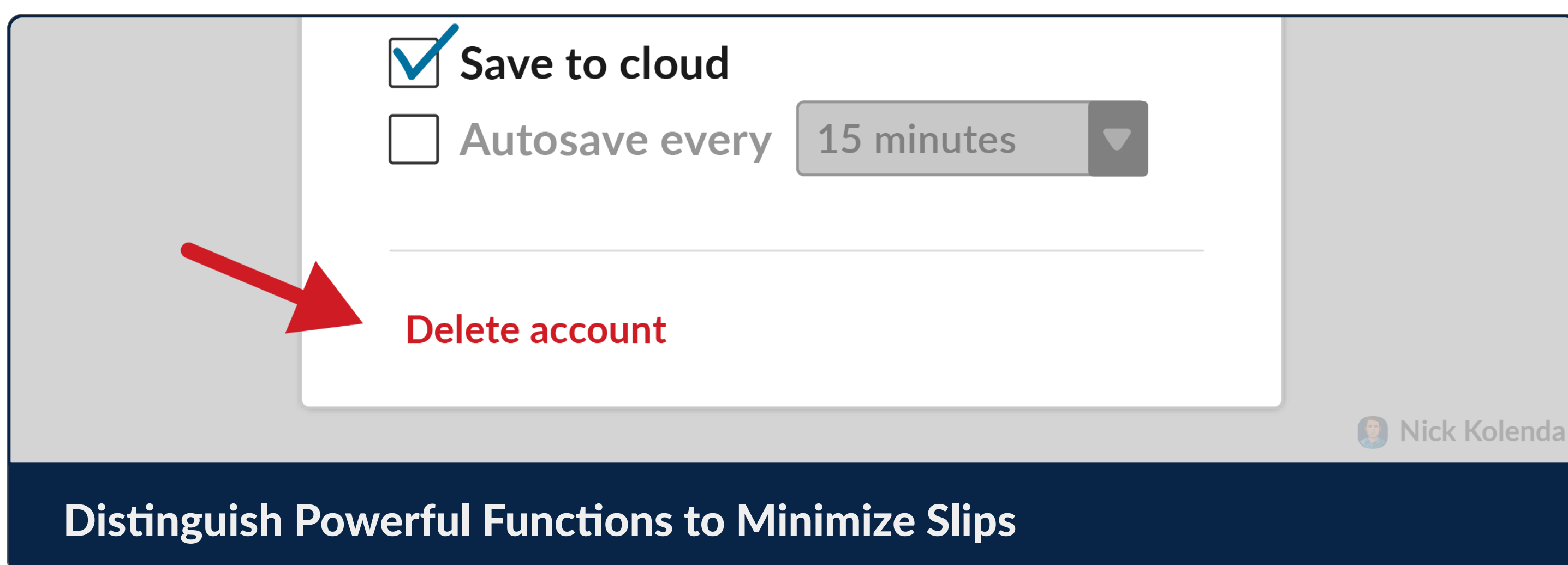
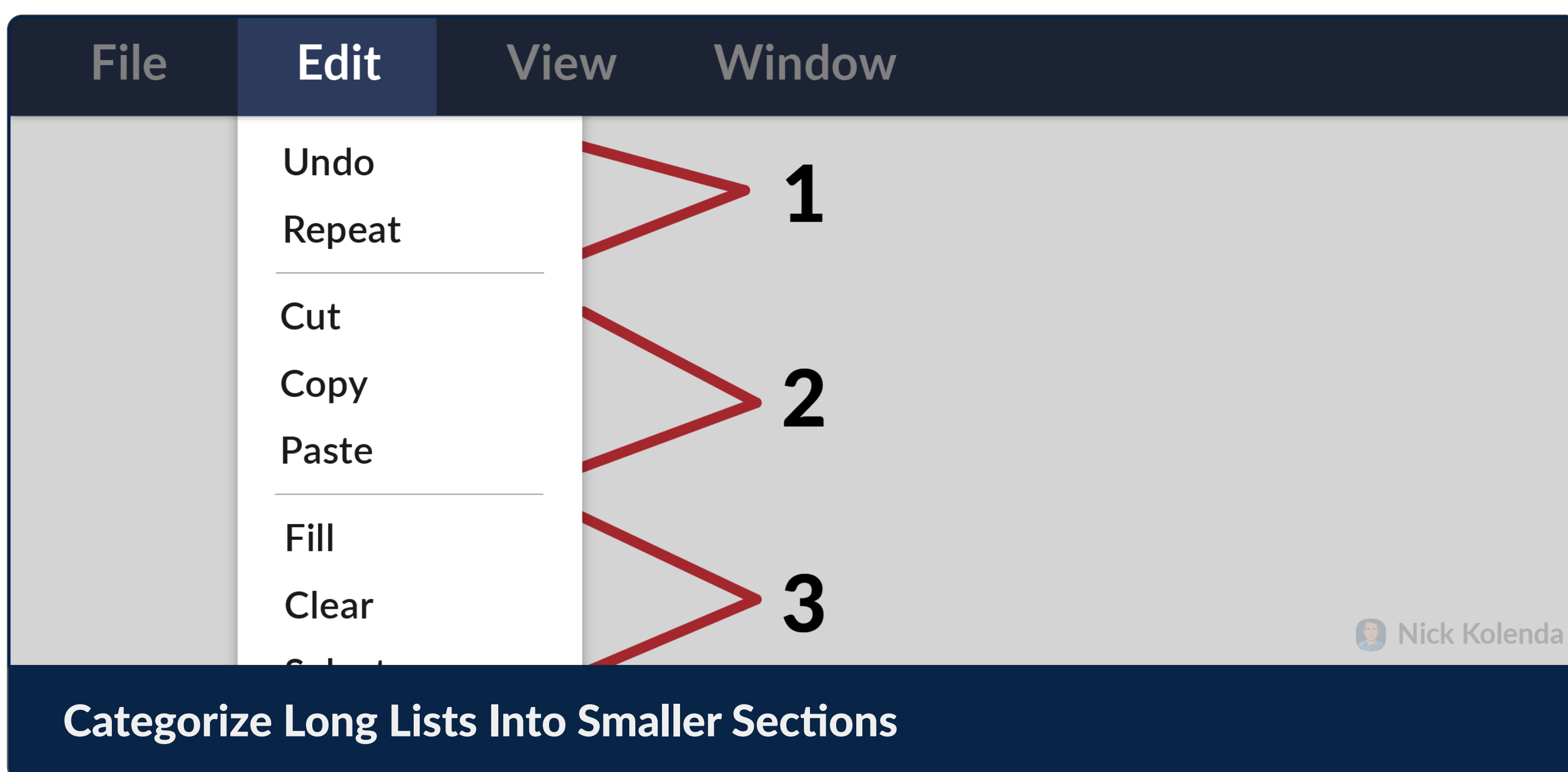
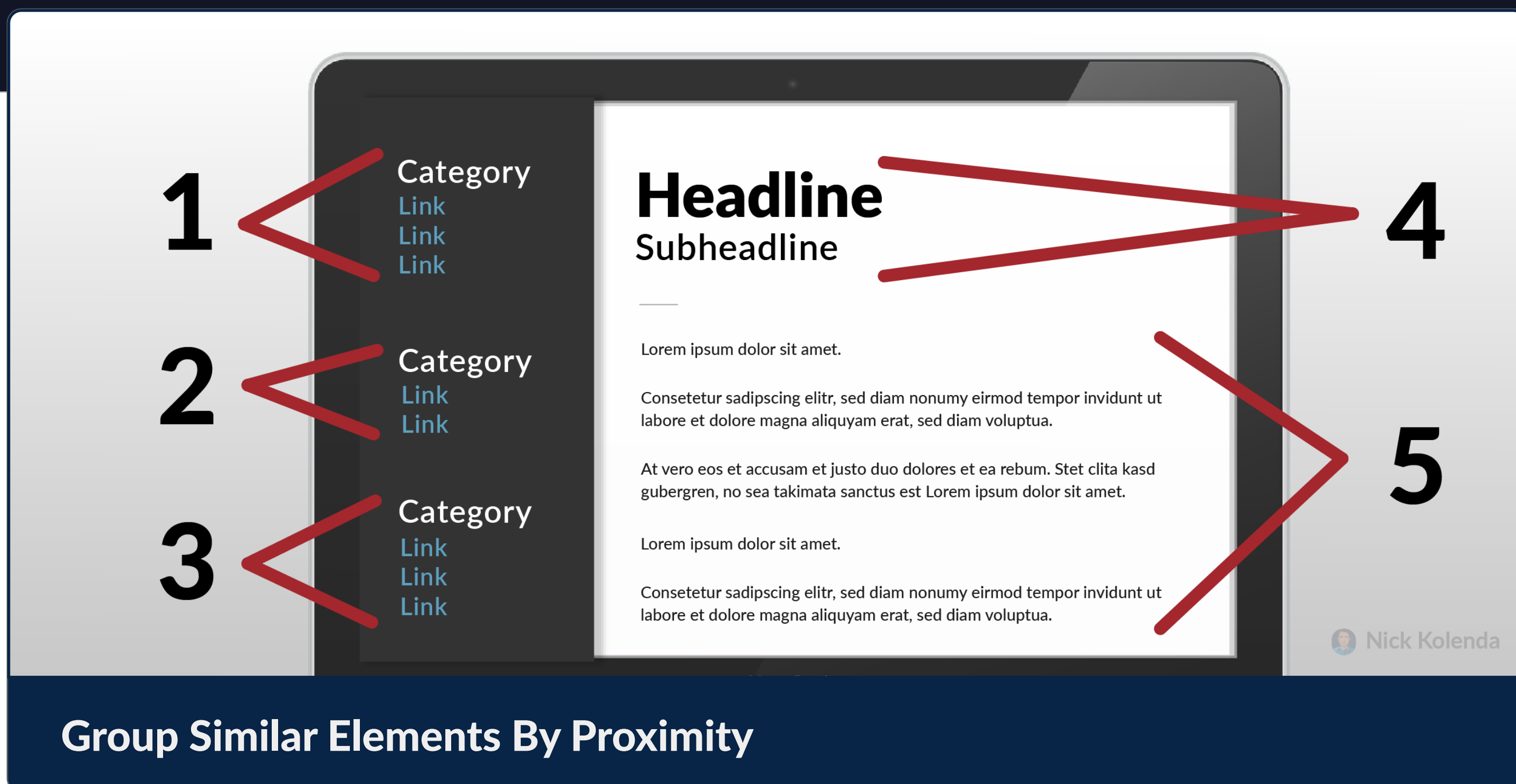
 Nick Kolenda

Overlap Elements Across Sections

Group Similar Elements

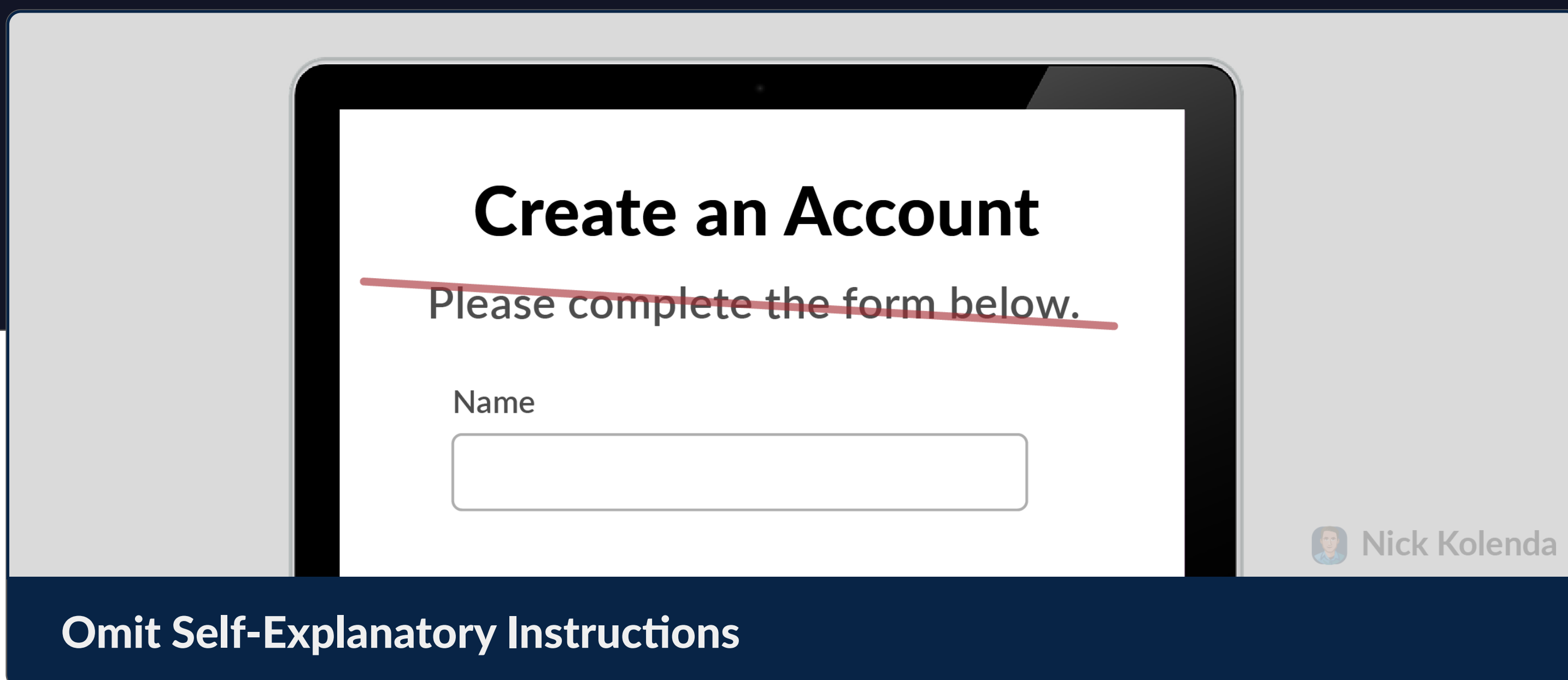
Push them closer. Use the same color.
Group them inside a container.



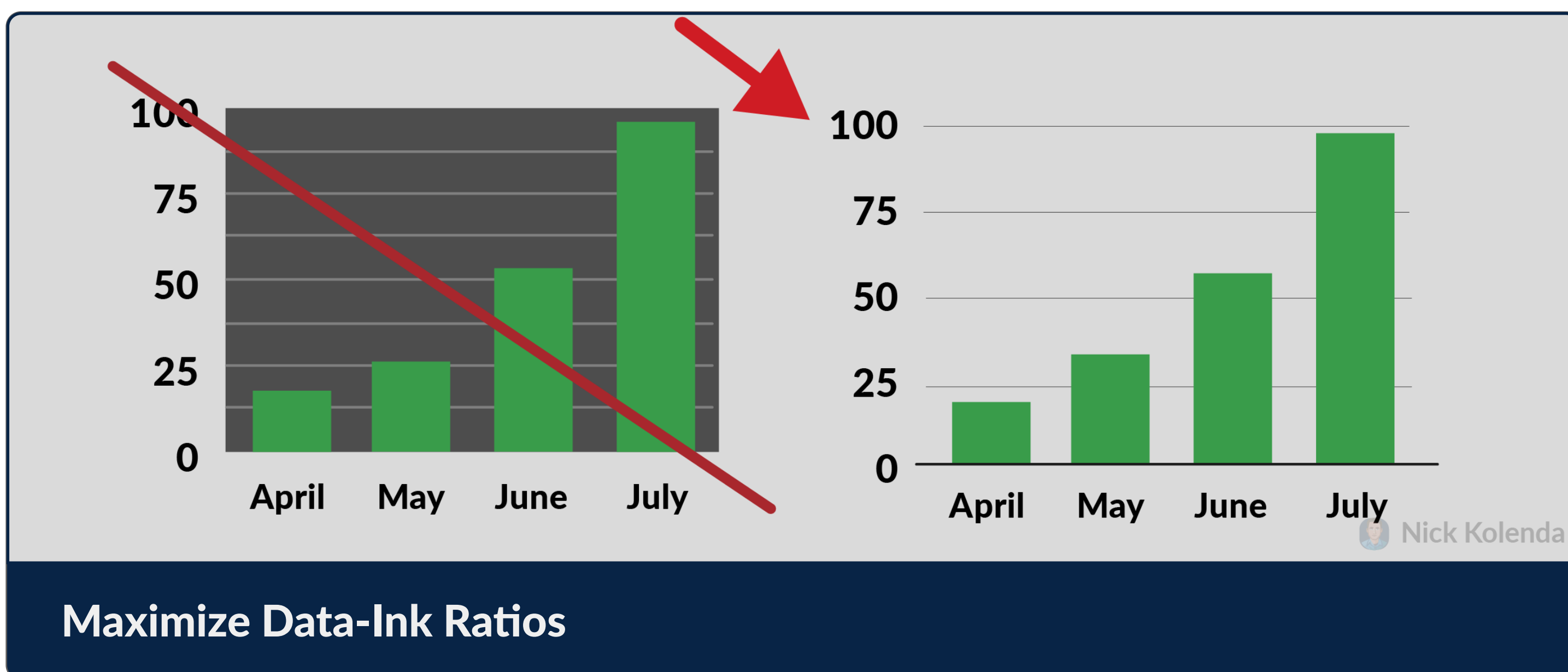


Remove Unnecessary Elements

Maintain focus toward the elements that matter.



Omit Self-Explanatory Instructions





Maximize Data-Ink Ratios

How much is shipping?+

Can I return the item?−

Yes. You can return items within 30 days.



 Nick Kolenda

Hide Peripheral Details in Expandable Mediums

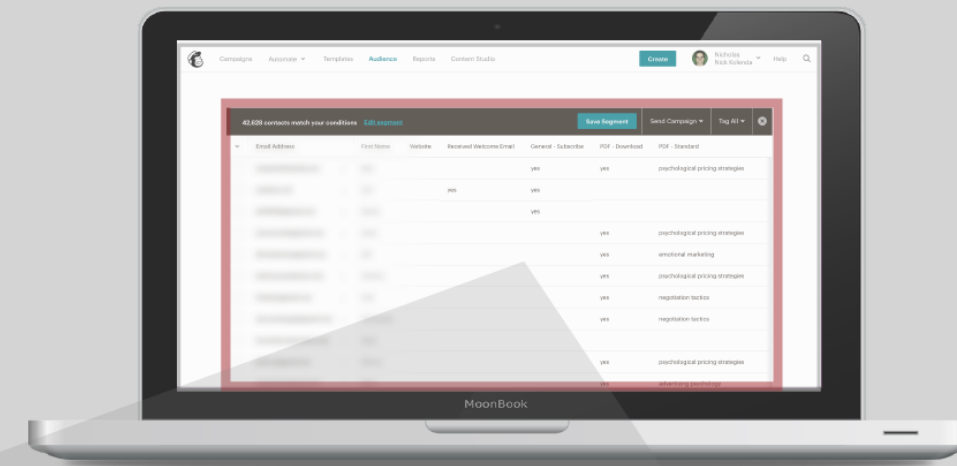
Communicate Hidden Sections of the Design

Let users know if your interface extends beyond the visible boundaries.



 Nick Kolenda

Indicate Whether Content Exists Below the Fold



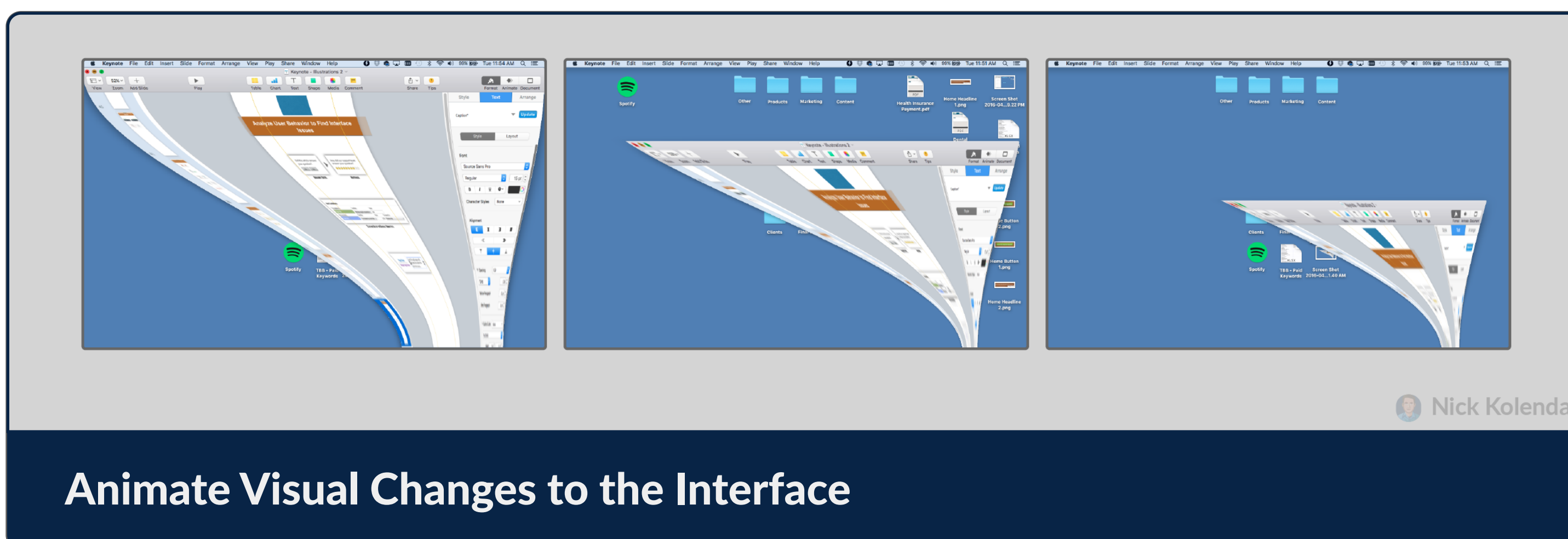
Name	Address	Address 2	City
Jon Doe	123 Elm St.		Lebanon
Jane Doe	99 Oak St.	Apt 3	Springfield
Jon Smith	50 Pine St.		Greenville
Jane Smith	100 Cedar St.		Bristol

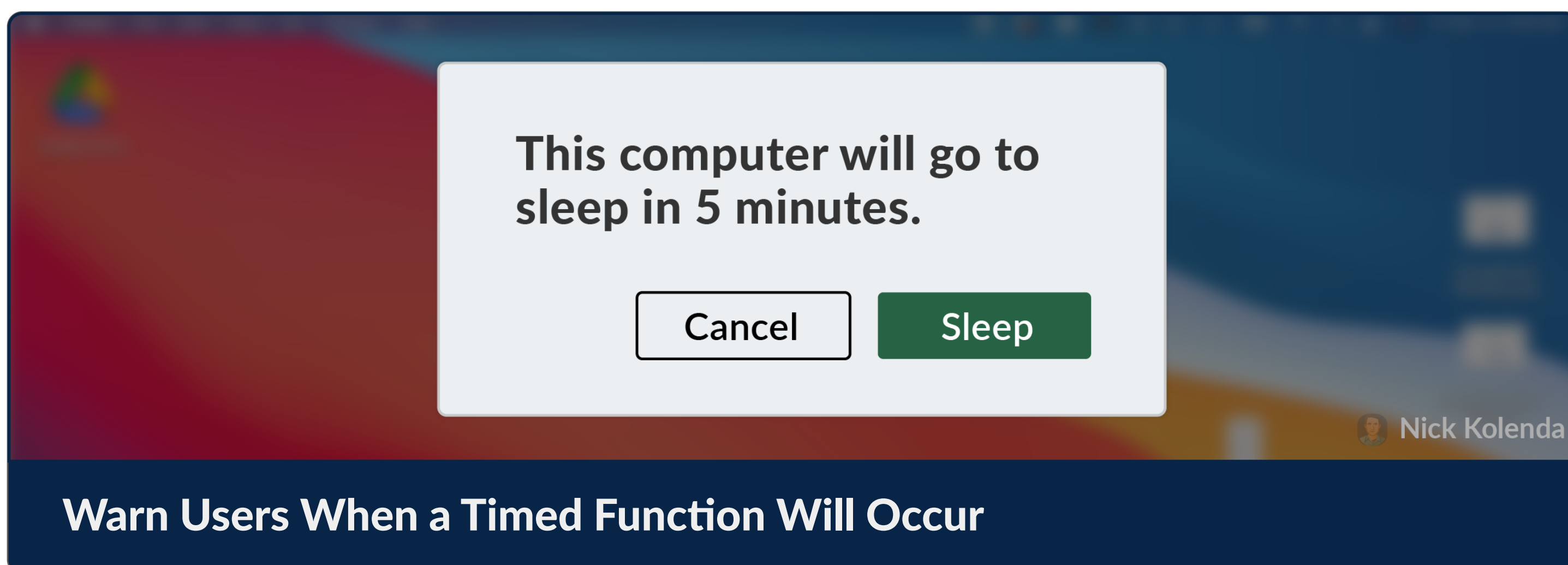
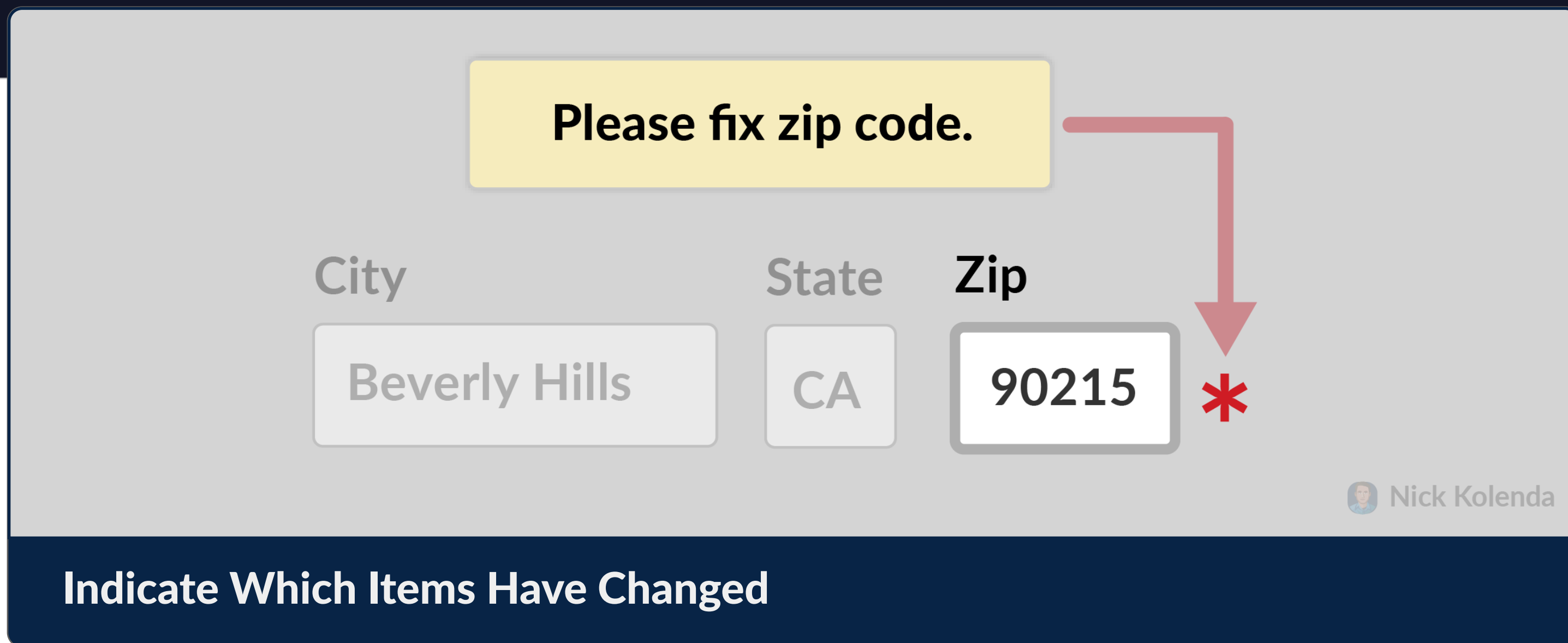
 Nick Kolenda

Convey Depth Through Fades or Shadows

Depict Changes Without Disrupting the User

Help users notice and understand changes to the interface.







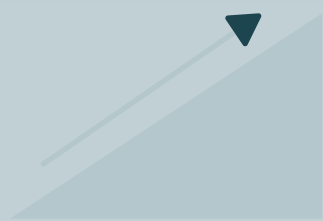
GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS



GUIDELINE 2

UNDERSTANDING



GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT



GUIDELINE 4

ERRORS

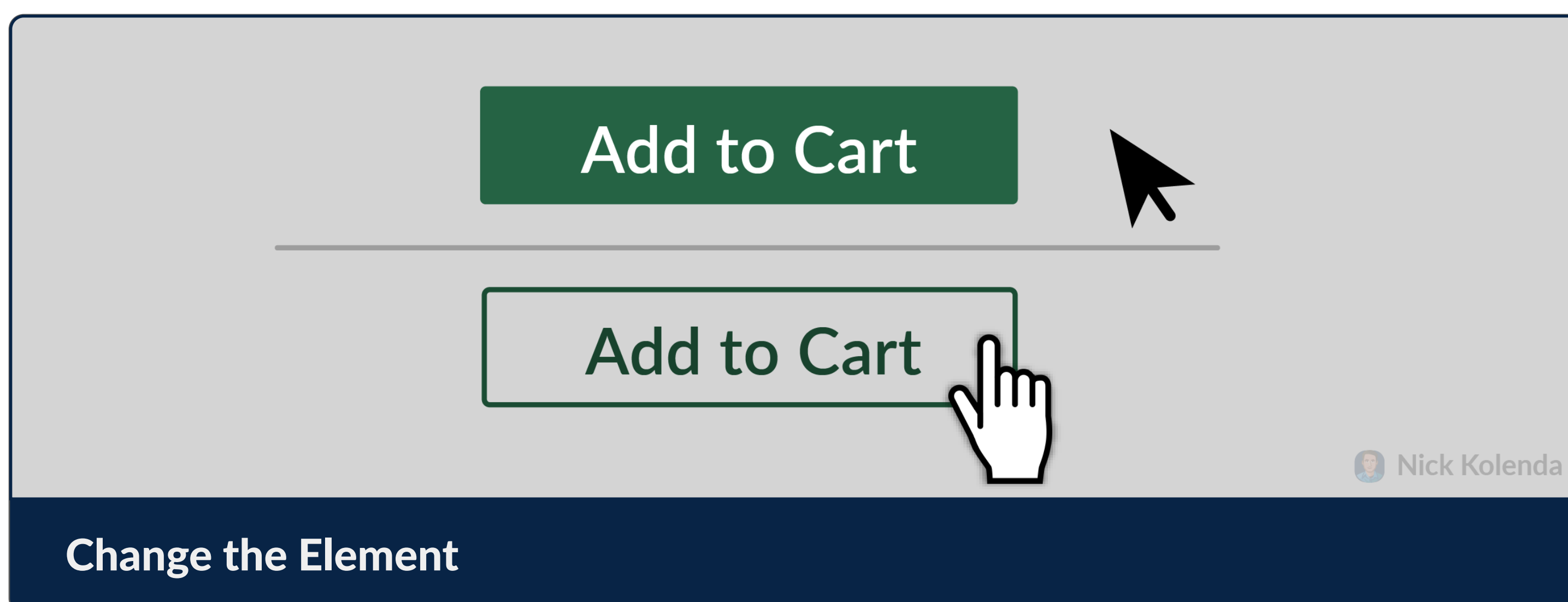
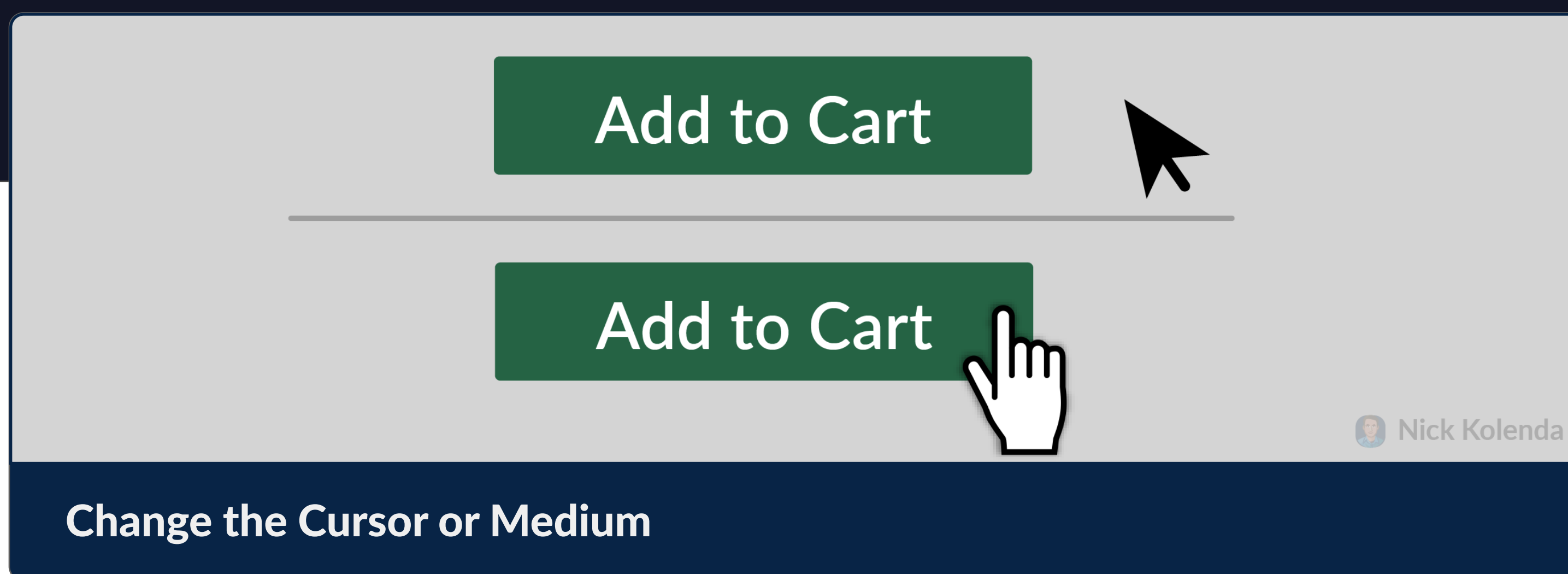


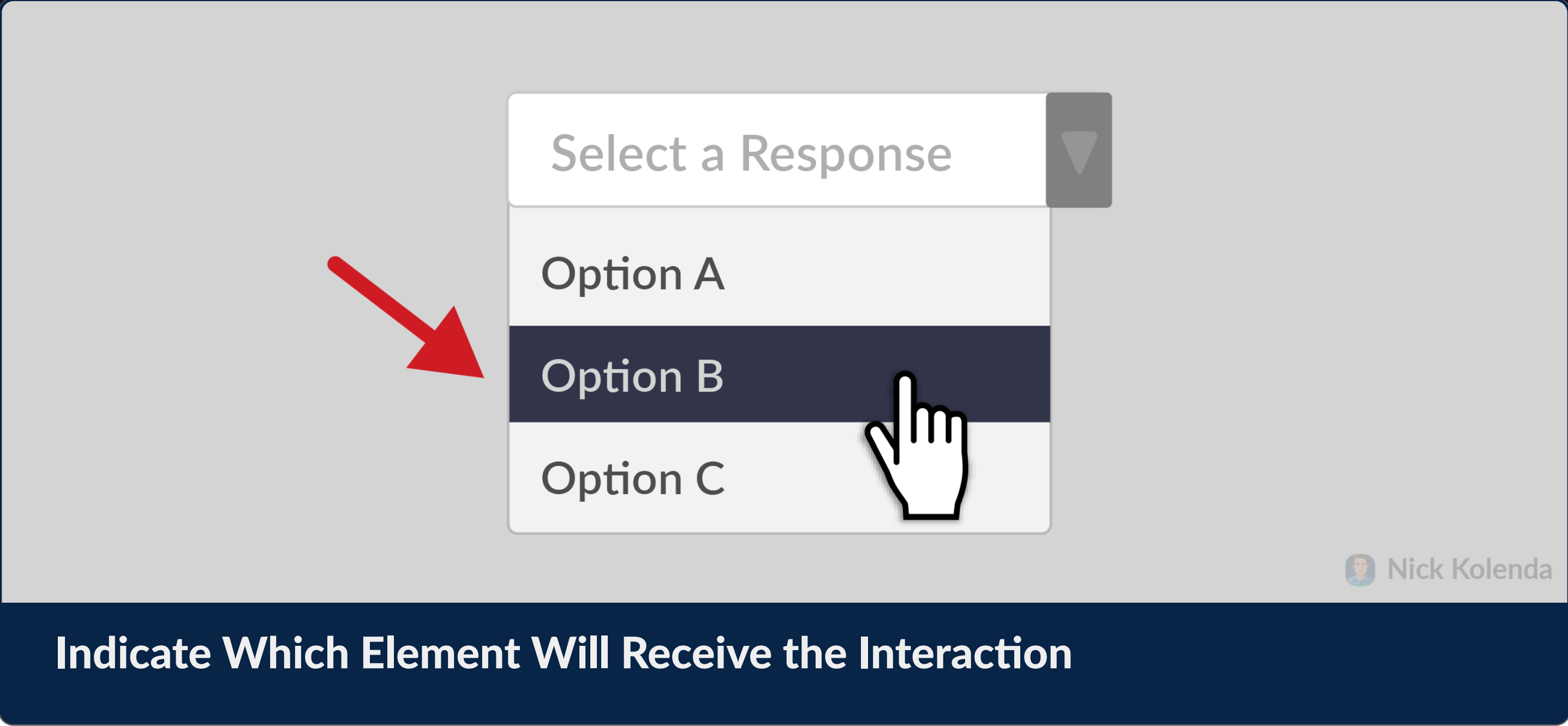
GUIDELINE 5

COMPATIBILITY

Indicate Which Items Are Interactive

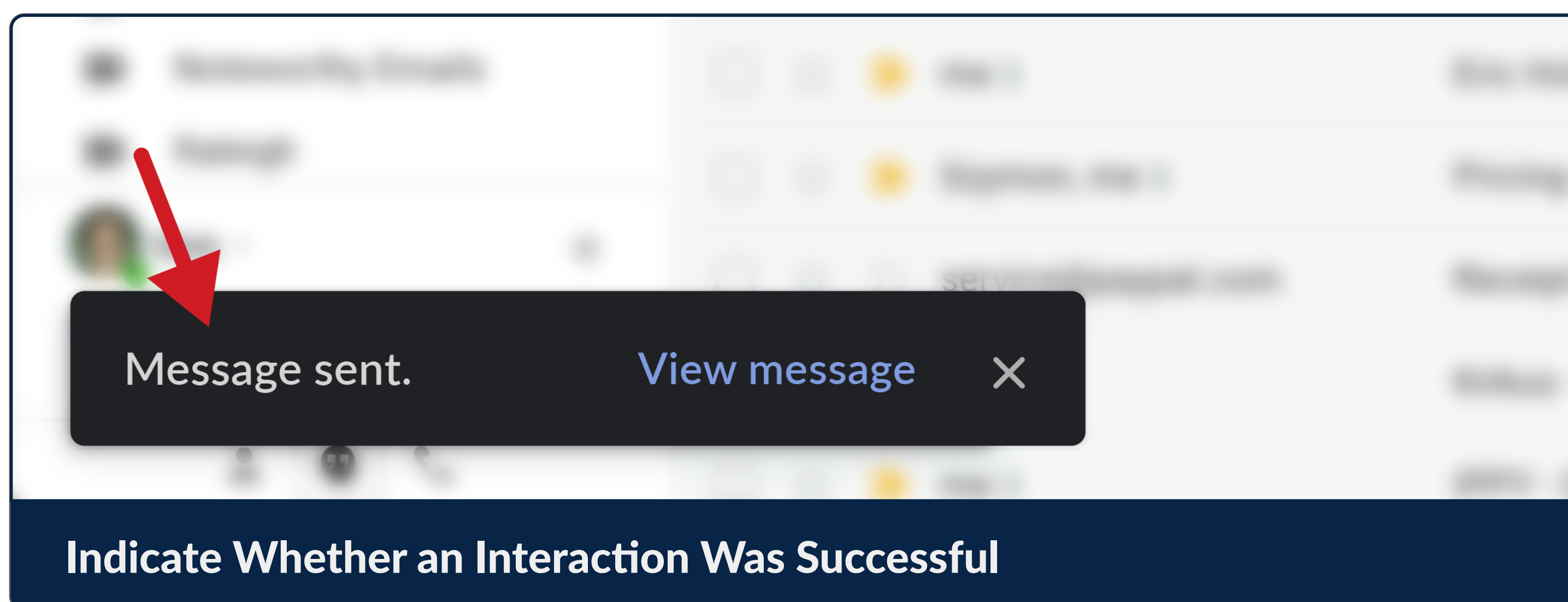
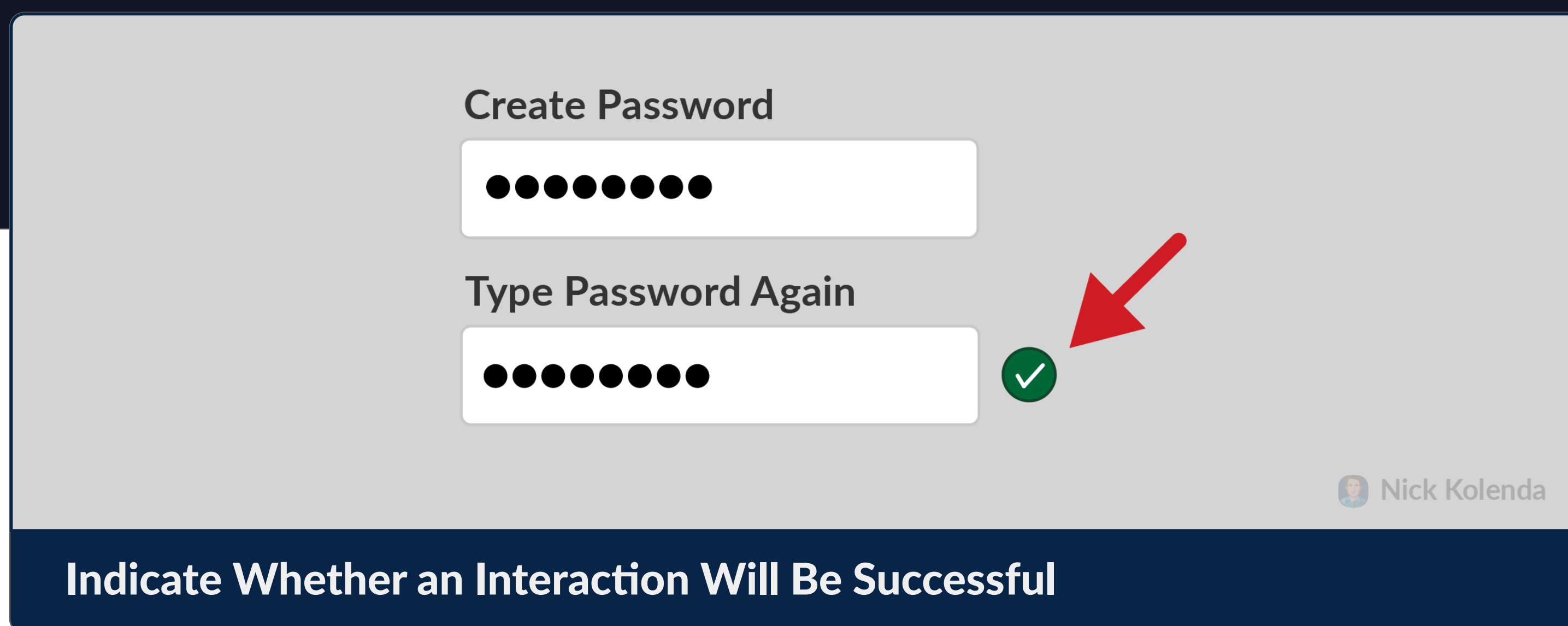
Users should know whether they can interact with an element.





Provide Feedback During and After Interactions

Users should know whether an interaction was successful.



Communicate in Relative Terms

Relative framing can be more meaningful than absolute framing.



Nick Kolenda A comment

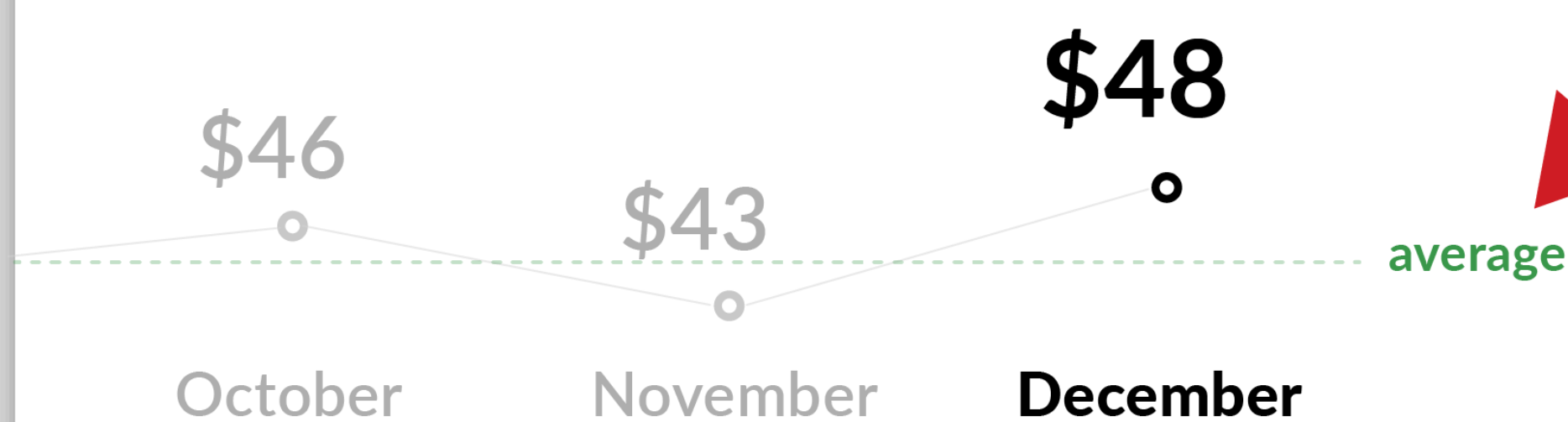
Like Reply 2 days ago



Nick Kolenda

Communicate Time in Relation to the Present

Electric Bill

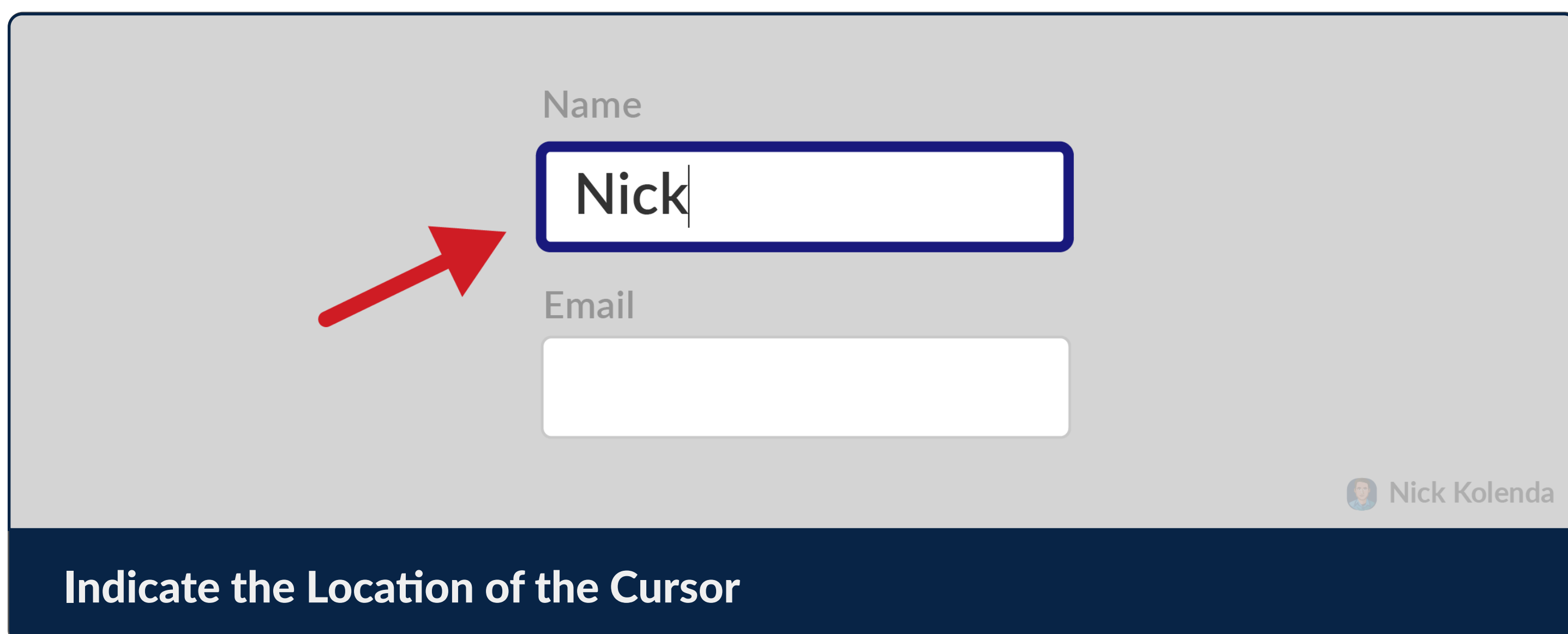
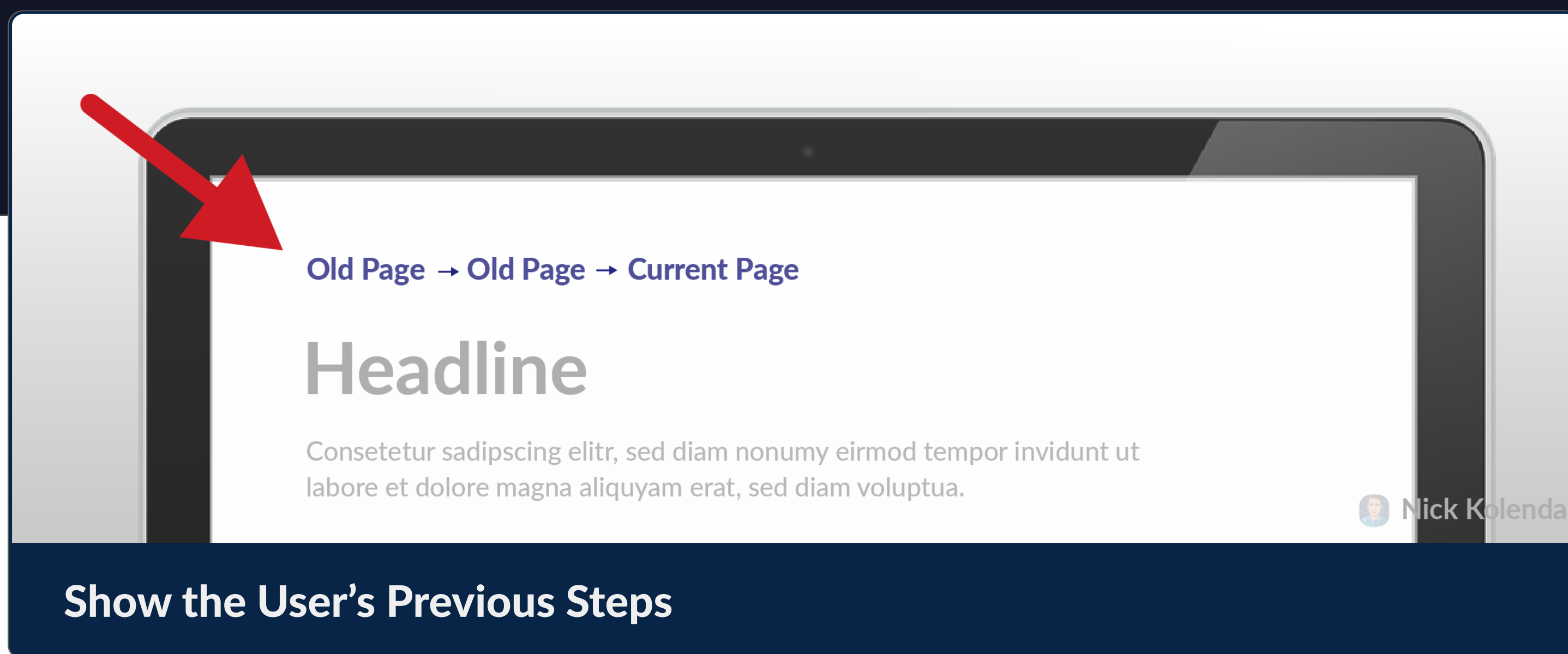


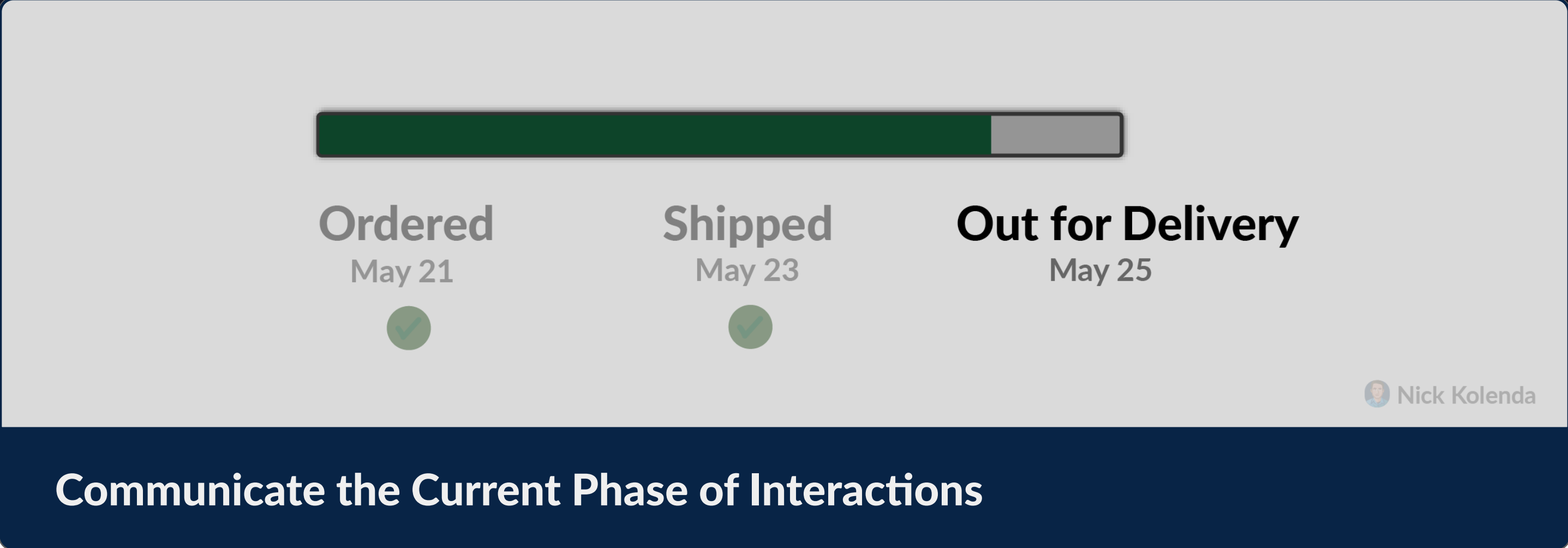
Nick Kolenda

Compare Numbers With a Meaningful Baseline

Help Users Find Their Current Location

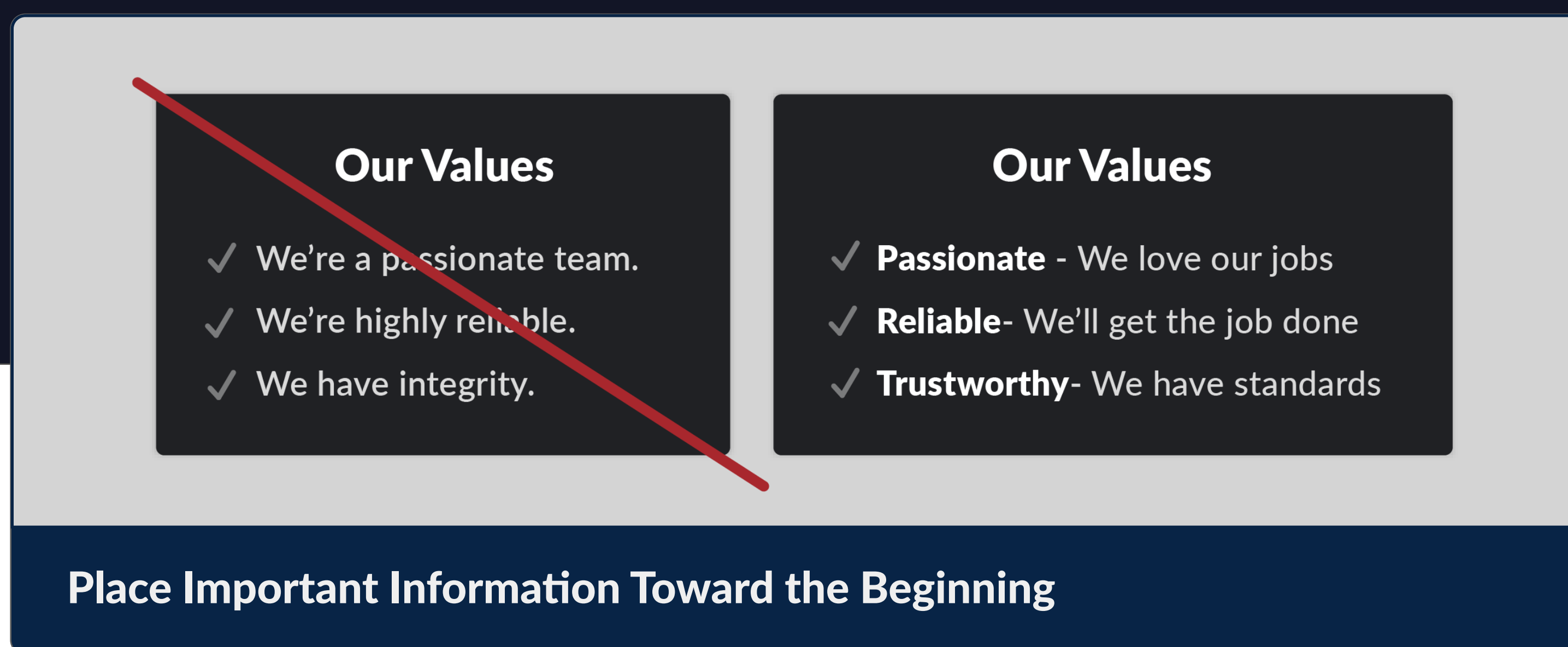
Users can feel lost. Clarify their position inside the interface.





Design for Scannability

Don't resist scanning. Embrace it. Create designs that facilitate scanning.



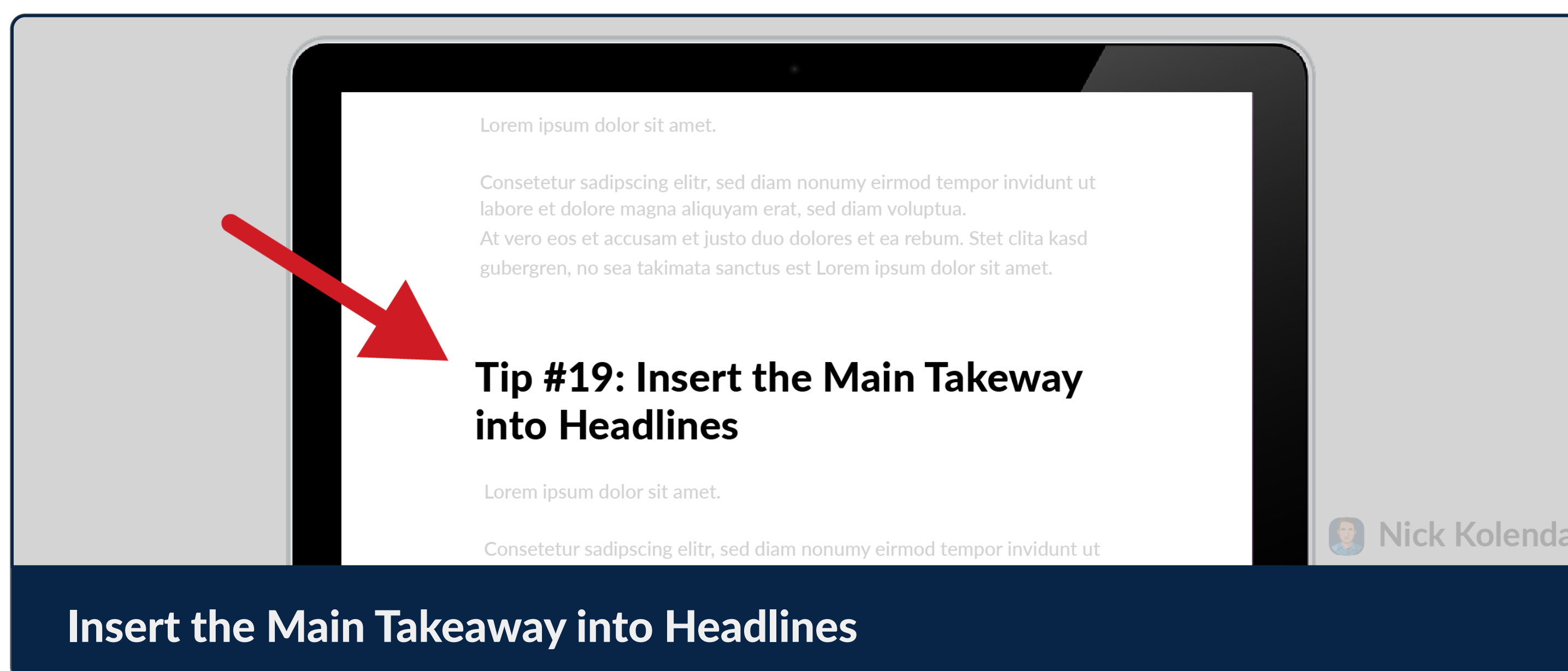
Our Values

- ✓ We're a passionate team.
- ✓ We're highly reliable.
- ✓ We have integrity.

Our Values

- ✓ **Passionate** - We love our jobs
- ✓ **Reliable** - We'll get the job done
- ✓ **Trustworthy** - We have standards

Place Important Information Toward the Beginning



Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.


Consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

At vero eos et accusam et justo duo dolores et ea rebum. Stet clita kasd gubergren, no sea takimata sanctus est Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.

Tip #19: Insert the Main Takeaway into Headlines

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.

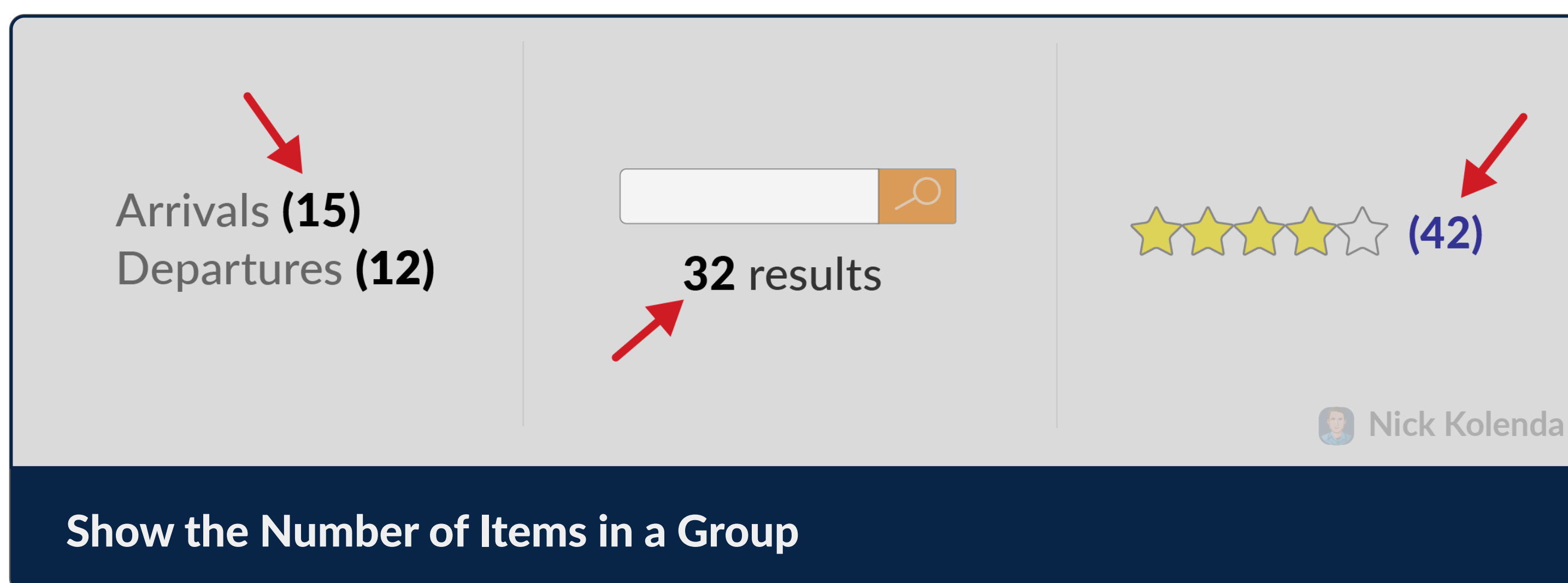
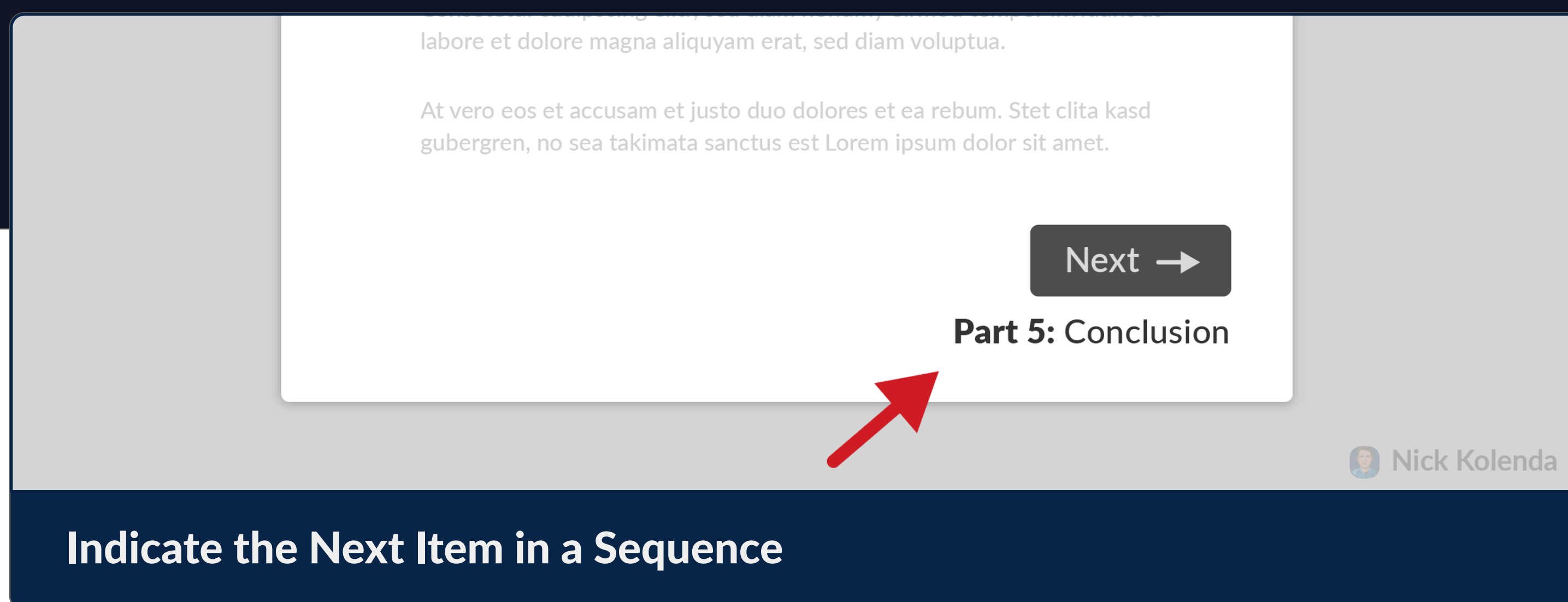
Consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut

 Nick Kolenda

Insert the Main Takeaway into Headlines

Communicate the Expected Outcome of Interactions

Users should know what will happen *before* it happens.



Ad Details

Headline

Line 1

Line 2

URL

Preview of ad

Ad · www.website.com

Headline From the Left

Consetetur sadipscing elitr, sed diam nonumy eirmod tempor invidunt ut labore et dolore magna aliquyam erat, sed diam voluptua.

Nick Kolenda

Show a Preview of the Output

~~Click here to visit your account settings.~~

Visit your account settings.

Nick Kolenda

Describe the Destinations of Links

File

Edit

View

Window

Undo Color Change

Cut

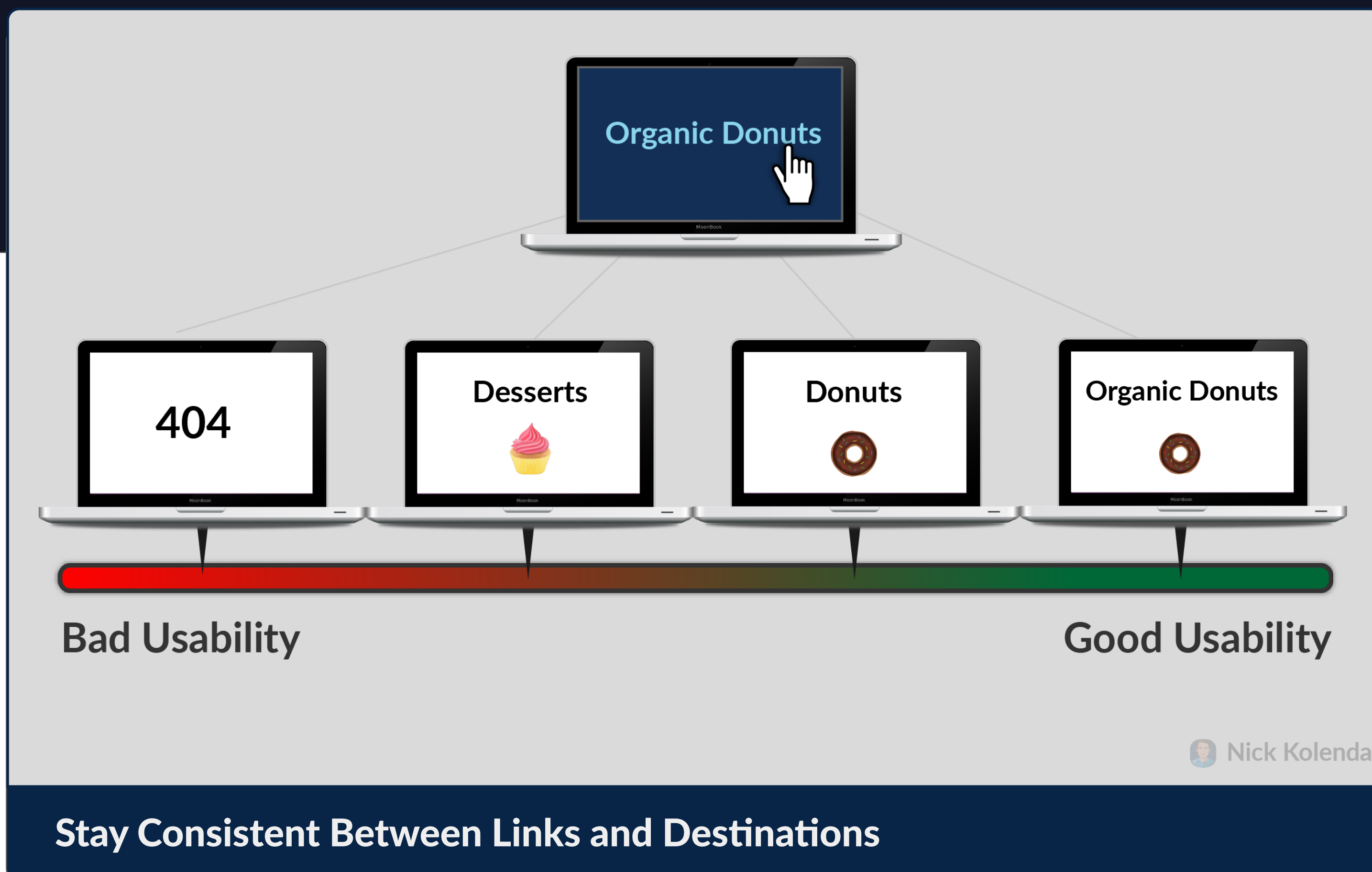
Copy

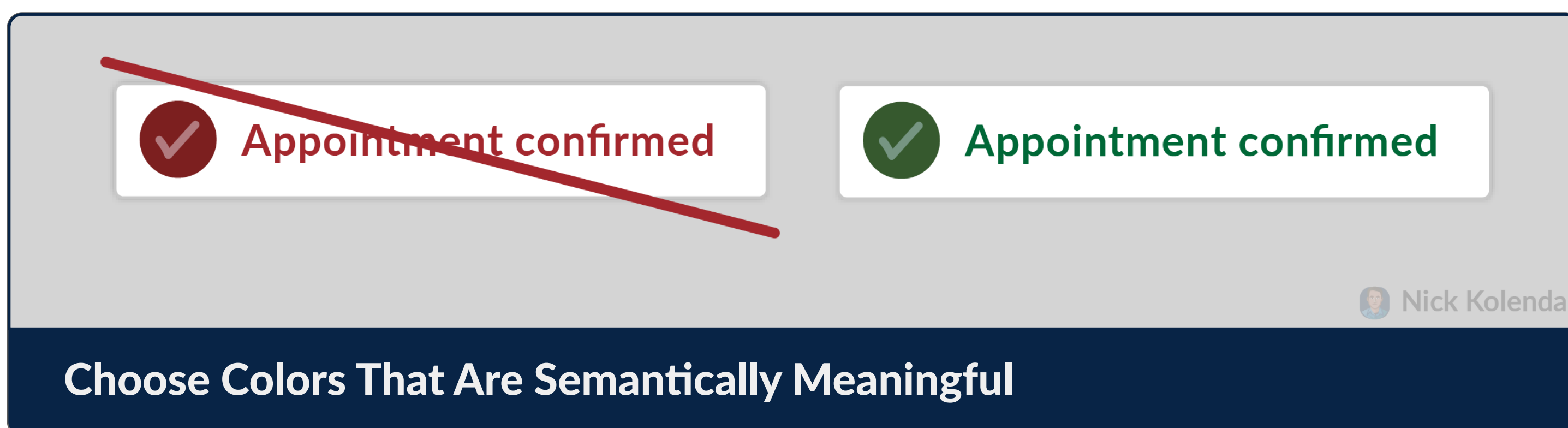
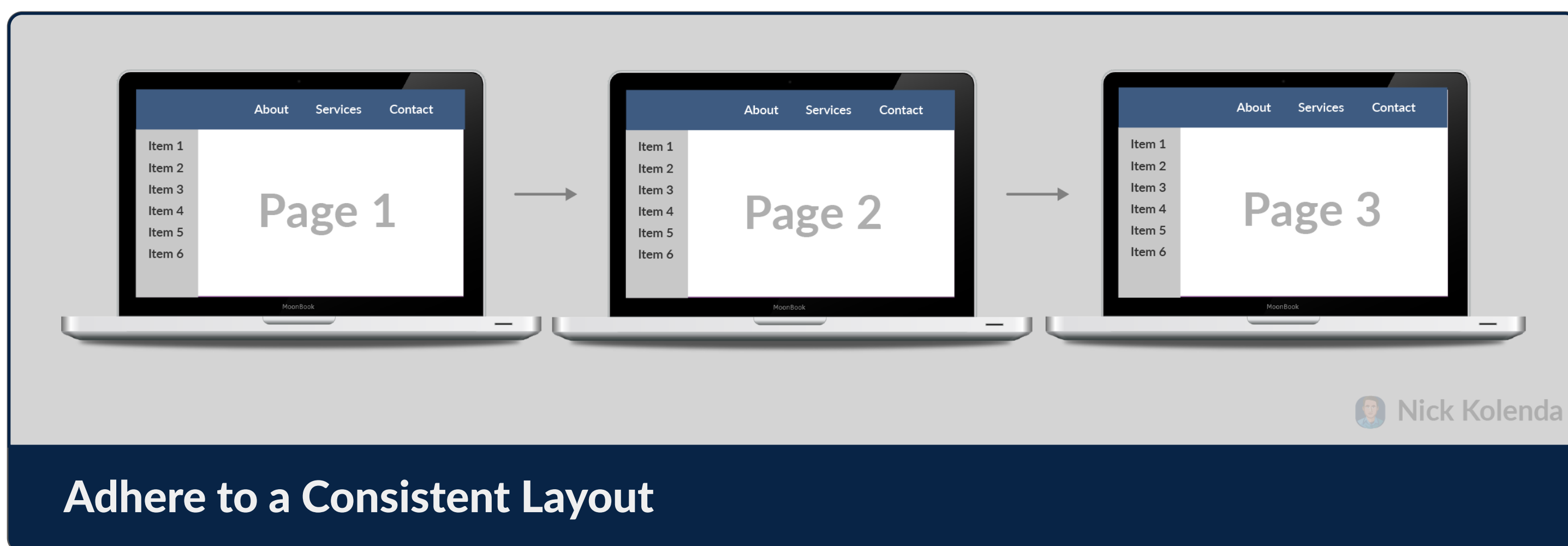
Nick Kolenda

Specify the Interaction That Will Occur

Match the User's Expectations

Once you communicate the right expectations, verify them.







GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS



GUIDELINE 2

UNDERSTANDING



GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT



GUIDELINE 4

ERRORS

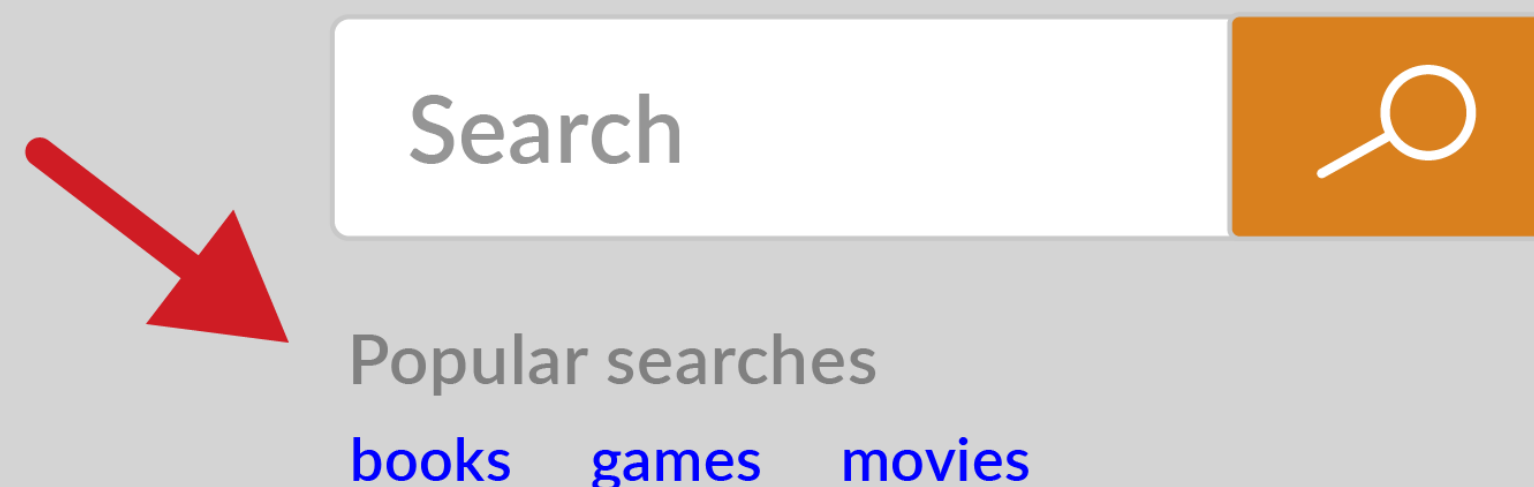


GUIDELINE 5

COMPATIBILITY


Help Users Choose Options

More options aren't necessarily better. Simplify choices.



 Nick Kolenda

Suggest a Starting Point



Price	\$195	\$285	\$125
Reviews	★★★★☆	★★★★★	★★★★☆
Brand	Acme	ABC Corp	Widget LLC
Size	26 in	32 in	32 in

 Nick Kolenda

Compare Options Across Attributes

Free

\$0 / month

Best Value

Standard

\$25 / month

Enterprise

Contact Us

Recommend an Option

Ad budget

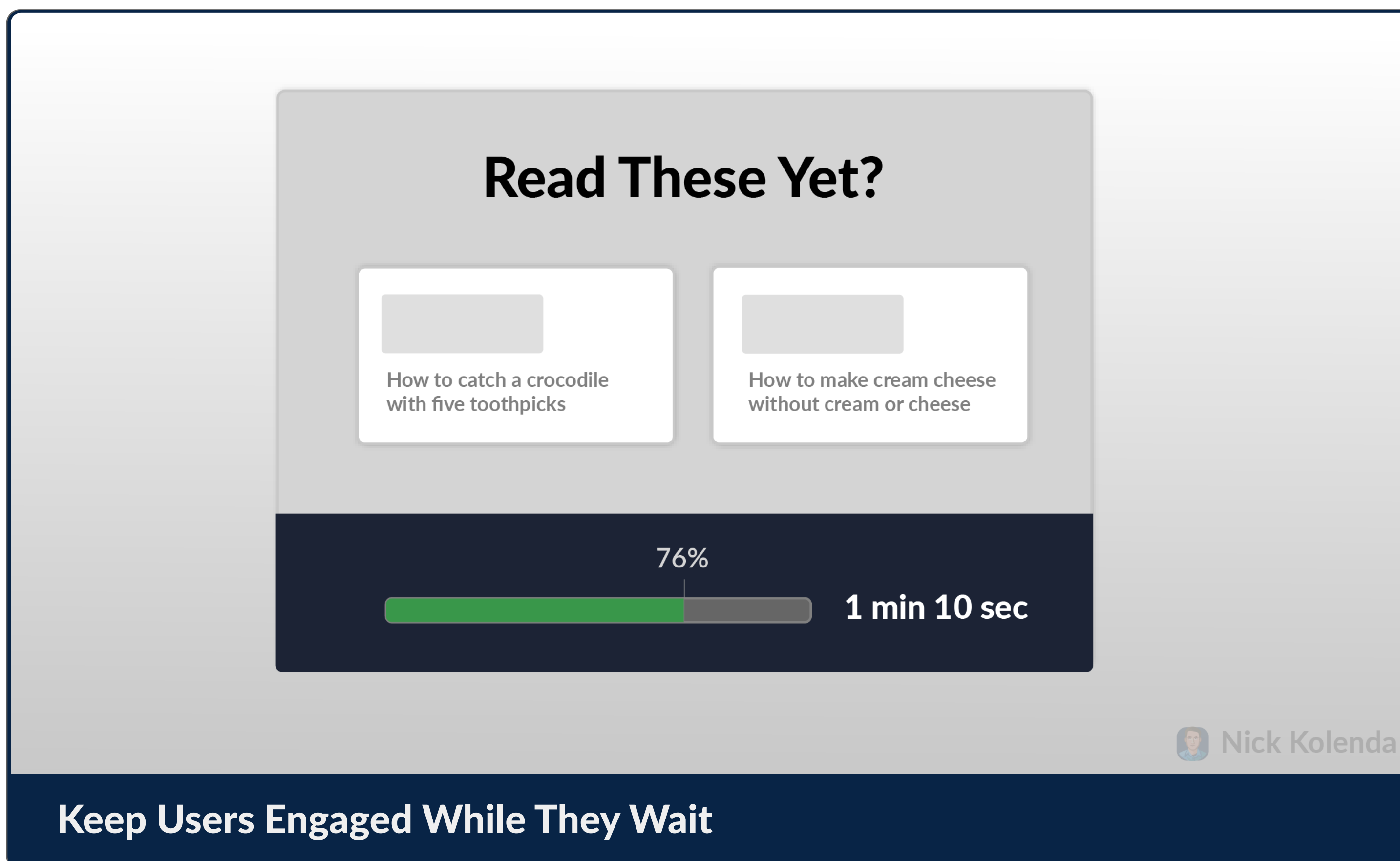
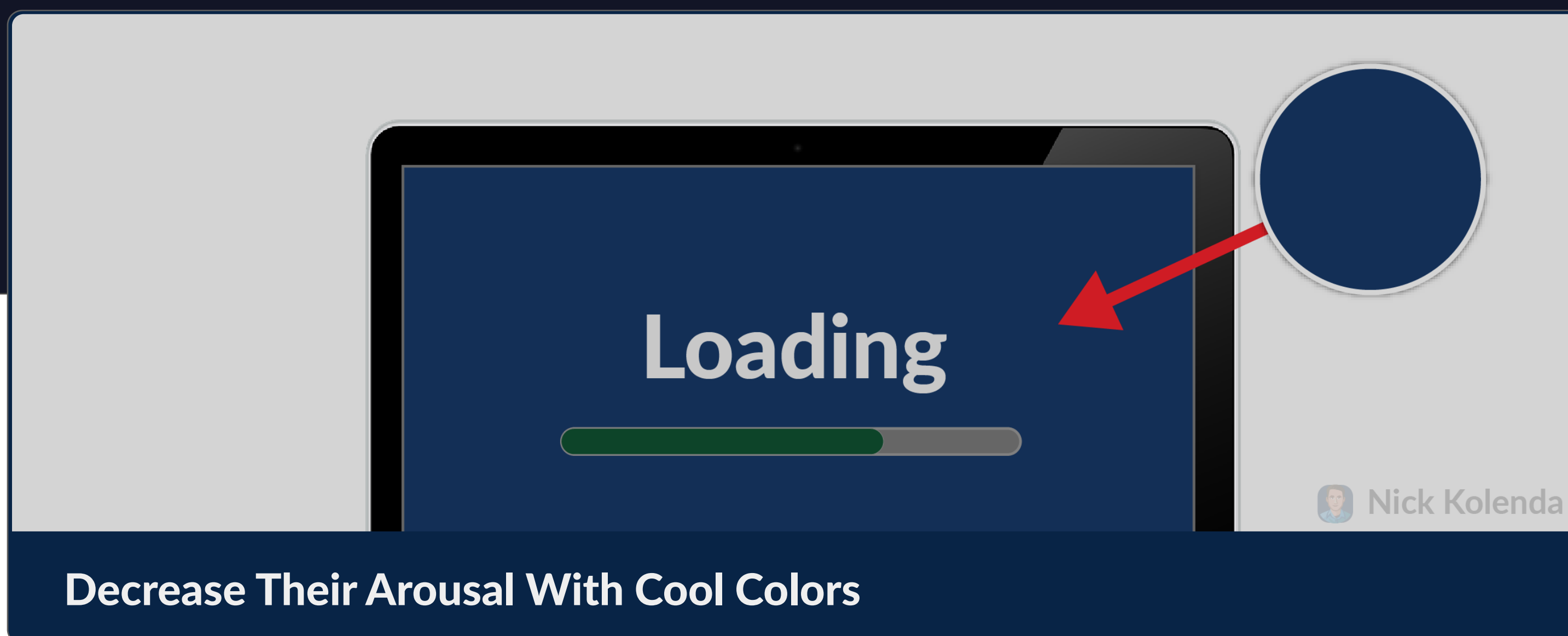
\$

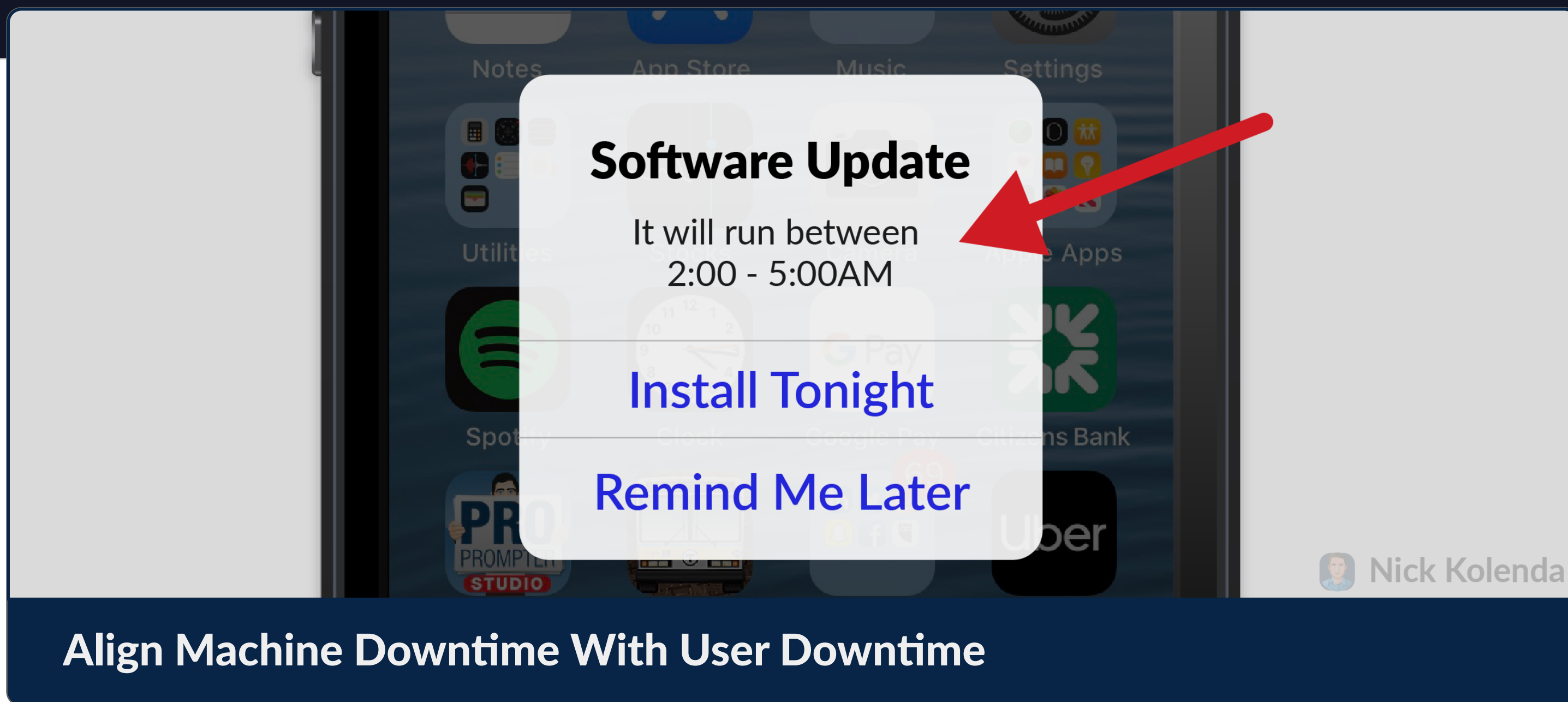
Most users start with \$10/day

Show the Typical Answer

Minimize the Detriments of Waiting

If users need to wait for something, shorten the length of this time.

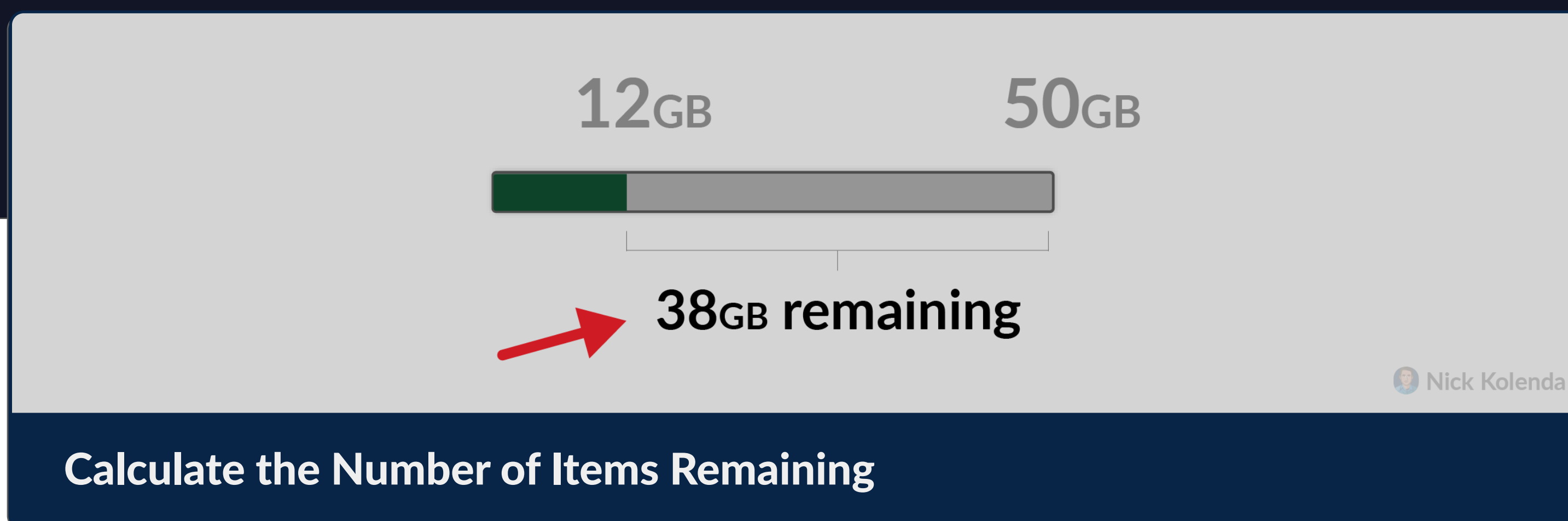




EFFORT

Minimize Reliance on Calculations and Memory

Don't let users struggle to calculate or remember something.





A form with two input fields. The first field is labeled "Name" and contains the text "Nick". A red arrow points to the "Name" label. The second field is labeled "Email" and is empty. A small "Nick Kolenda" logo is in the bottom right corner.

Keep Pertinent Information Visible

Your discount code

XRK483 Copy



 Nick Kolenda


Let Users Copy Information

Article 1	Description	New
Article 2	Description	
Article 3	Description	New
Article 4	Description	
Article 5	Description	




 Nick Kolenda

Indicate Which Items Users Have Already Viewed

Username or Email 

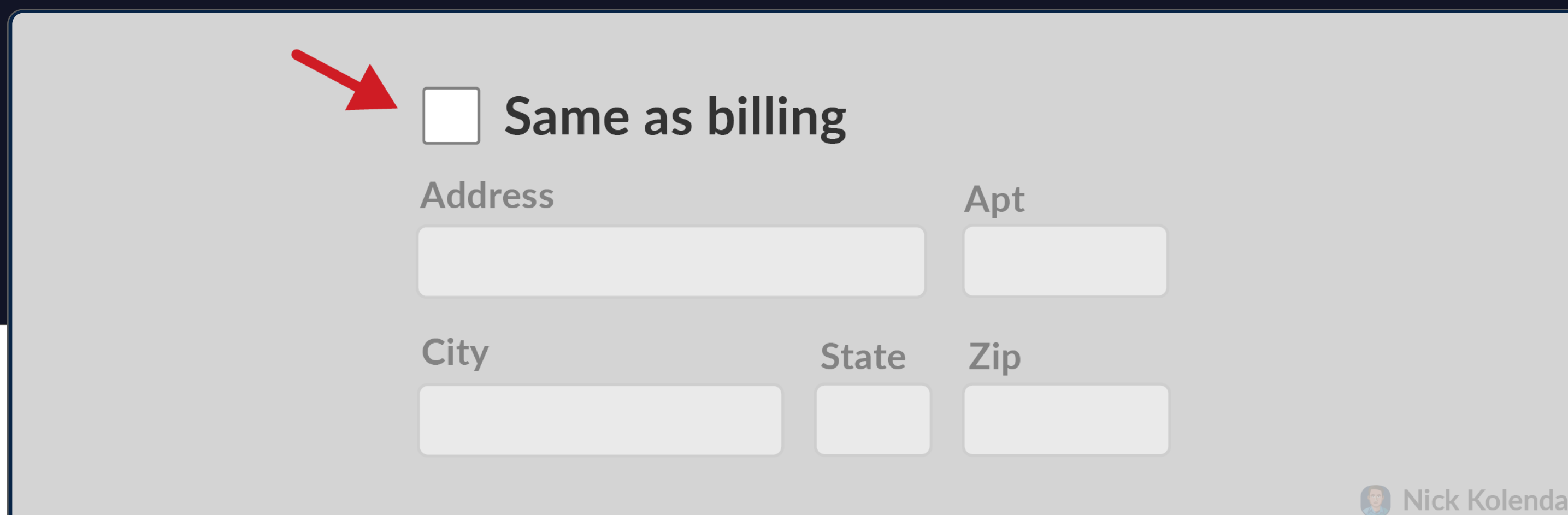
Password

 Nick Kolenda

Minimize Credentials That Are Specific to the Interface

Minimize Redundant Tasks

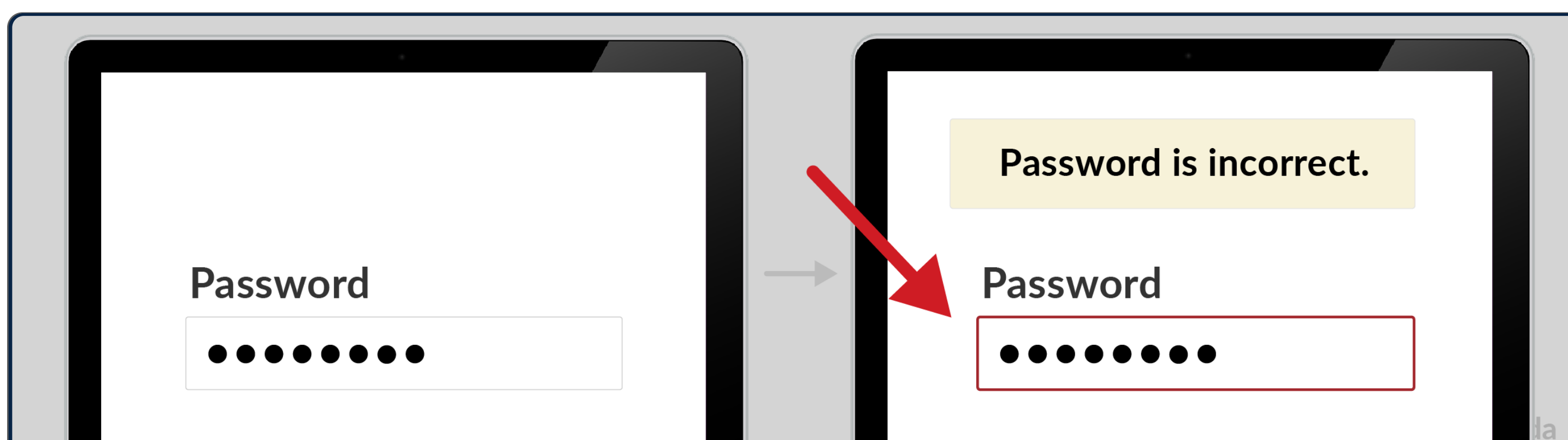
Sometimes users need to perform the same action again. Make it easier.



A red arrow points to a checkbox labeled "Same as billing". Below this are input fields for "Address", "Apt", "City", "State", and "Zip".

Nick Kolenda

Let Users Duplicate Past Input

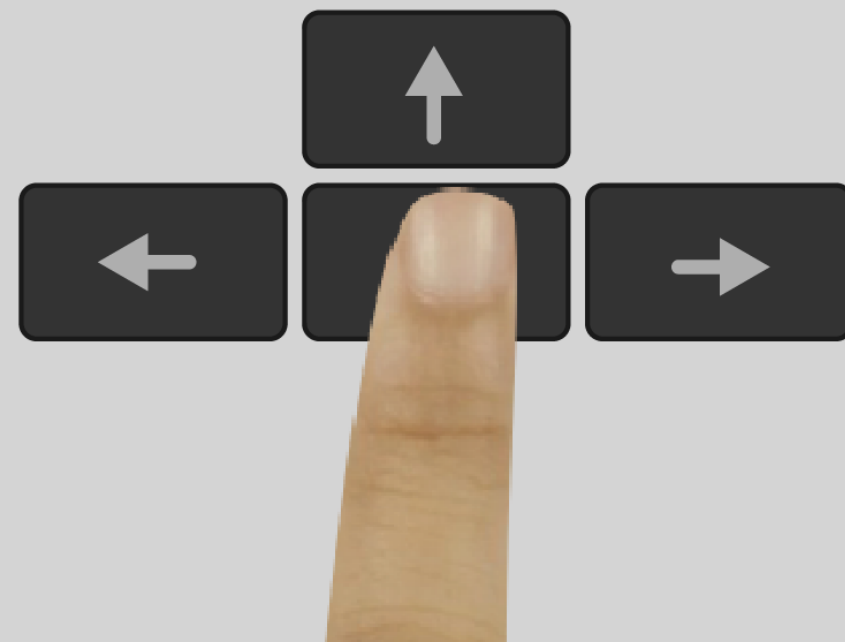


The diagram shows two states of a password form. On the left, a "Password" field with masked characters. An arrow points to the right, where the same field is shown with a red border. Above the field is a yellow message box that says "Password is incorrect.".

Preserve Input During Interface Changes

IF

more than 3 seconds



THEN

Speed up exponentially

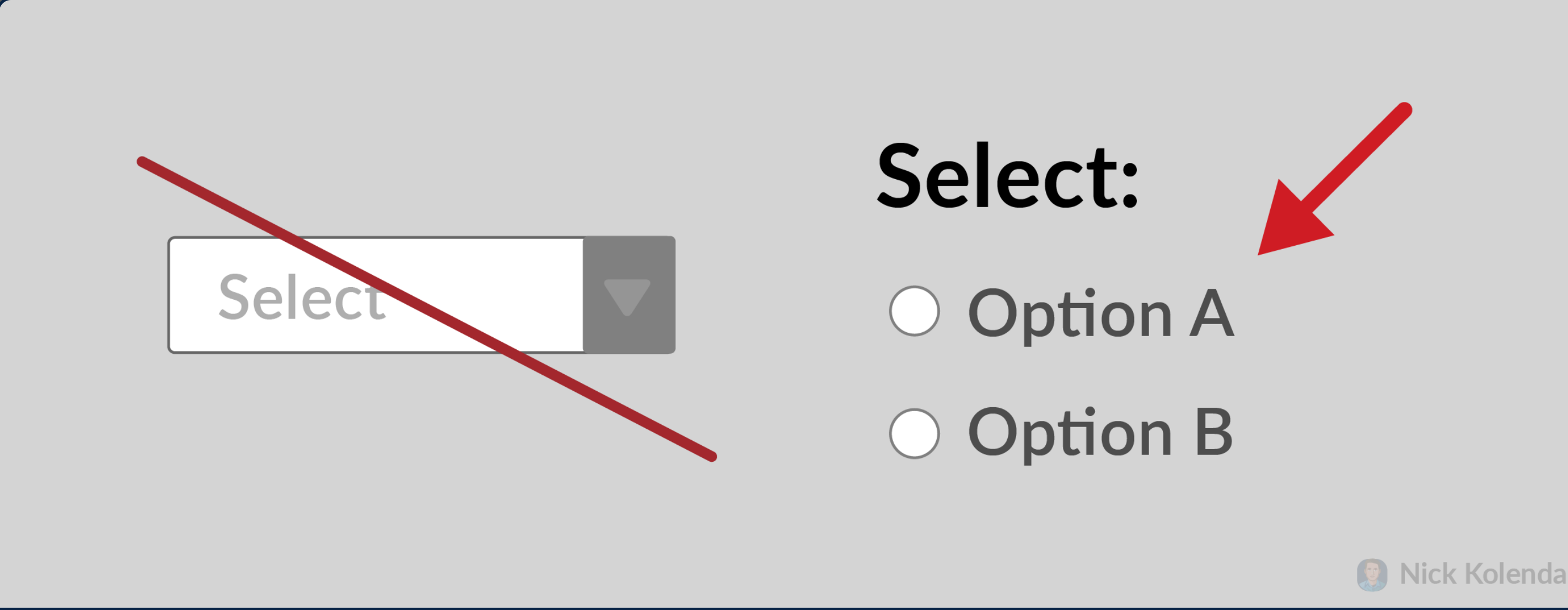


 Nick Kolenda

Monitor Excessive Input or Repetitions

Place Frequent Interactions Closer to Users

Not all functions are equal. Common functions should be easier.



The mockup shows a light gray rectangular area. On the left, there is a dropdown menu with the text "Select" and a downward arrow icon. A red diagonal line is drawn over this dropdown. To the right of the dropdown, the word "Select:" is written in a large, bold font. A red arrow points from the top right towards the "Select:" text. Below "Select:", there are two radio button options: "Option A" and "Option B".

Select:

☐ Option A

☐ Option B

Nick Kolenda

Keep Options Visible in Small Assortments



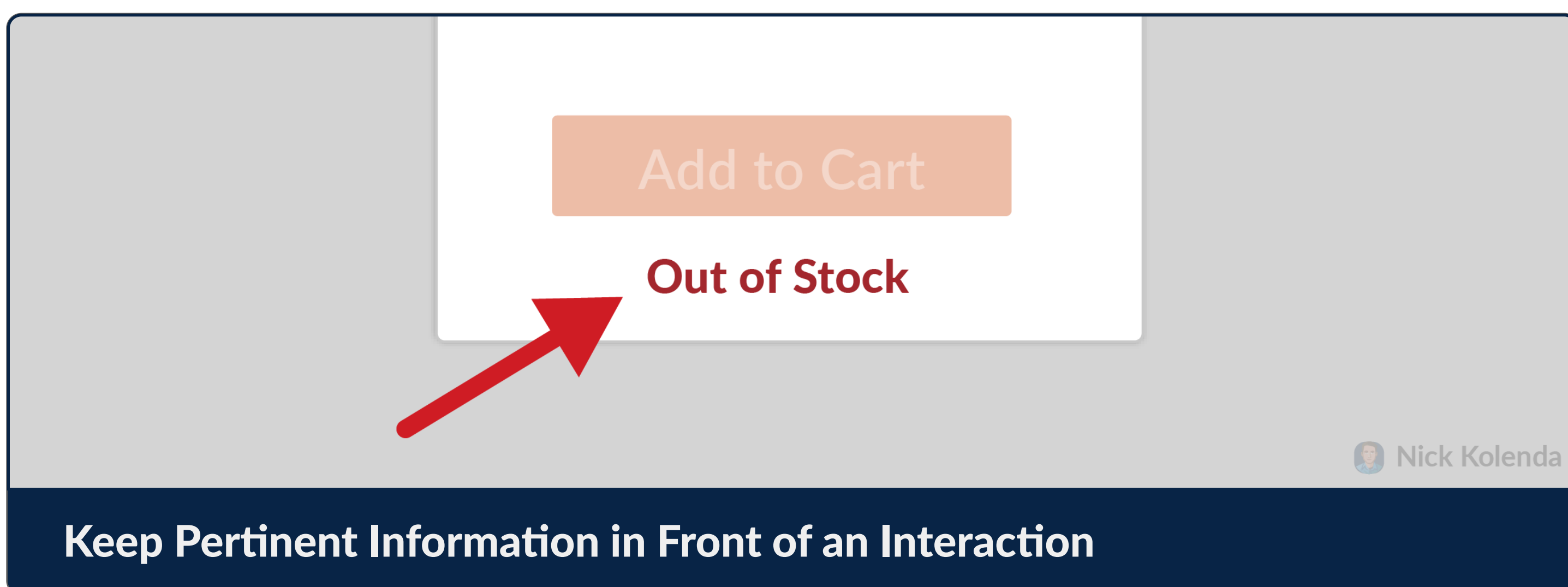
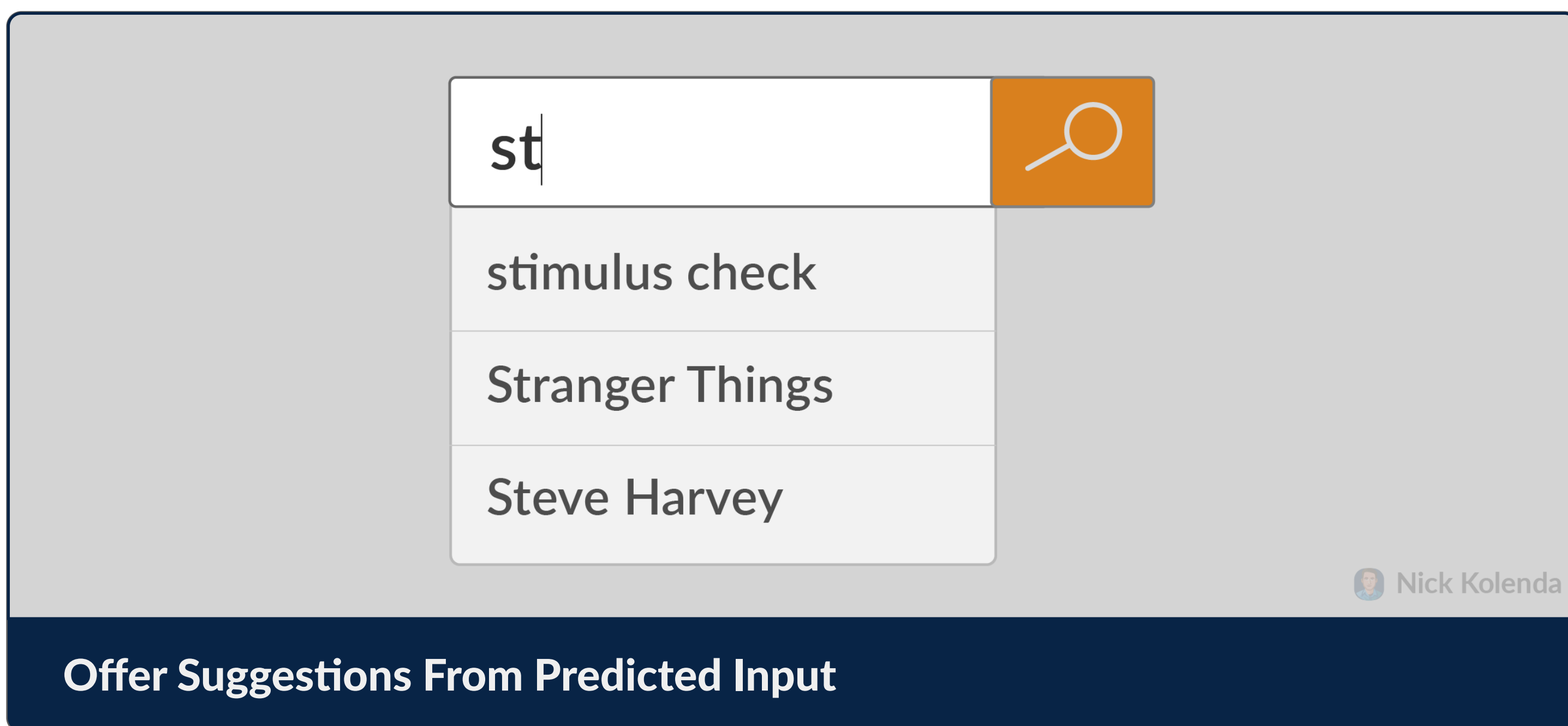
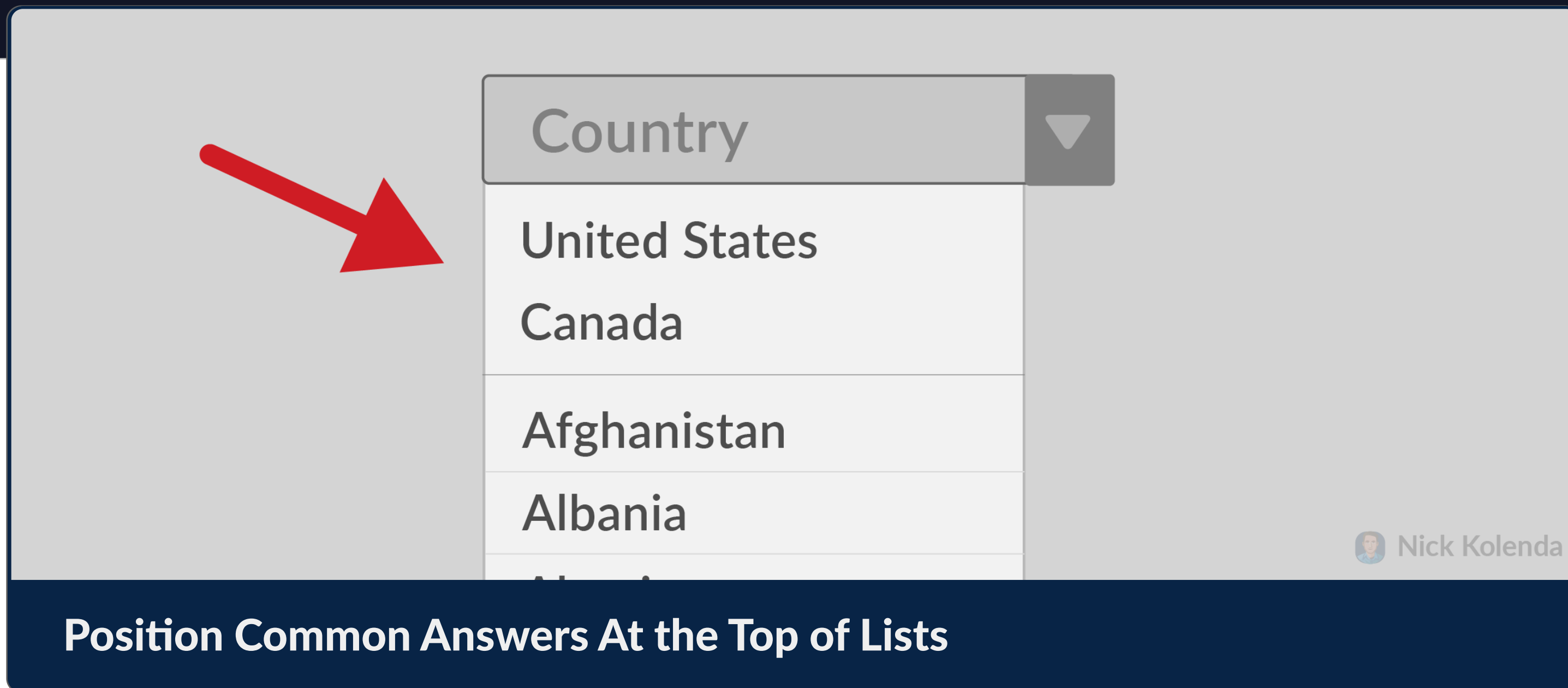
The mockup shows a light gray rectangular area. At the top, the label "Name" is above a text input field. Below the "Name" field, the label "Country" is above a dropdown menu. The dropdown menu currently displays "United States" and has a downward arrow icon. A red arrow points from the left towards the "Country" dropdown.

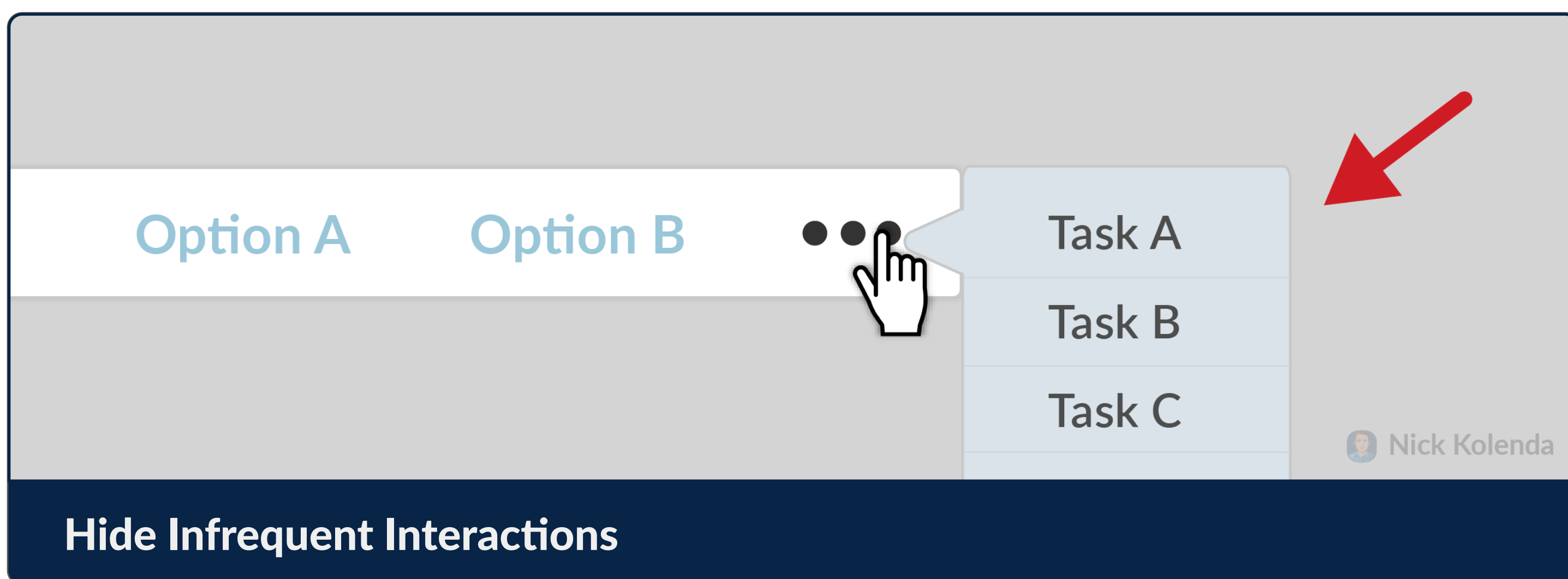
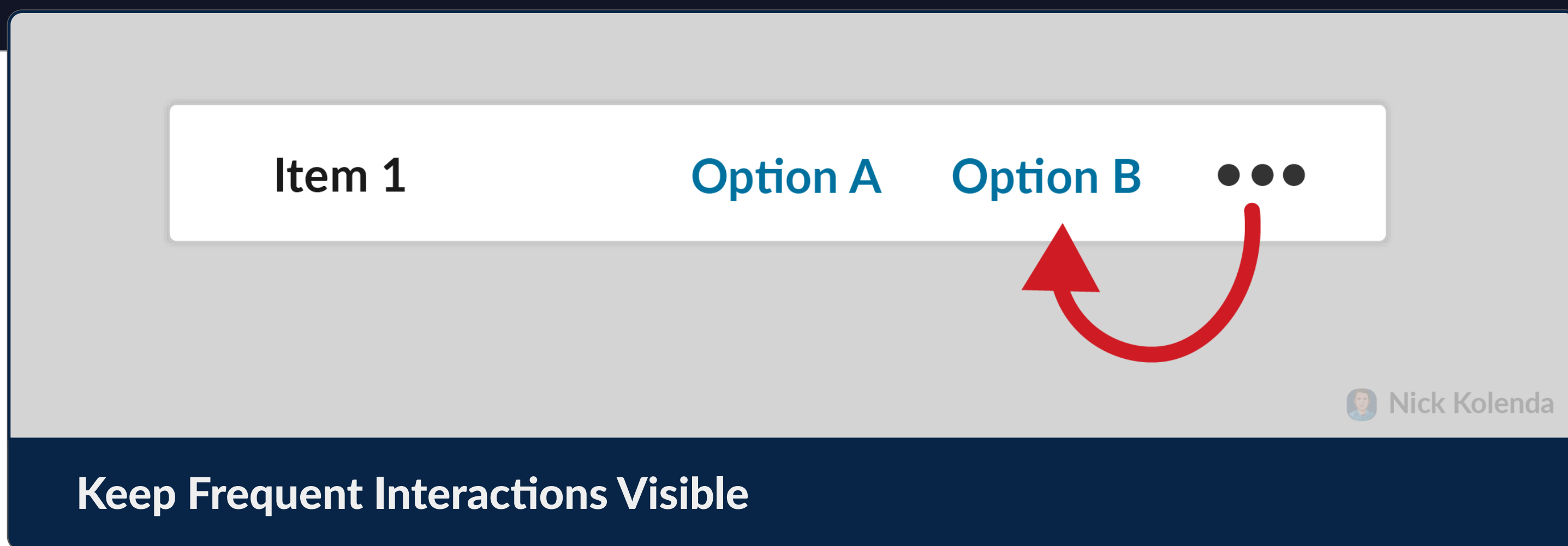
Name

Country

Nick Kolenda

Prefill Input Fields With Common Responses

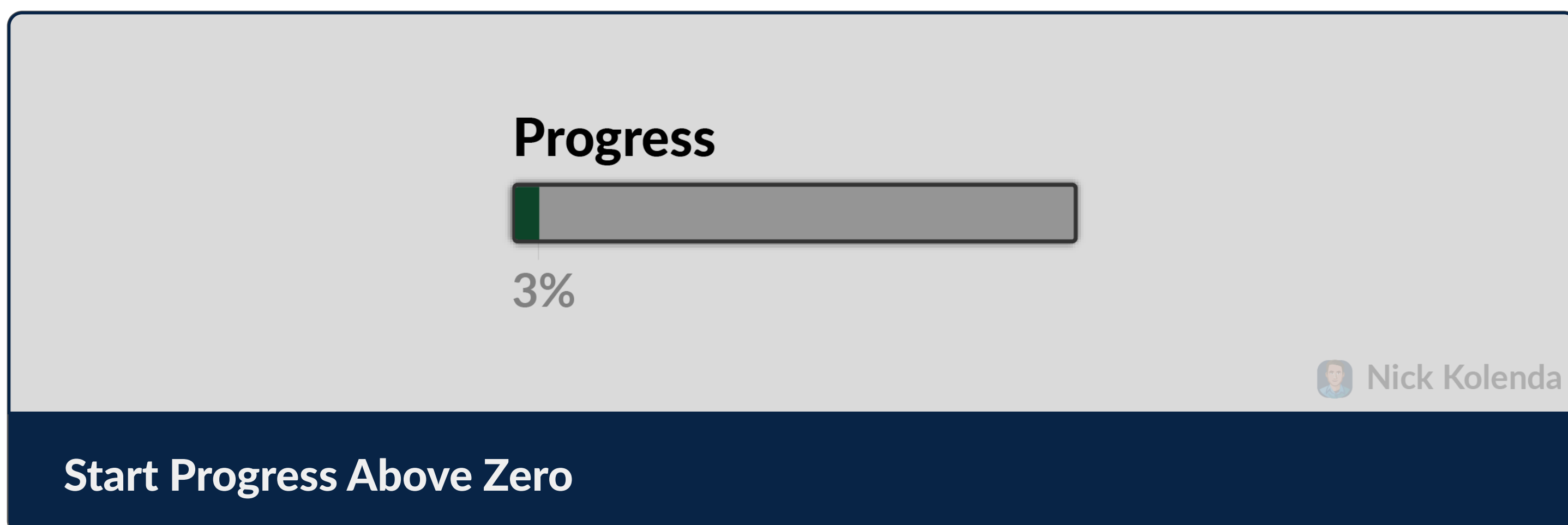
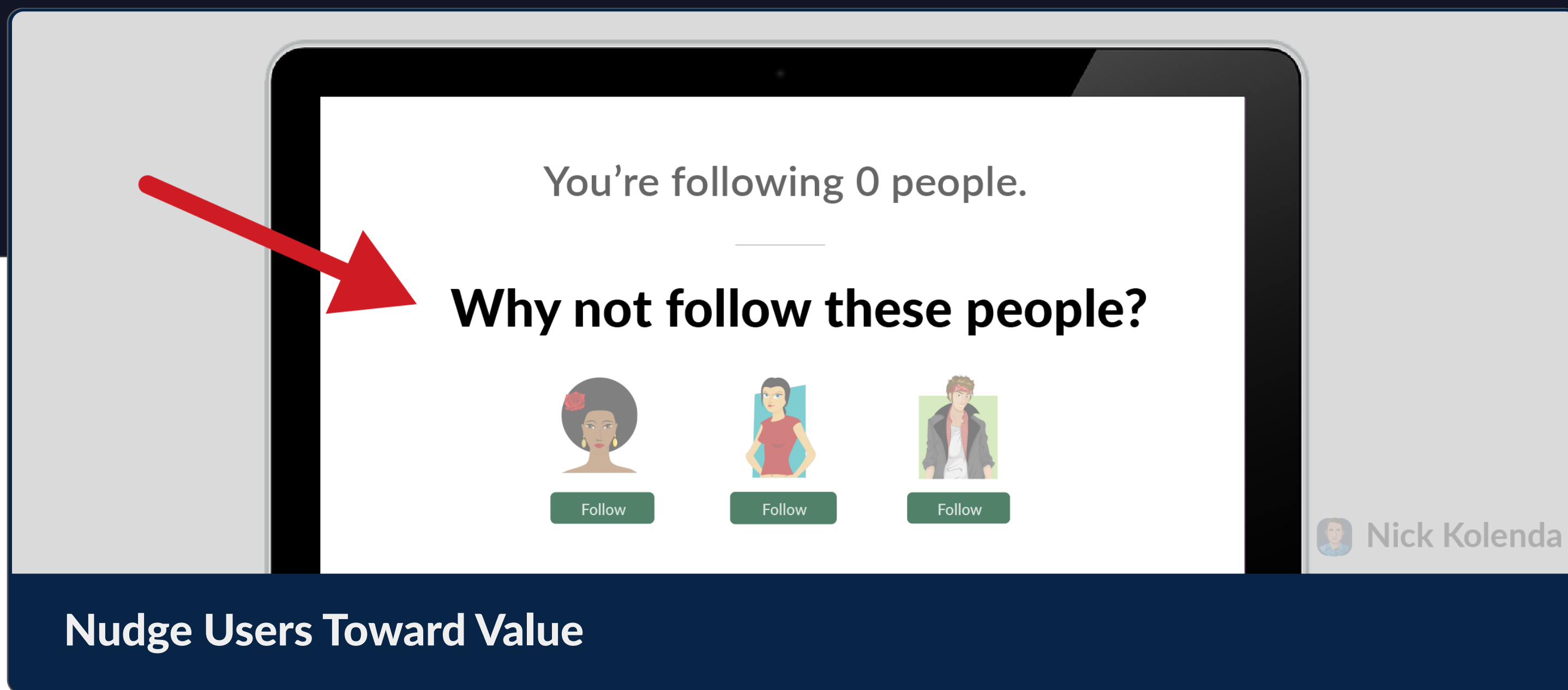




EFFORT

Guide Users Toward Their Goal

Give 'em a push.





GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS



GUIDELINE 2

UNDERSTANDING



GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT



GUIDELINE 4

ERRORS

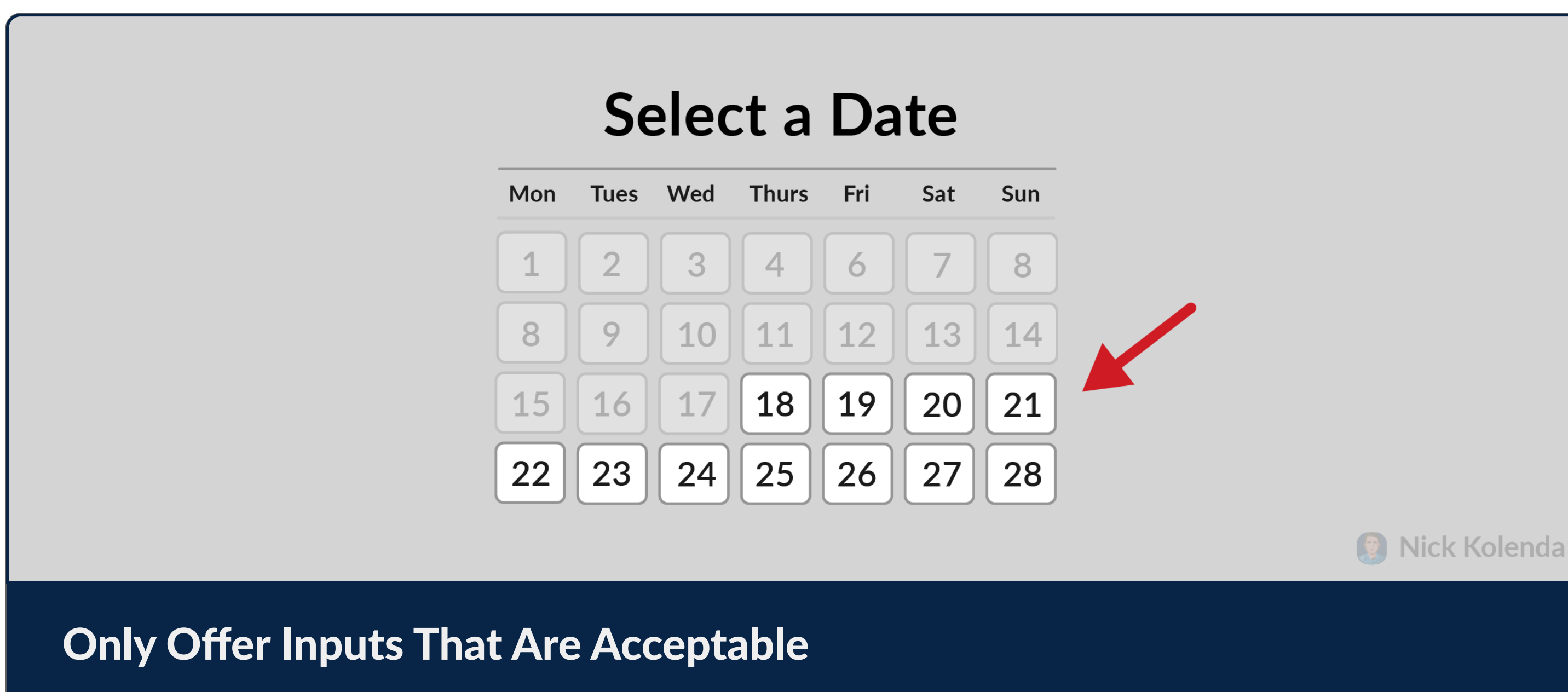


GUIDELINE 5

COMPATIBILITY


Prevent the Possibility of Errors


Design interfaces that are error-proof.



☒ Save to cloud

☐ Autosave every 15 minutes ▾




 Nick Kolenda

Enable Functions Only When Necessary

Enter Serial Number:

—


 Nick Kolenda

Structure Text Fields to Match Input

Type DELETE to delete your account

This action is irreversible.

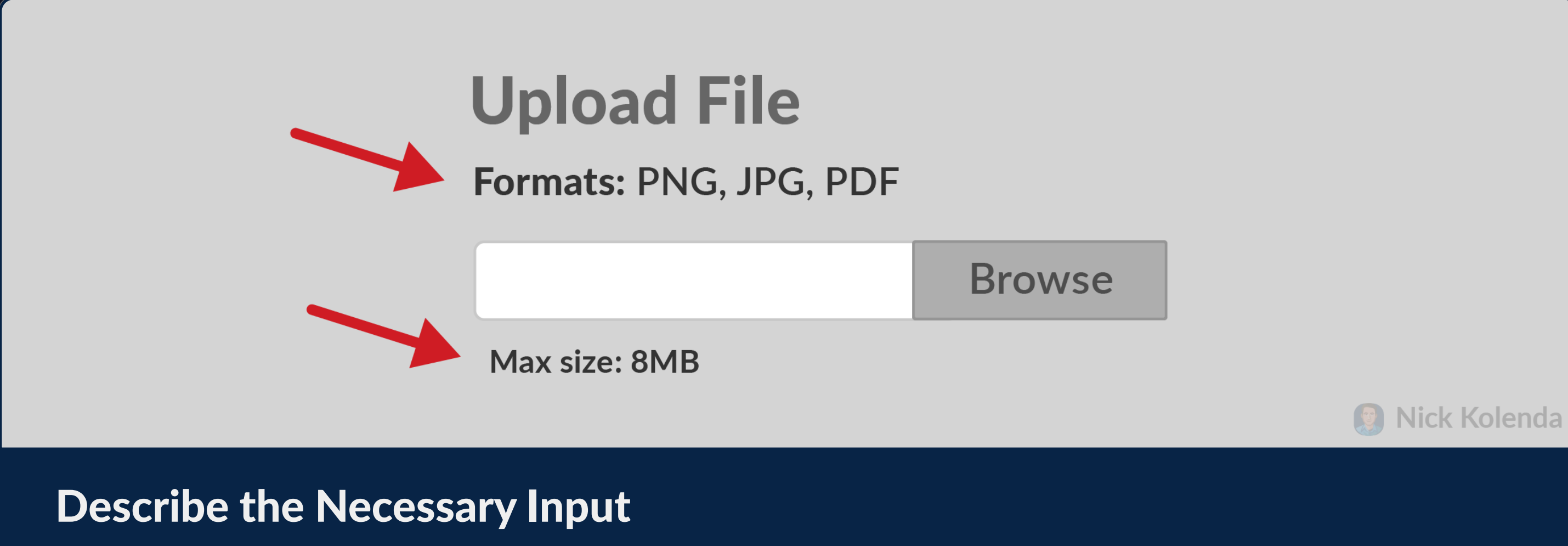
Delete

 Nick Kolenda

Add Constraints to Irreversible Changes

Communicate the Requirements for an Interaction

What do users need in order to do something?



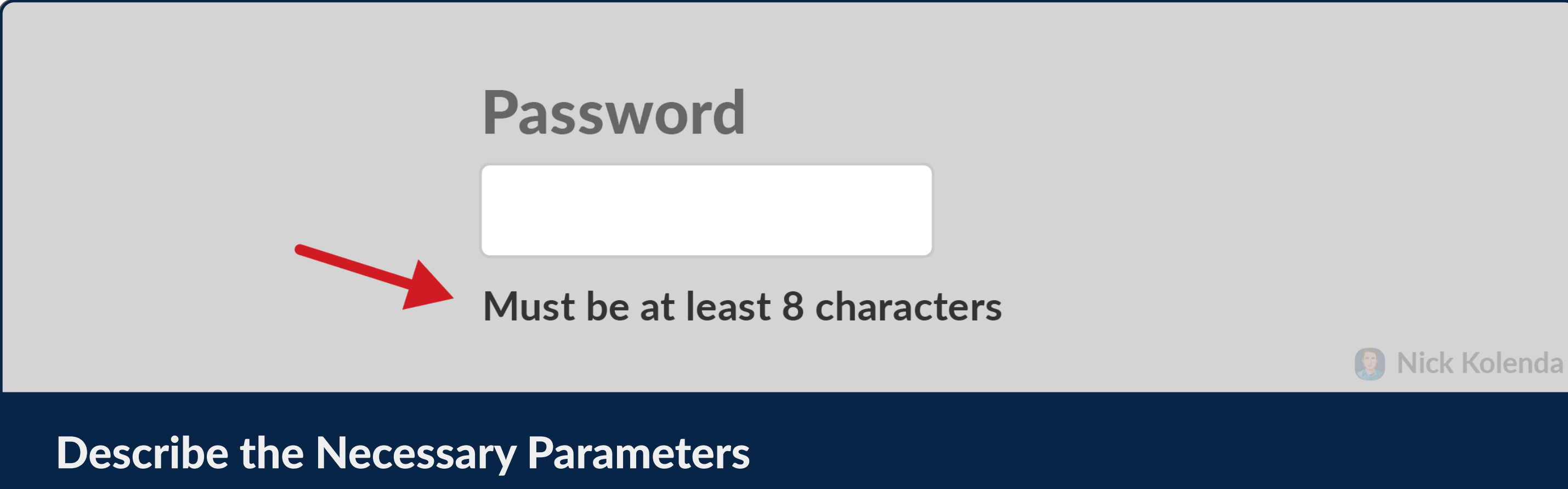
Upload File
Formats: PNG, JPG, PDF

Max size: 8MB

Nick Kolenda

Describe the Necessary Input

This example shows a file upload form. It includes a title 'Upload File', supported formats 'Formats: PNG, JPG, PDF', a text input field, a 'Browse' button, and a maximum size requirement 'Max size: 8MB'. Red arrows point to the formats text and the max size text. The form is credited to Nick Kolenda and has a dark blue footer with the text 'Describe the Necessary Input'.



Password


Must be at least 8 characters

Nick Kolenda

Describe the Necessary Parameters


This example shows a password form. It includes a title 'Password', a password input field, and a requirement 'Must be at least 8 characters'. A red arrow points to the requirement text. The form is credited to Nick Kolenda and has a dark blue footer with the text 'Describe the Necessary Parameters'.

\$ USD

 Nick Kolenda

Populate the Units or Parameters

Address Apt

 Nick Kolenda

Match Form Sizes With Input Sizes

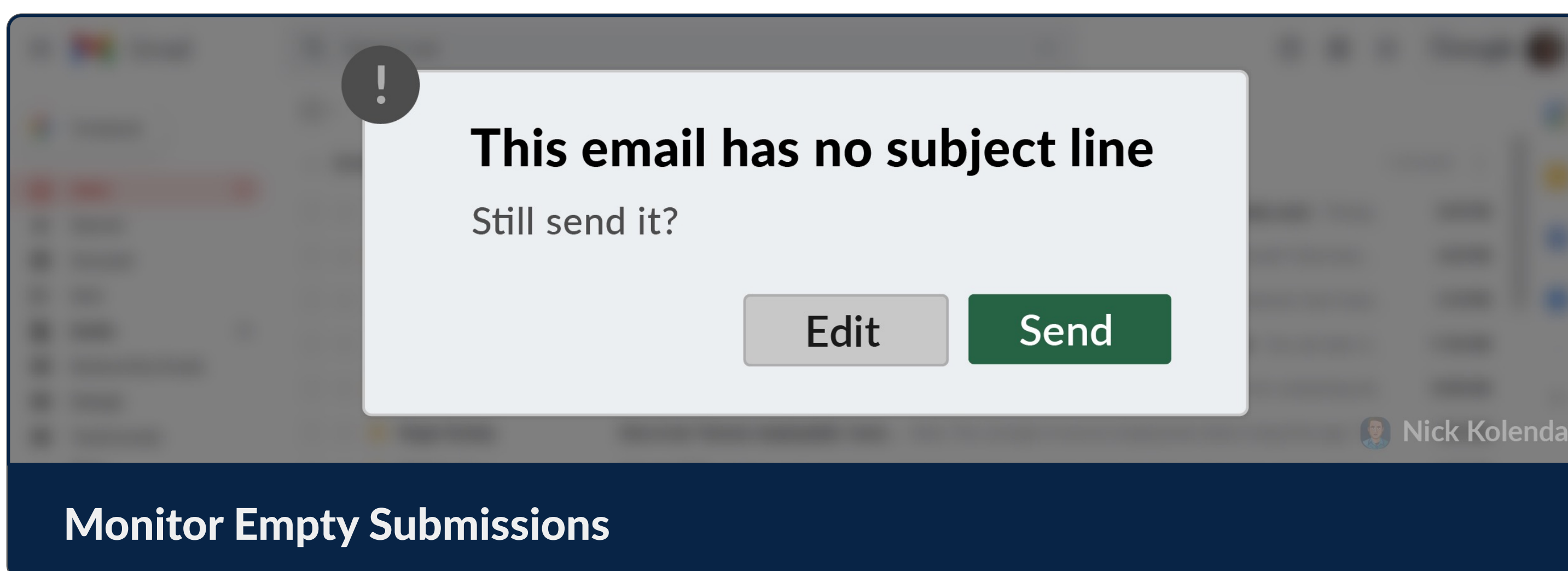
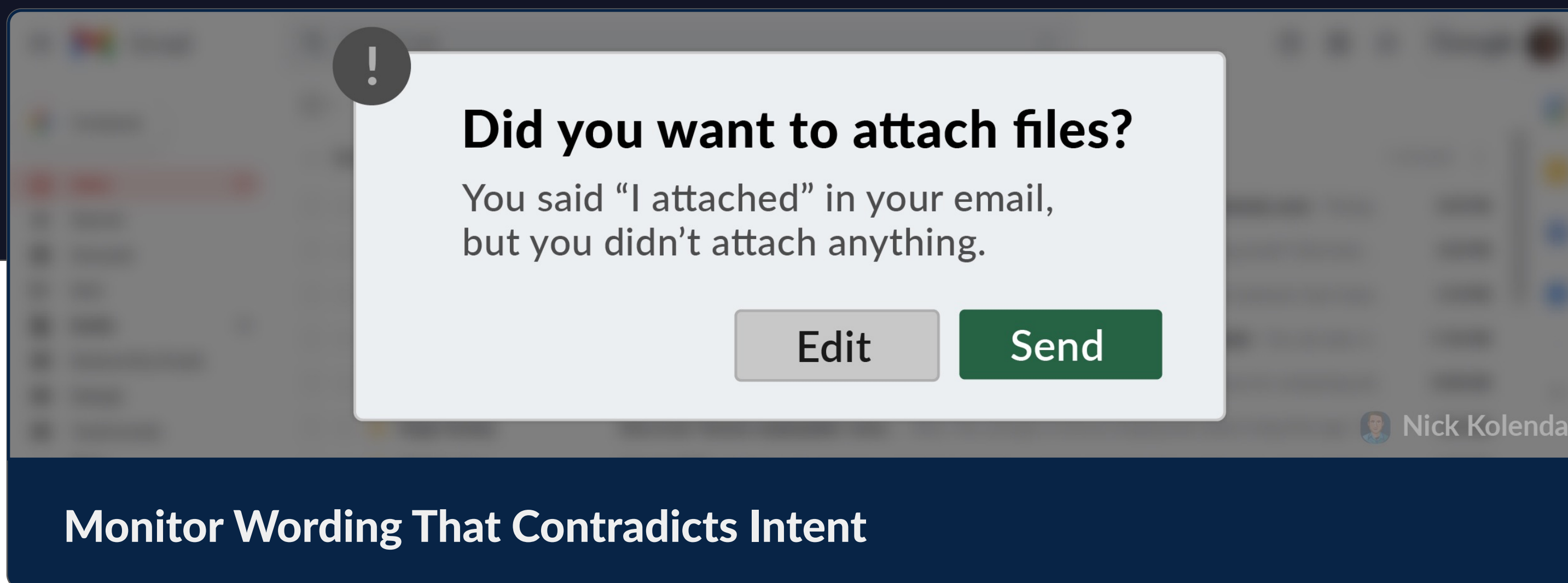
Address* 

 Nick Kolenda

Indicate Which Elements Are Required

Monitor Signals That Are Typical in Errors

Catch mistakes before they happen.



Are you still watching “Grey’s Anatomy”?

Continue Watching

Exit

Nick Kolenda

Monitor for Inactivity

You recently sent a payment of \$850 to Nick Kolenda

Send this new payment?

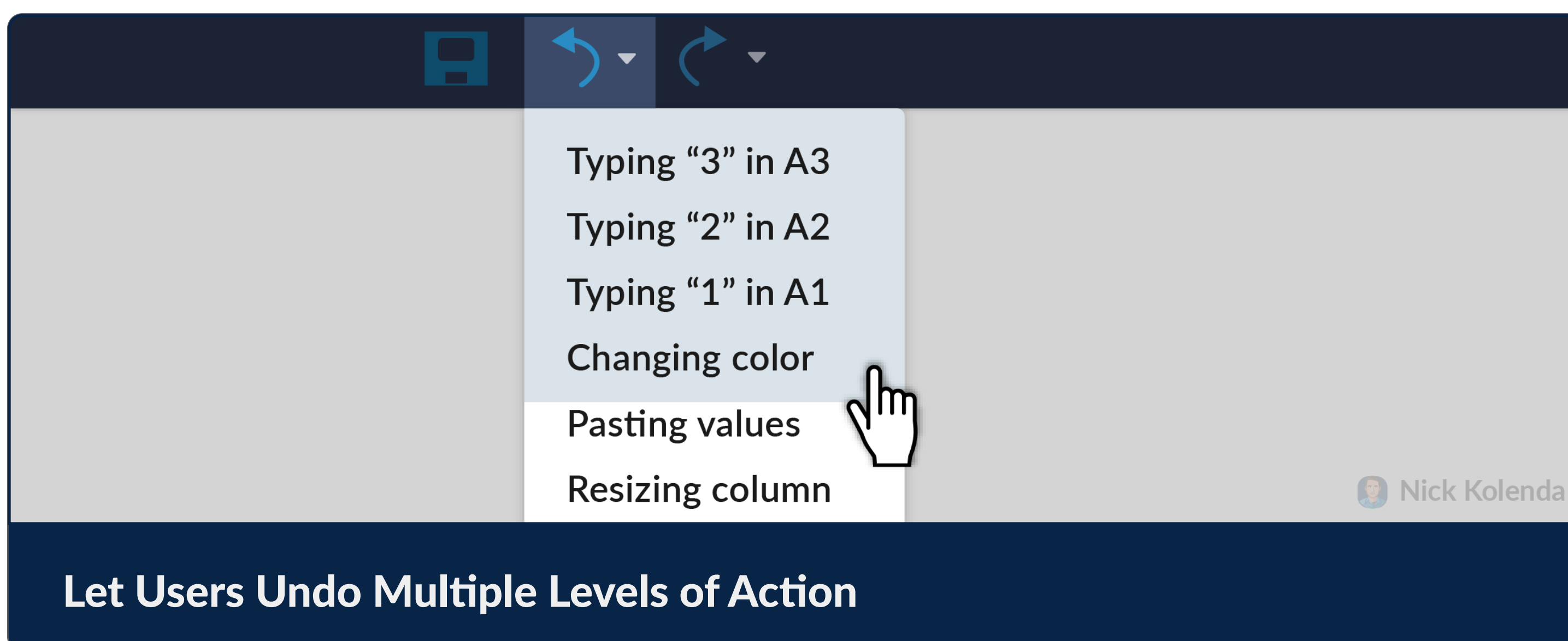
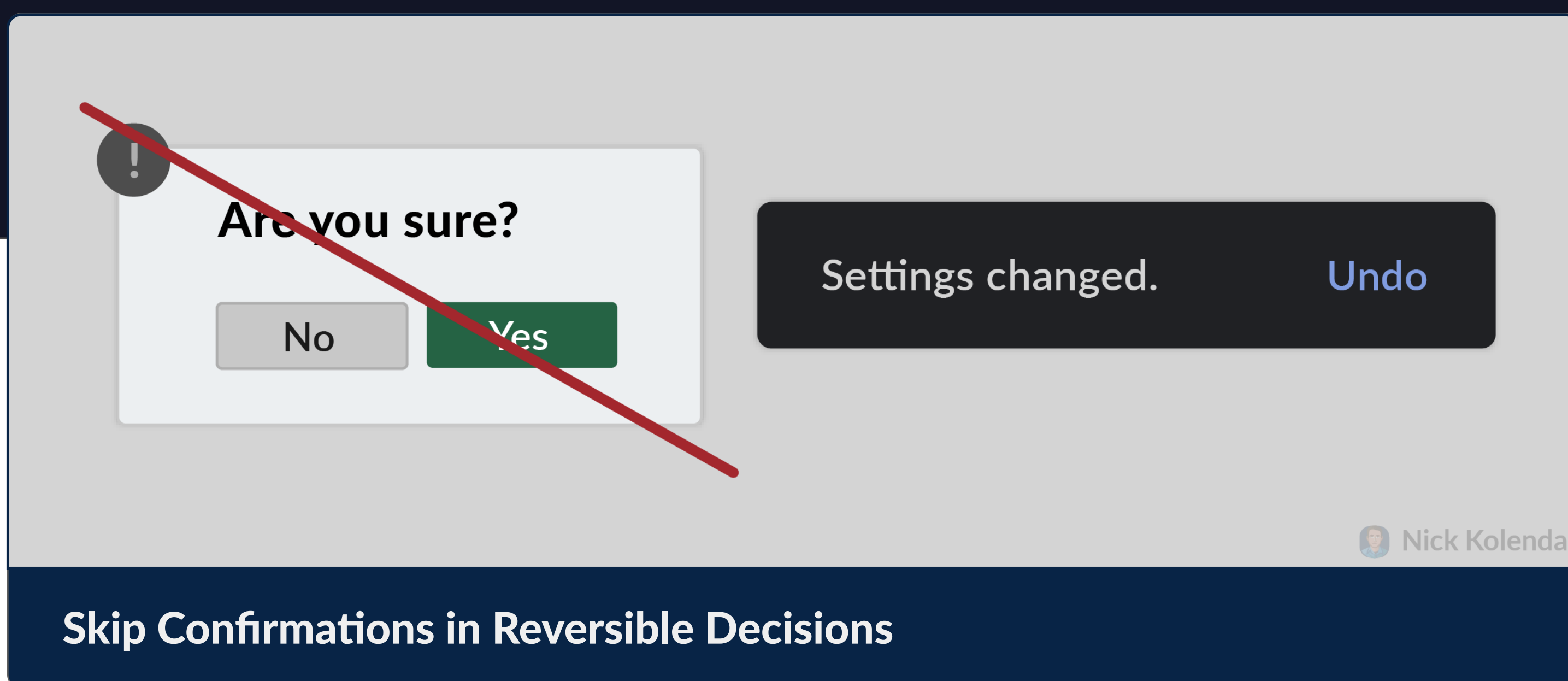
Cancel **Yes, send new payment**

Nick Kolenda

Confirm Whether a Repeated Action Was Intended

Provide Easy Ways to Revert or Escape

Help users reverse past slips.



Help Users Resolve the Issue

If users make a mistake, help them fix the problem.

~~Password is incorrect.~~

That password is old.

 Nick Kolenda

Identify the Problem and Solution to Errors

You don't have the right permissions.

Learn how to [acquire them](#).

 Nick Kolenda

Point Users to Support or Documentation

~~You forgot the zip code.~~

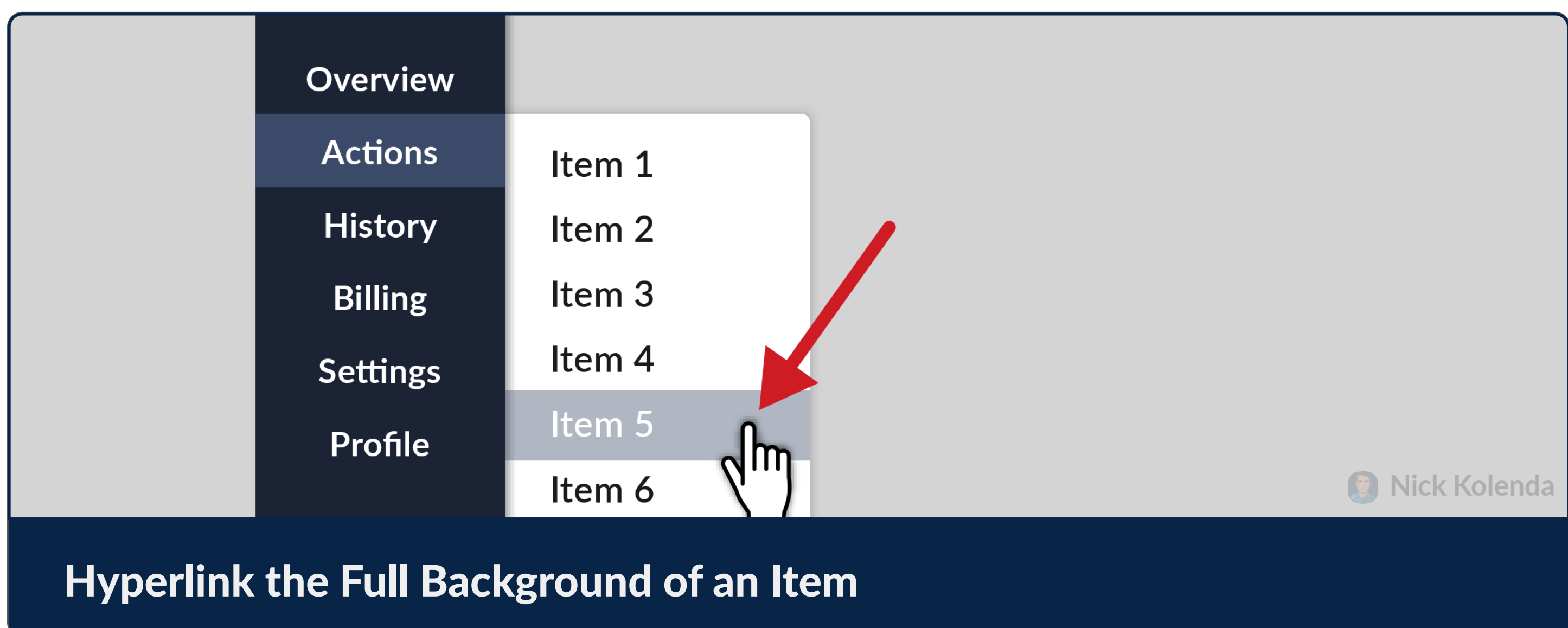
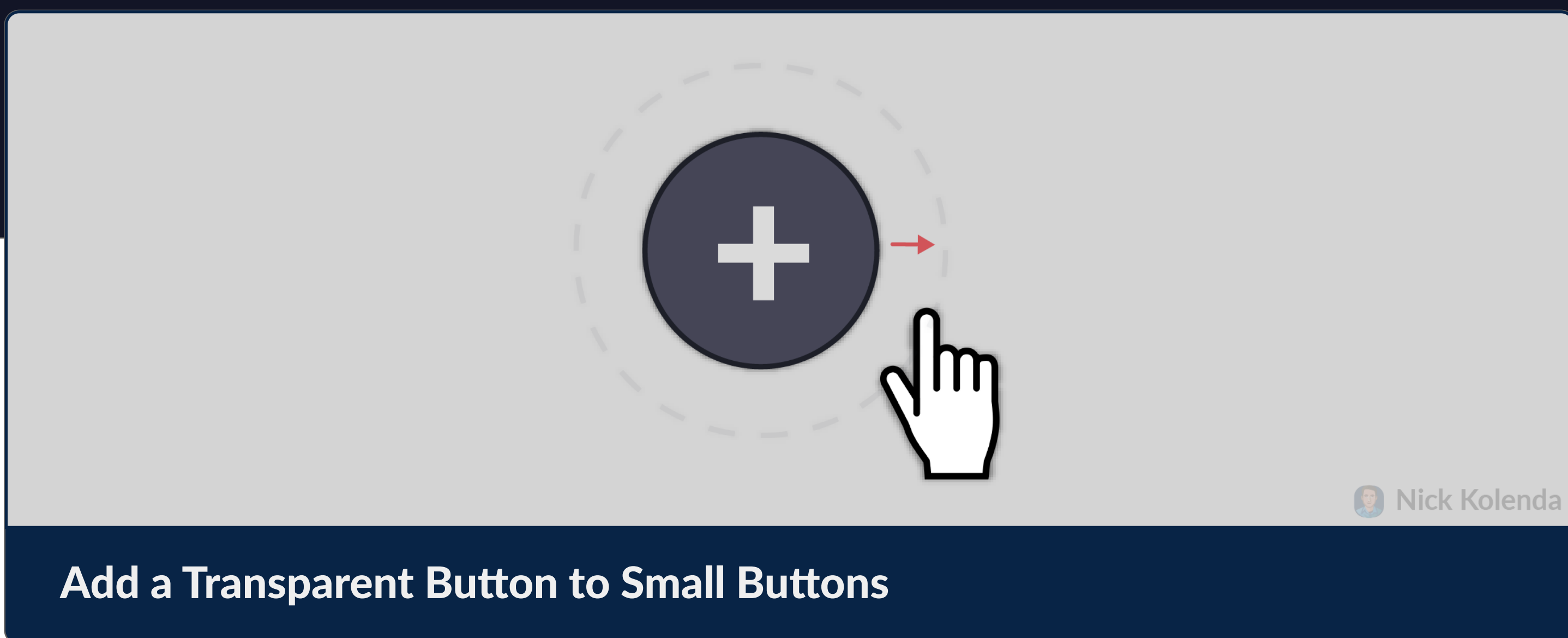
Please enter a zip code.

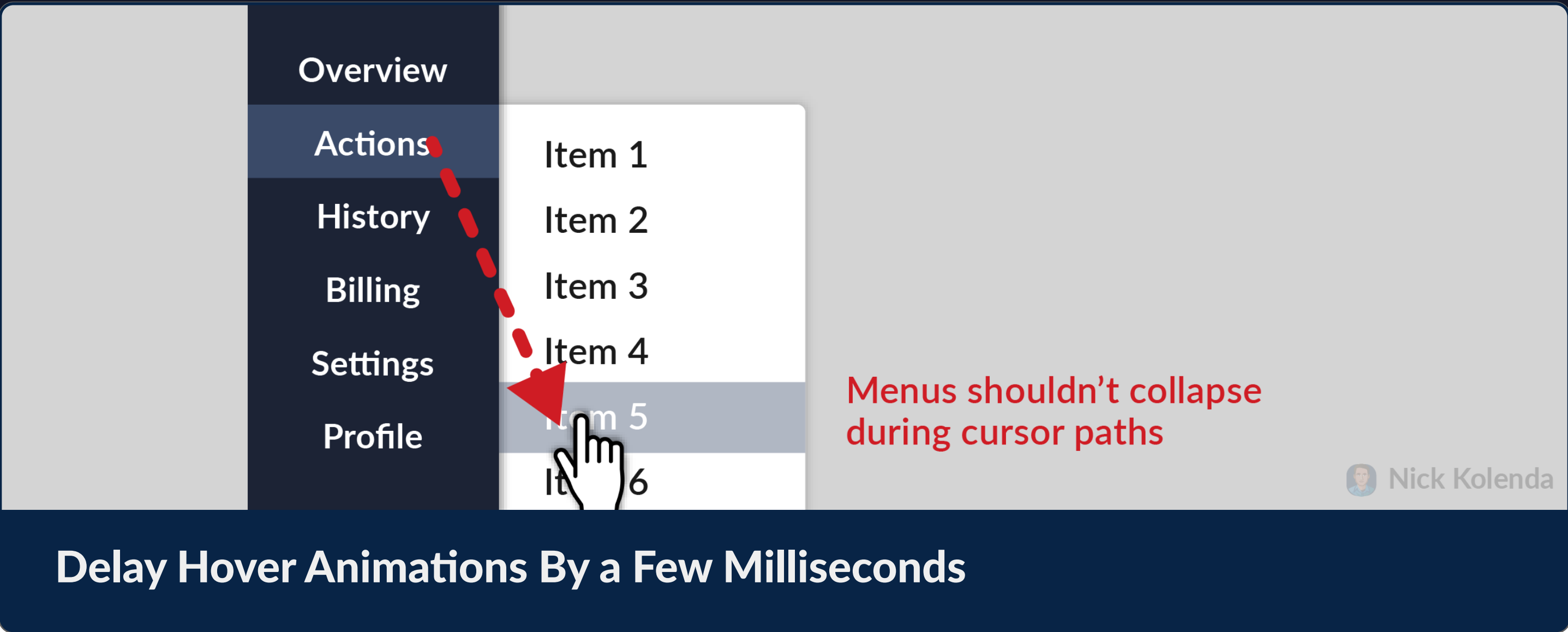
 Nick Kolenda

Avoid Saying "You" in Error Messages

Extend Movable Paths and Clickable Areas

Don't require precision.







GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS



GUIDELINE 2

UNDERSTANDING



GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT



GUIDELINE 4

ERRORS

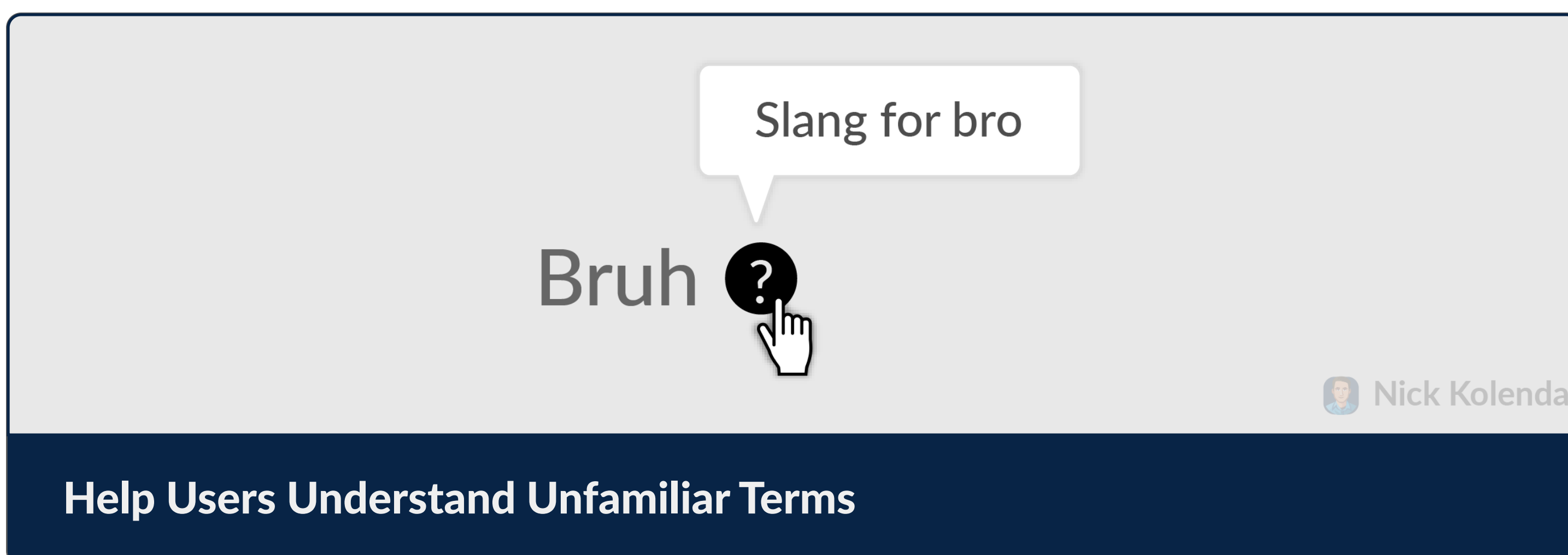
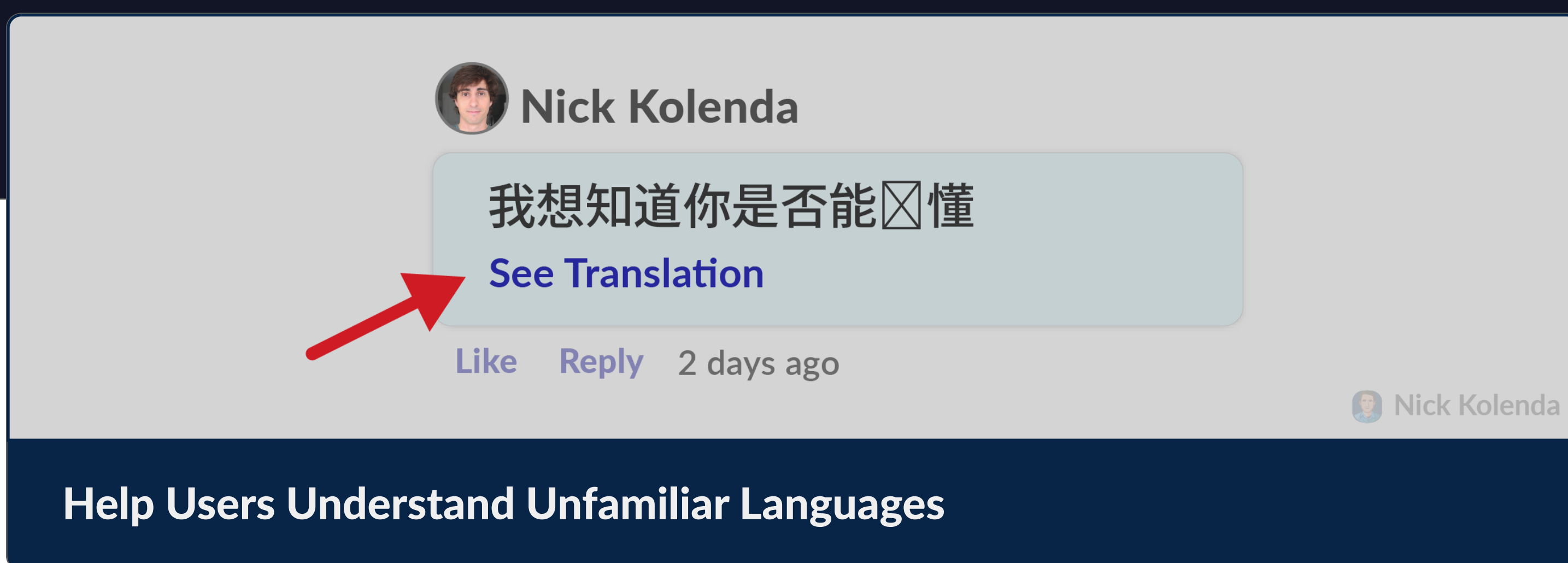


GUIDELINE 5

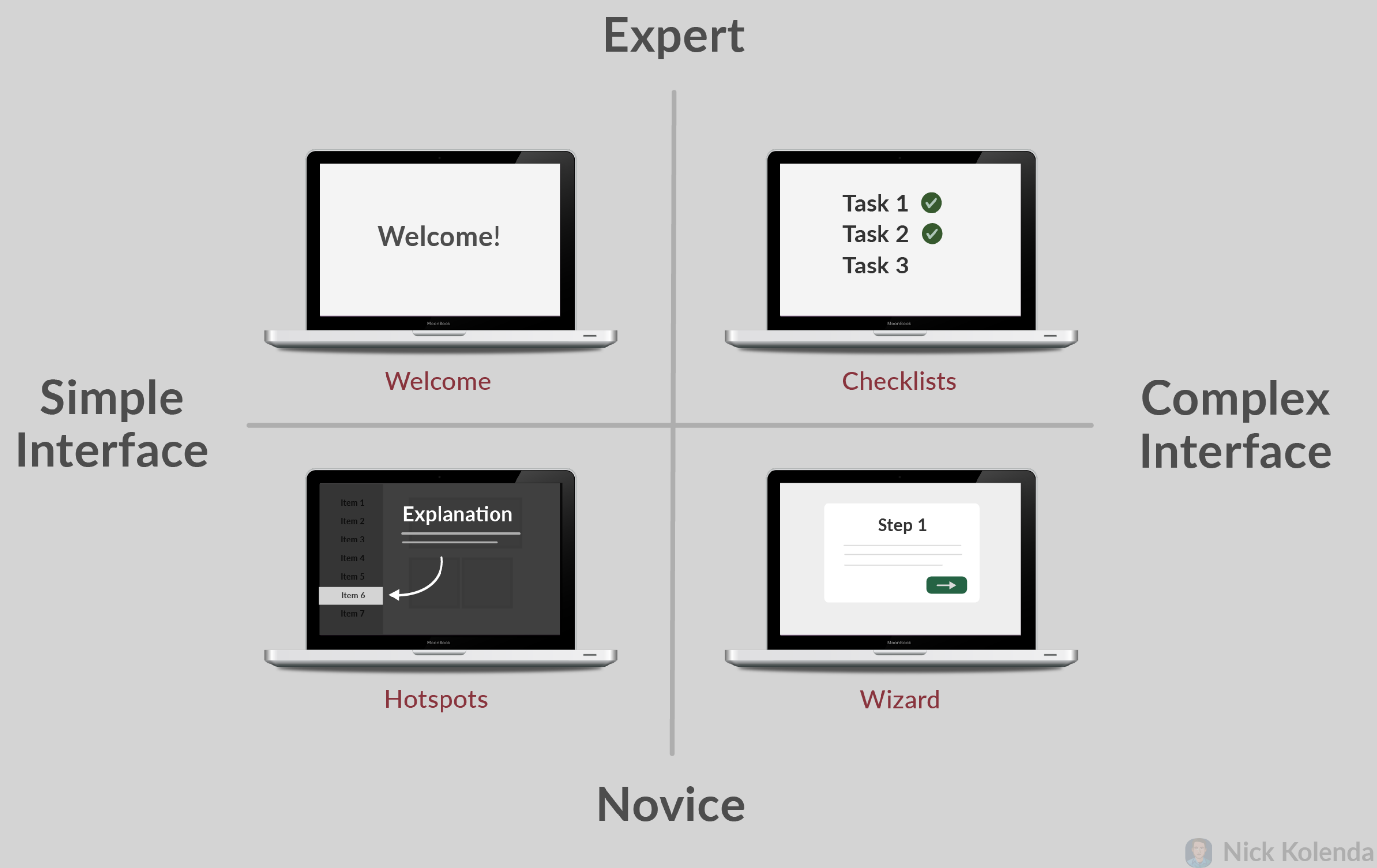
COMPATIBILITY

Accommodate the User's Skill or Knowledge

Help novice users without hindering expert users.



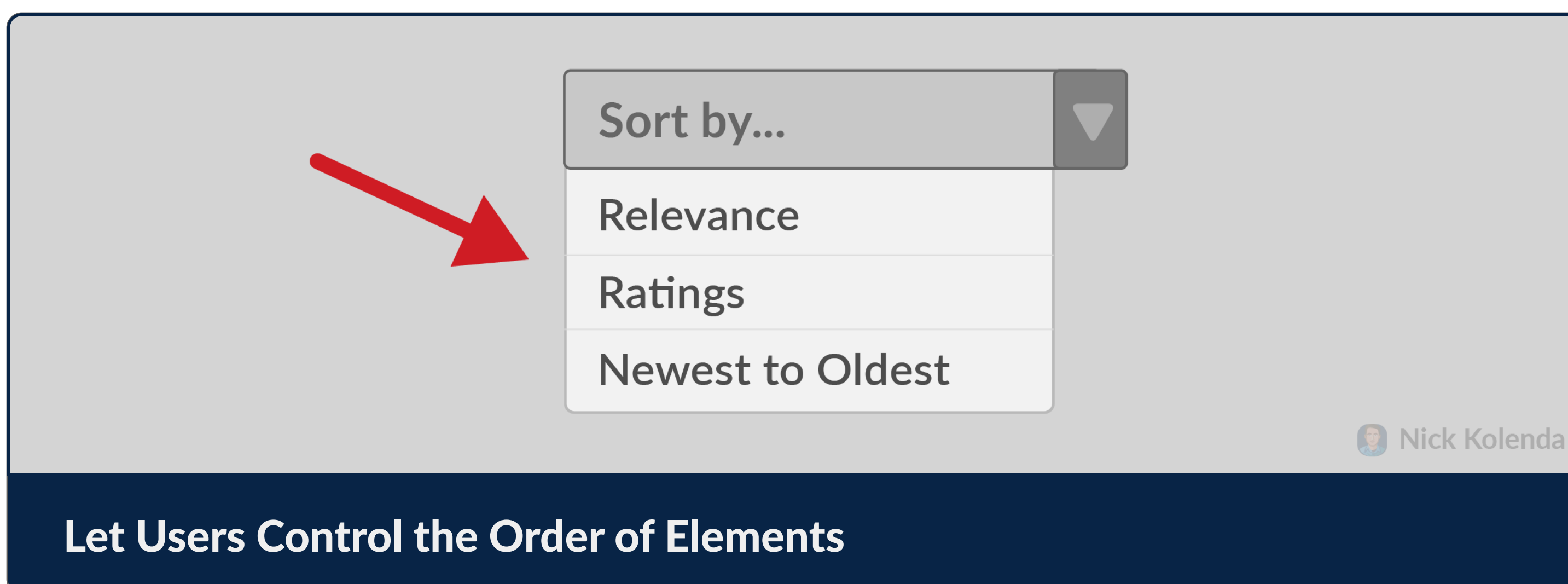
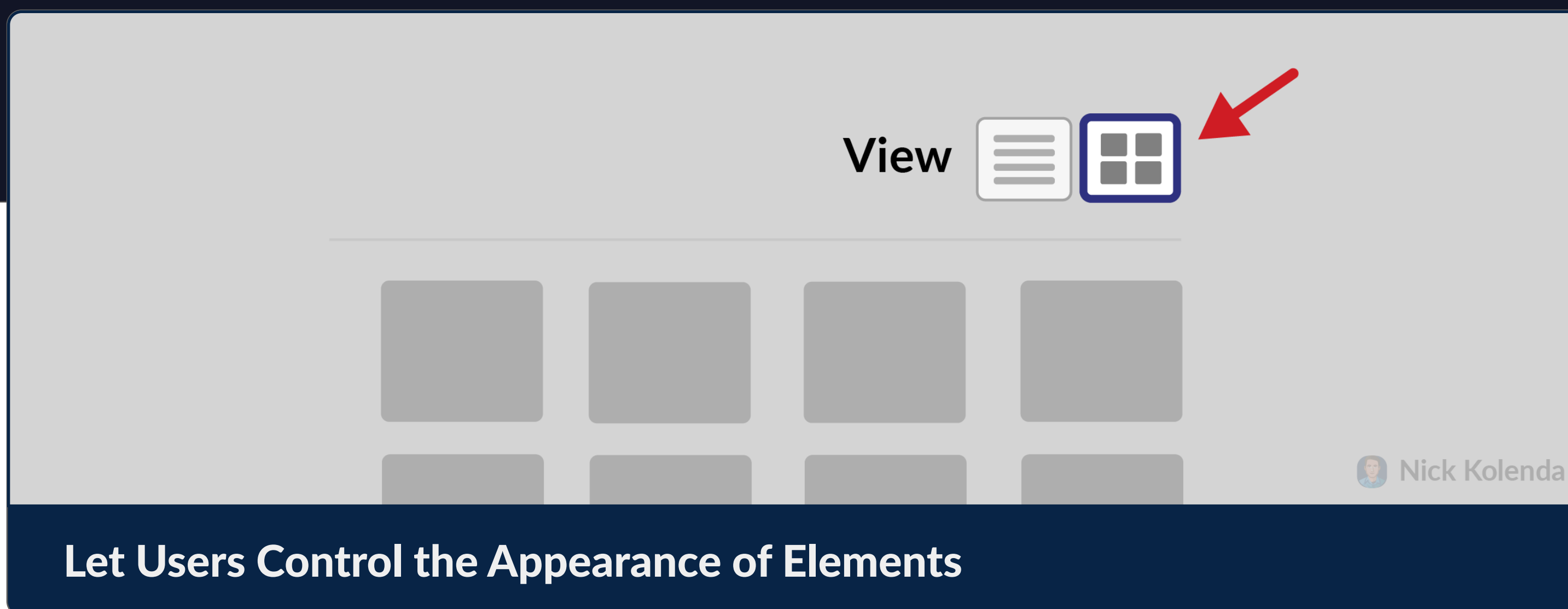
Onboarding Matrix

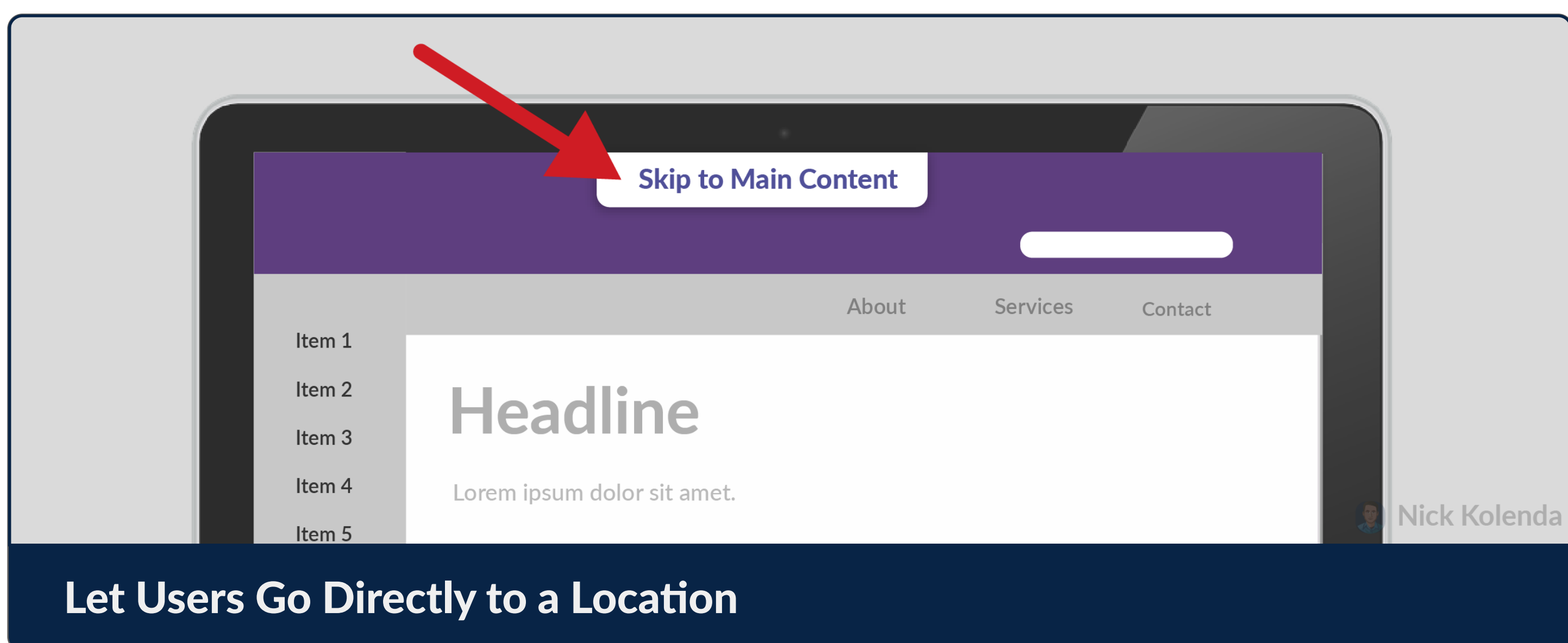
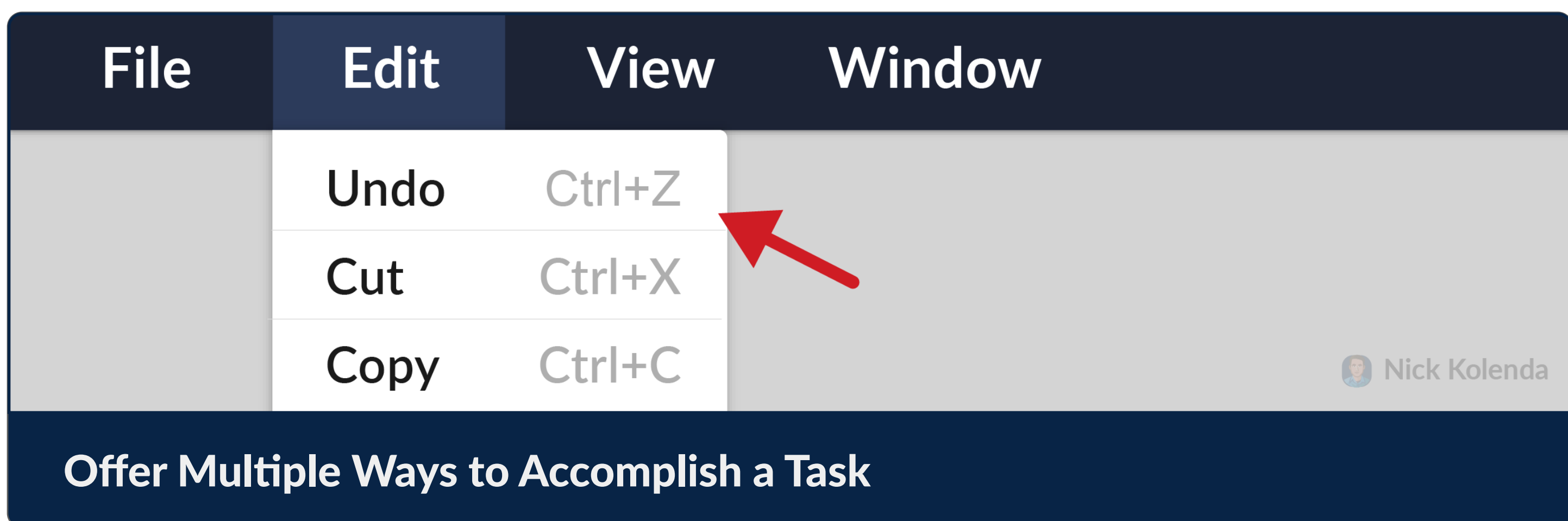
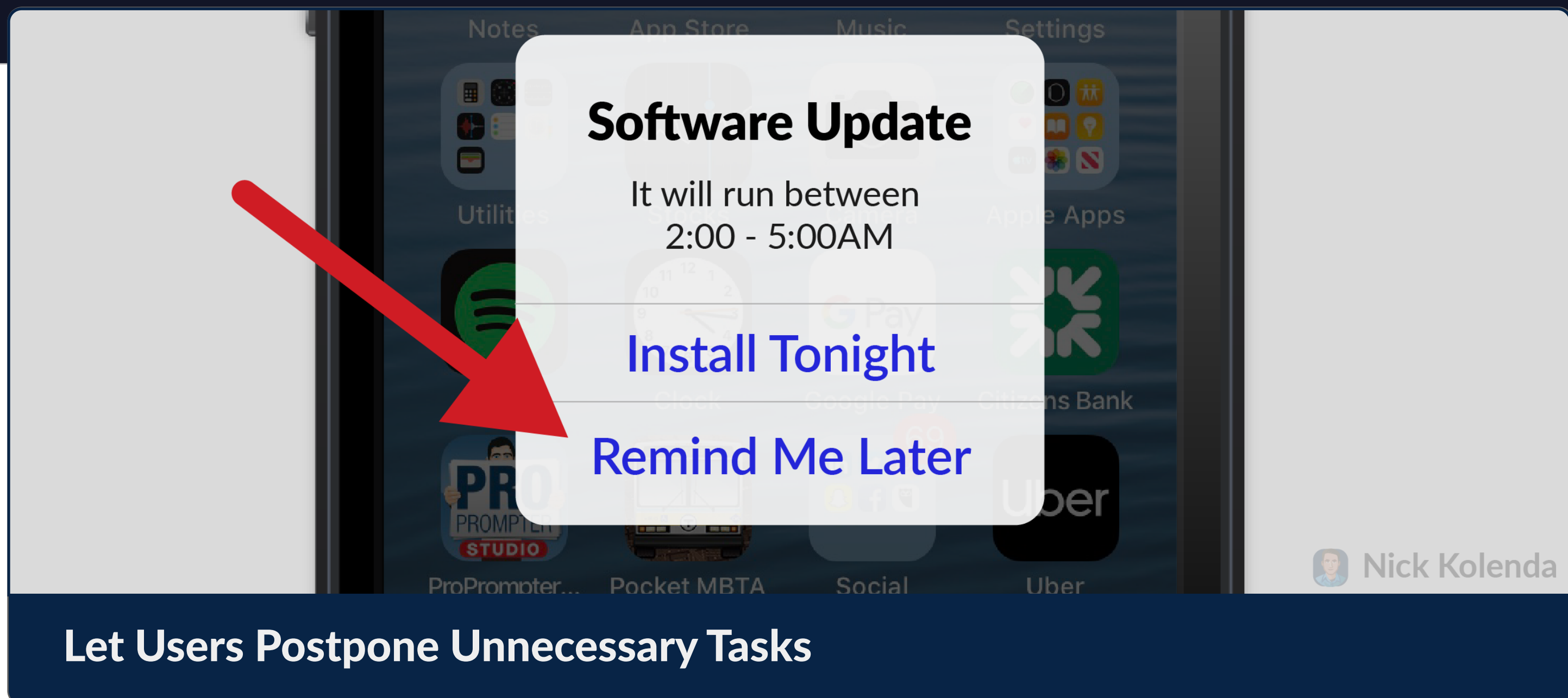


Onboard Users Based on Their Expertise

Accommodate the User's Goal or Workflow

Every user works differently. Design for these varying workflows





Maximize the Accessibility of Your Interface

Help *every* user interact with your interface.

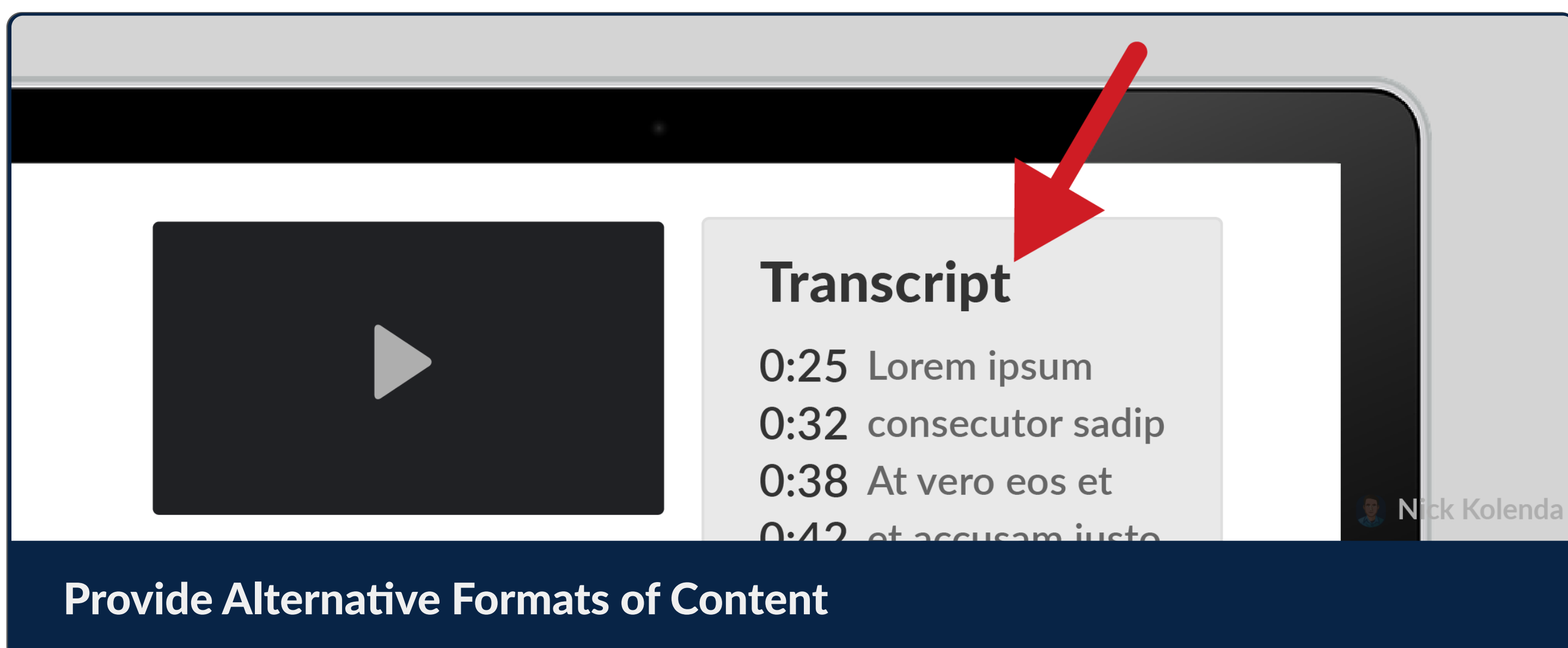
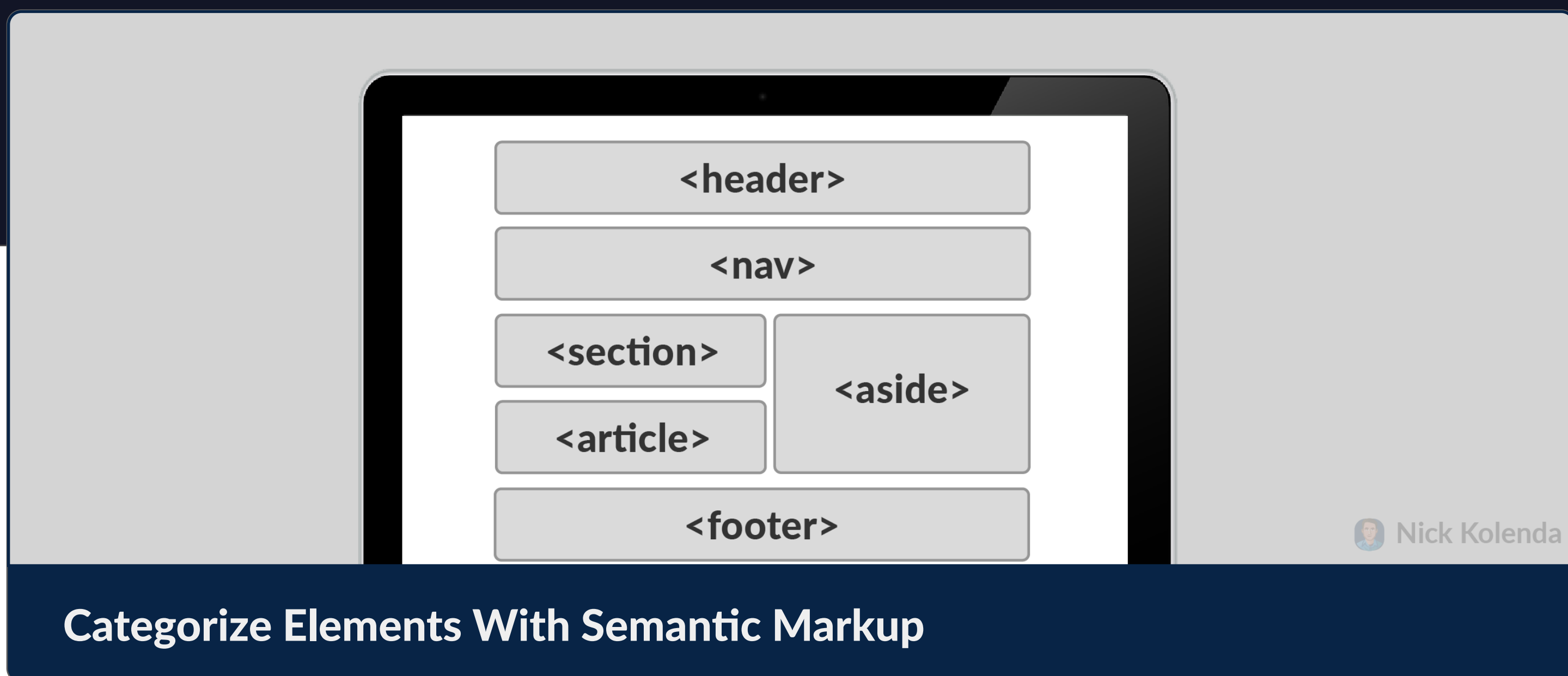



Diagram illustrating a password field with annotations:

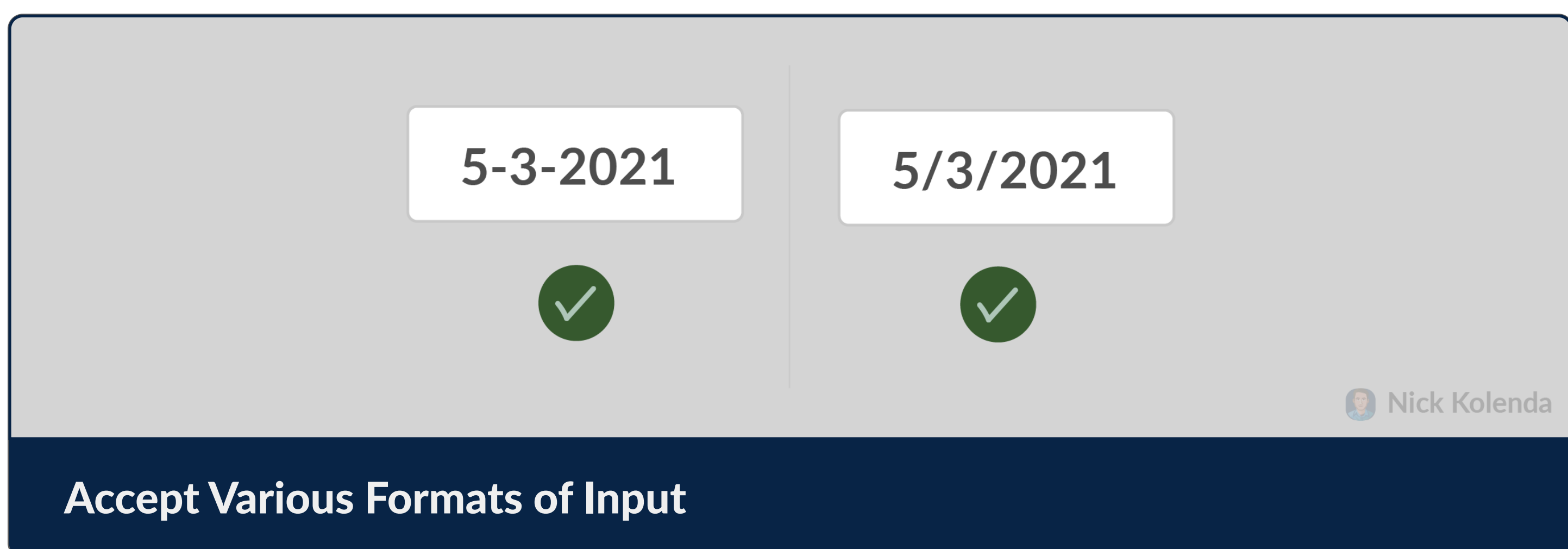
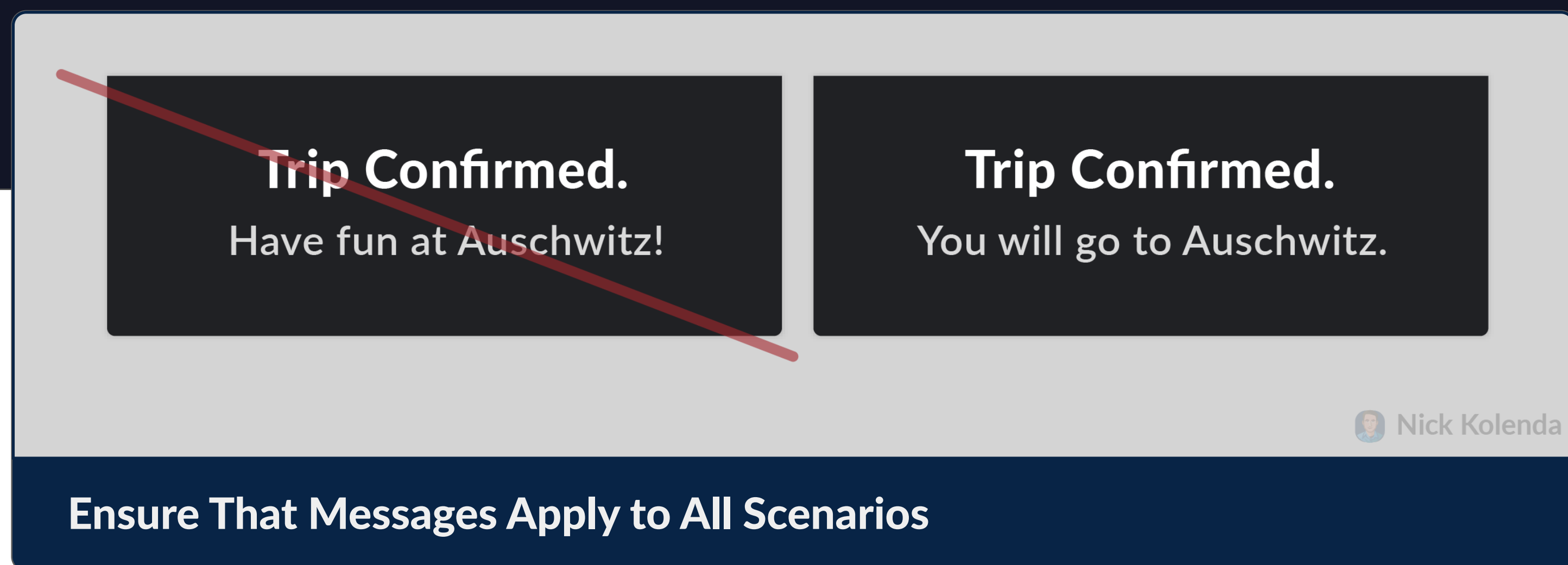
- Password**: Label above the input field.
- Red Border**: Annotation pointing to the red border of the input field.
- asterisk**: Annotation pointing to a red asterisk (*) next to the input field.

 Nick Kolenda

Communicate Information in Multiple Formats

Maximize Compatibility for All Inputs and Scenarios

Monitor for “extreme” input to verify that your interface works.



negitation



0 results for "negitation"



Here are 42 results
for **negotiation**

 Nick Kolenda

Handle Inputs With Improper Formatting

CHECKLIST

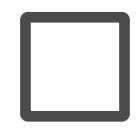
- ☒
- ☒
- ☒
- ☒
- ☒



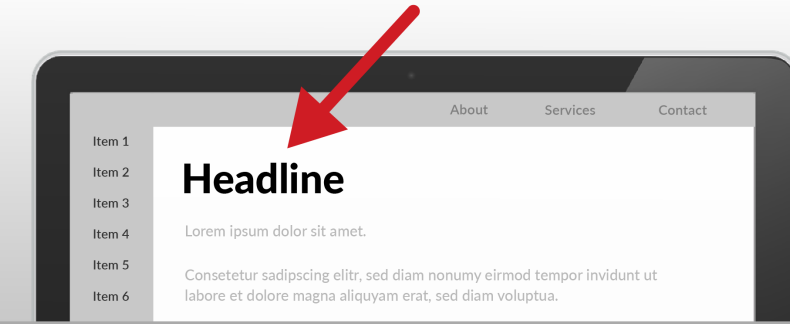
GUIDELINE 1

FOCUS

CREATE AN ENTRY POINT



Emphasize the Most Important Element



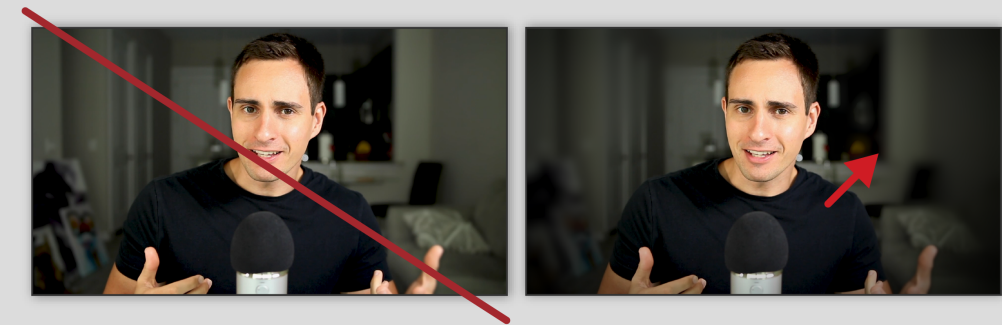
Desaturate Elements Near the Entry Point



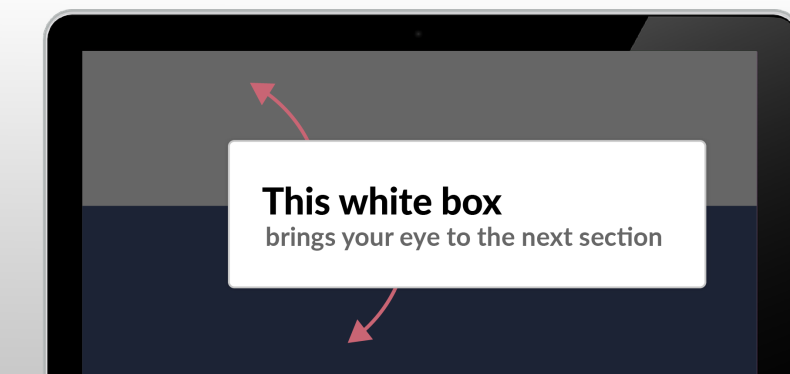
GUIDE EYE FLOW



Obscure Background Details



Overlap Elements Across Sections



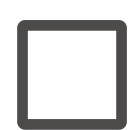
GROUP SIMILAR INTERESTS



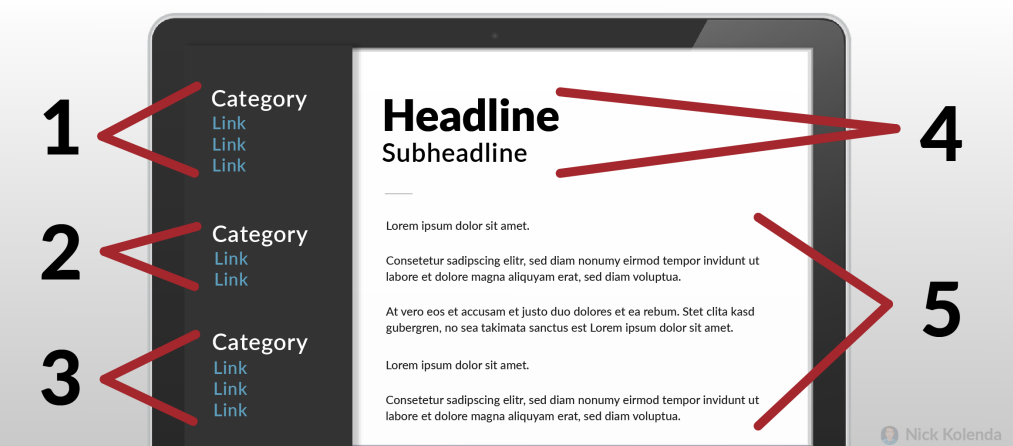
Push Headlines Closer to Their Sections



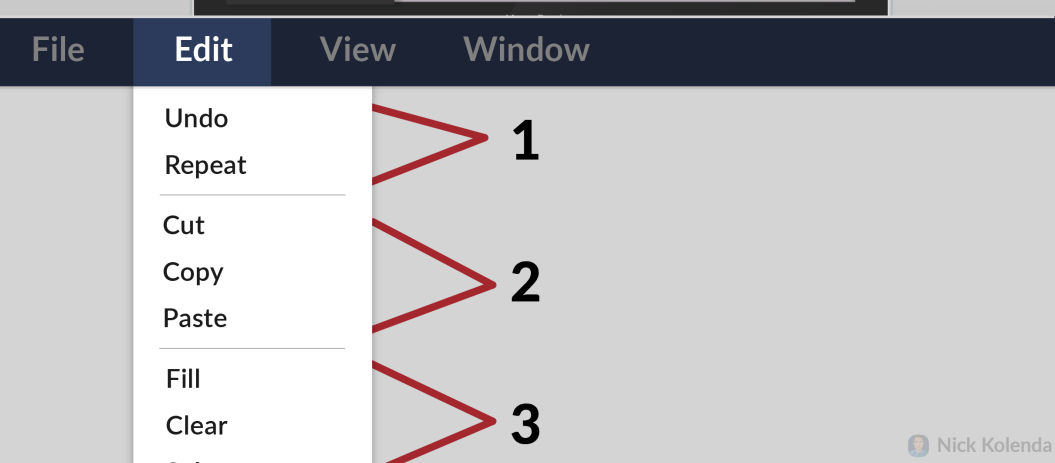
Keep Labels Close to Their Elements



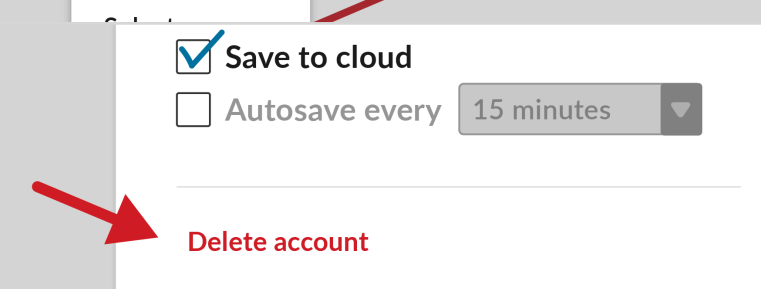
Group Similar Elements By Proximity



Categorize Long Lists Into Smaller Sections

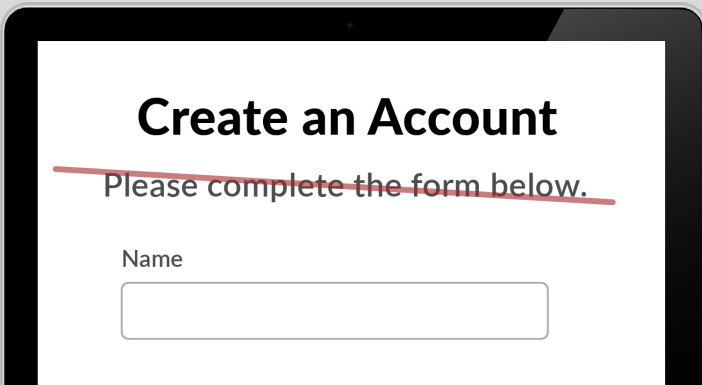


Distinguish Powerful Functions to Minimize Slips



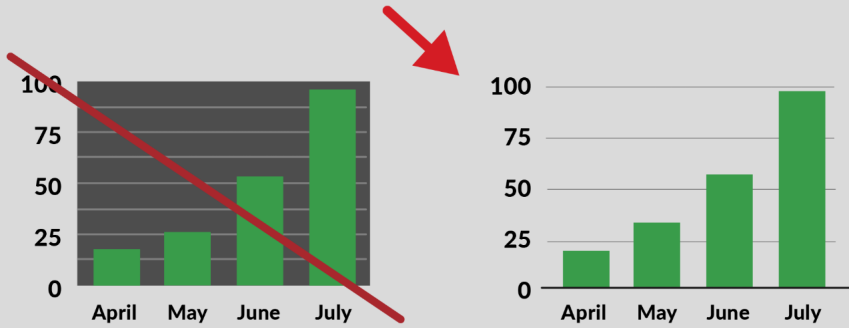
REMOVE UNNECESSARY ELEMENTS

☐ Omit Self-Explanatory Instructions



Nick Kolenda

☐ Maximize Data-Ink Ratios



Nick Kolenda

☐ Hide Peripheral Details in Expandable

A screenshot of an expandable form. The first section 'How much is shipping?' is expanded. The second section 'Can I return the item?' is collapsed. A red arrow points to the collapse button.

Nick Kolenda

COMMUNICATE HIDDEN SECTIONS OF THE DESIGN

☐ Indicate Whether Content Exists Below the Fold



Nick Kolenda

☐ Convey Depth Through Fades or Shadows

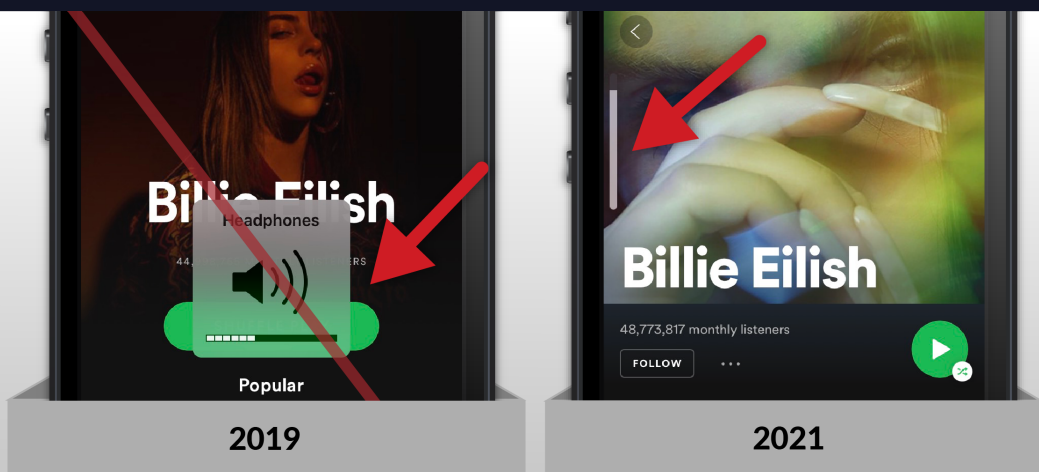
A screenshot of a table with a red box highlighting the bottom rows, indicating depth.

Name	Address	Address 2	City
Jon Doe	123 Elm St.		Lebanon
Jane Doe	99 Oak St.	Apt 3	Springfield
Jon Smith	50 Pine St.		Greenville
Jane Smith	100 Cedar St.		Bristol

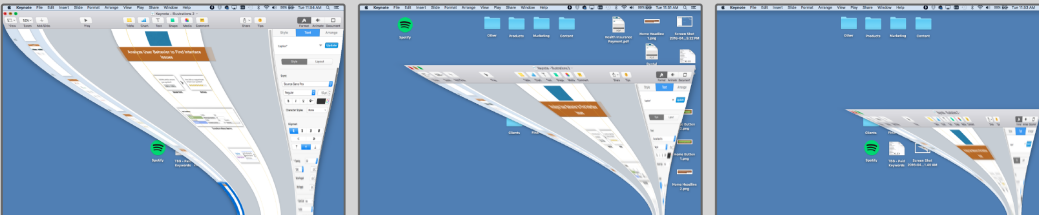
Nick Kolenda

DEPICT CHANGES WITHOUT DISRUPTING THE USER

☐ Prevent Changes From Blocking Other Functions



☐ Animate Visual Changes to the Interface



Nick Kolenda

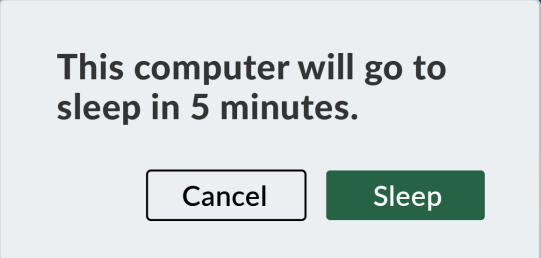
☐ Indicate Which Items Have Changed

A screenshot of a form with a yellow box highlighting the 'Please fix zip code.' message and a red asterisk next to the zip code field.

City	State	Zip
Beverly Hills	CA	90215 *

Nick Kolenda

☐ Warn Users When a Timed Function Will Occur



Nick Kolenda



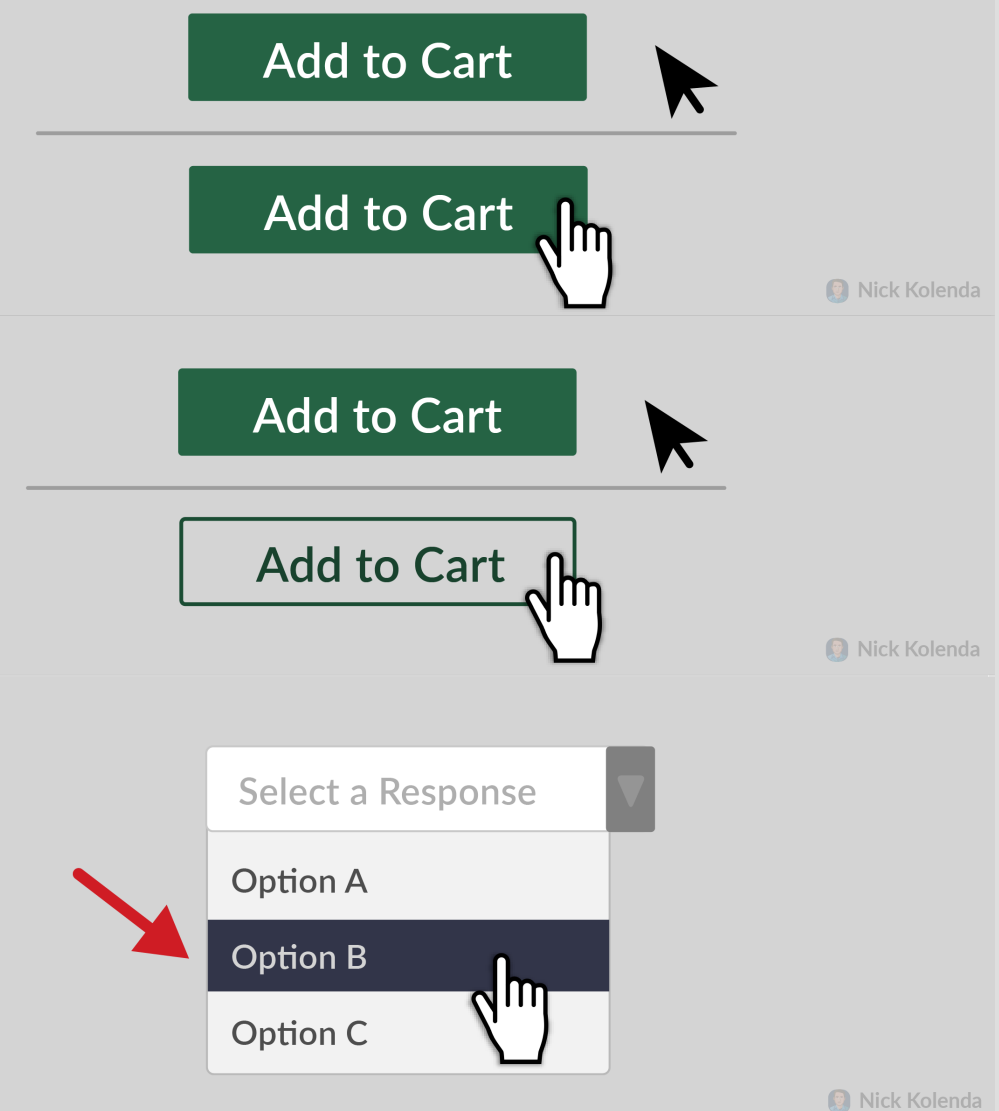
UNDERSTANDING

COMMUNICATE WHICH ITEMS ARE INTERACTIVE

☐ Change the Cursor or Medium

☐ Change the Element

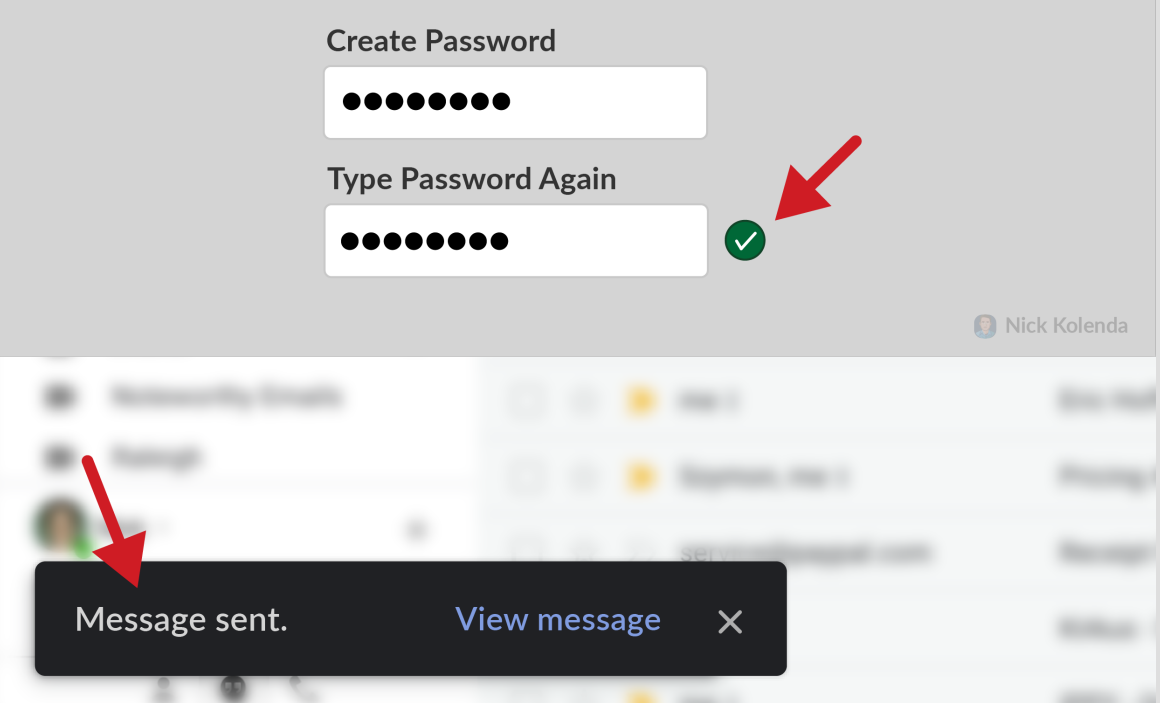
☐ Indicate Which Element Will Receive the Interaction



PROVIDE FEEDBACK DURING AND AFTER INTERACTIONS

☐ Indicate Whether an Interaction Will Be Successful

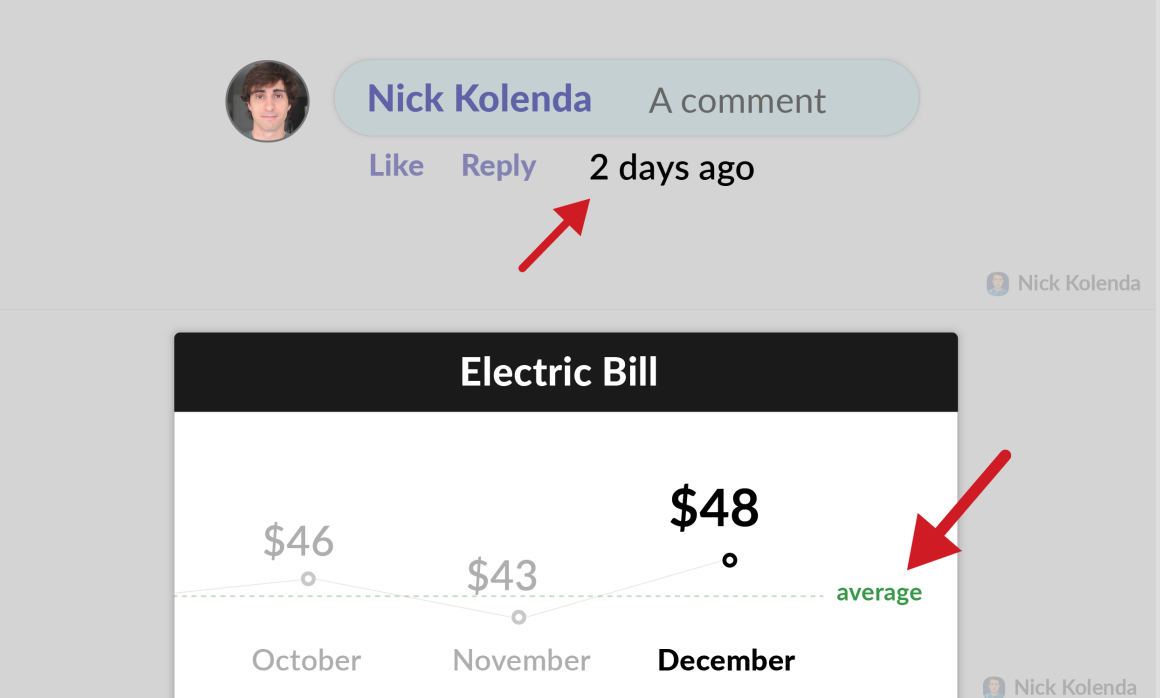
☐ Indicate Whether an Interaction Was Successful



COMMUNICATE IN RELATIVE TERMS

☐ Communicate Time in Relation to the Present

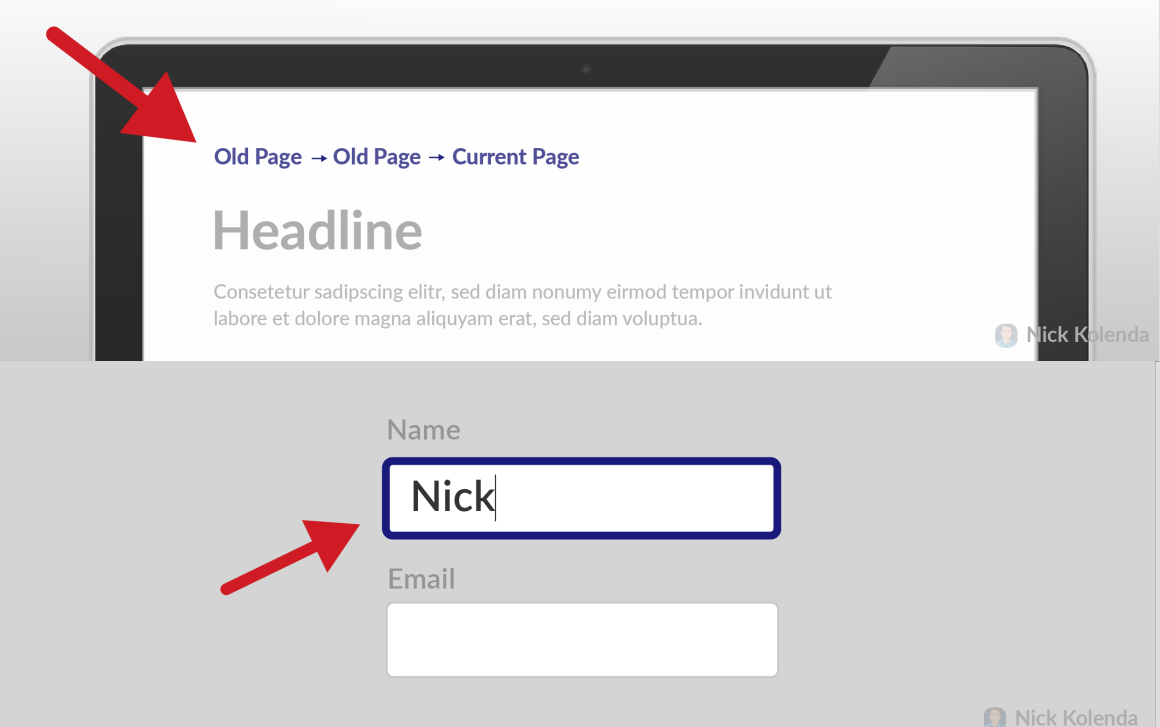
☐ Compare Numbers With a Meaningful Baseline



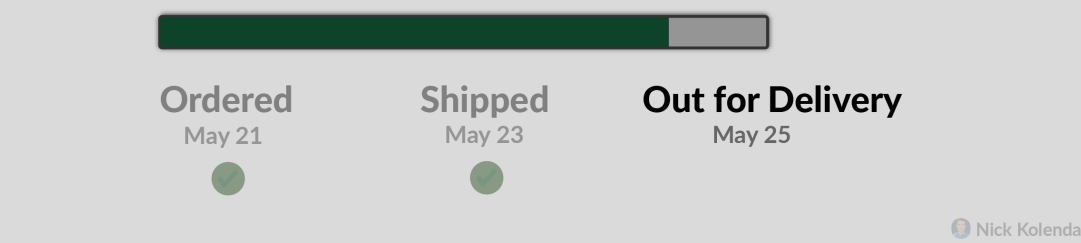
HELP USERS FIND THEIR CURRENT LOCATION

☐ Show the User's Previous Steps

☐ Indicate the Location of the Cursor

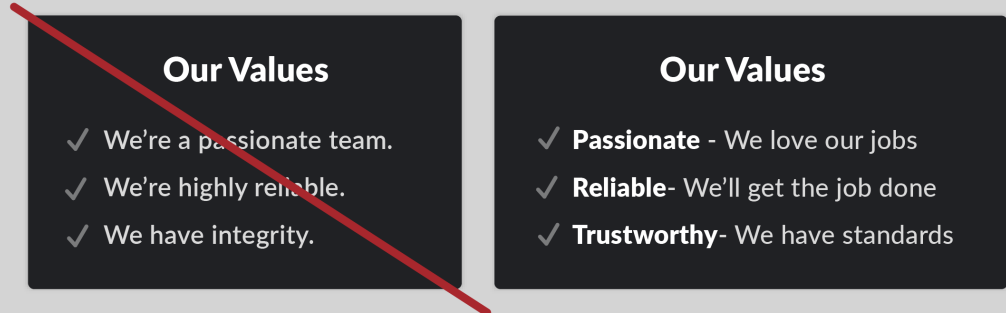


☐ Communicate the Current Phase of Interactions

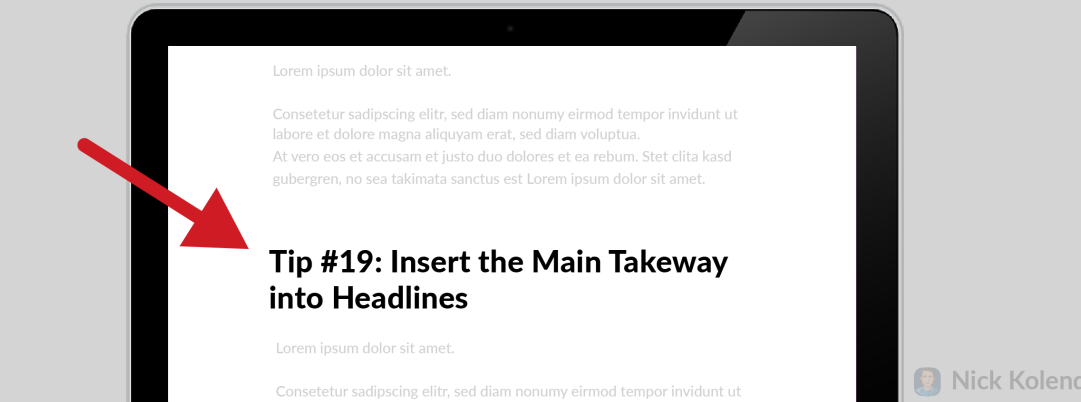


DESIGN FOR SCANNABILITY

☐ Place Important Information Toward the Beginning

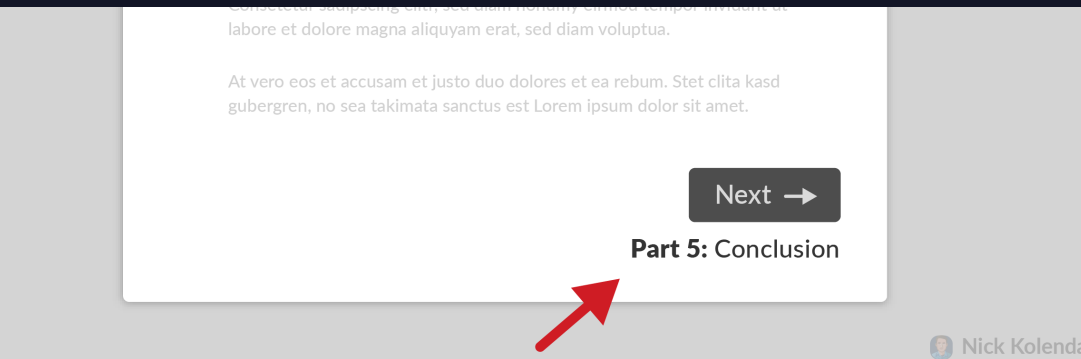


☐ Insert the Main Takeaway into Headlines

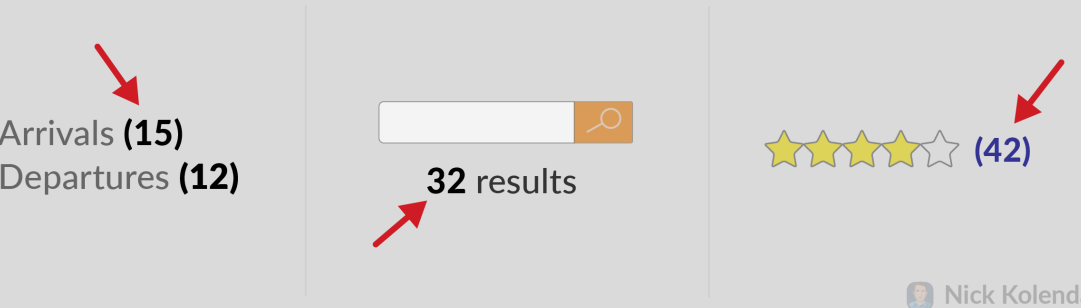


COMMUNICATE THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF INTERACTIONS

☐ Indicate the Next Item in a Sequence



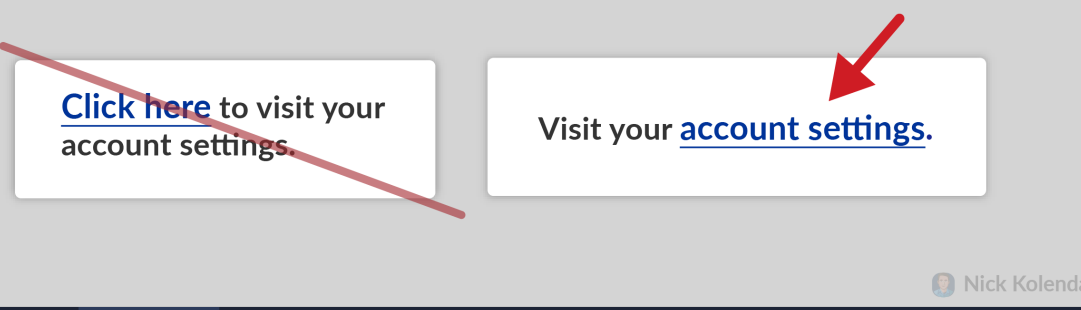
☐ Show the Number of Items in a Group



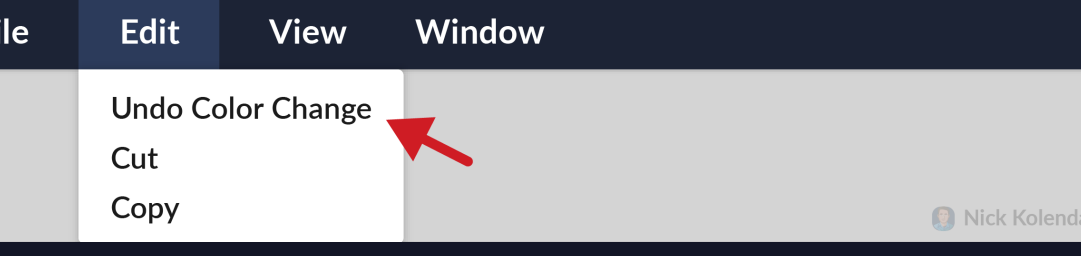
☐ Show a Preview of the Output



☐ Describe the Destinations of Links

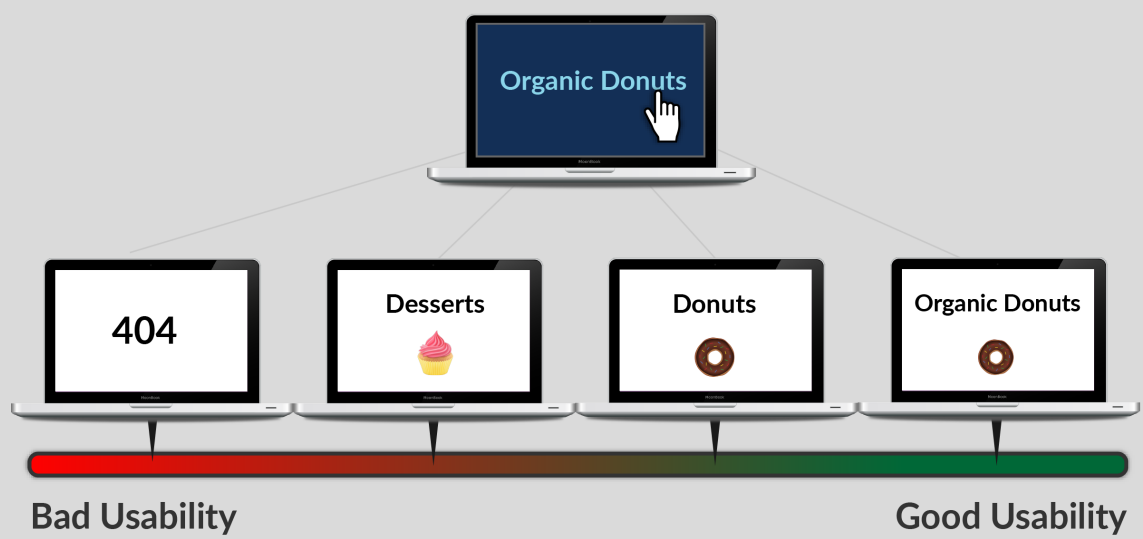


☐ Specify the Interaction That Will Occur

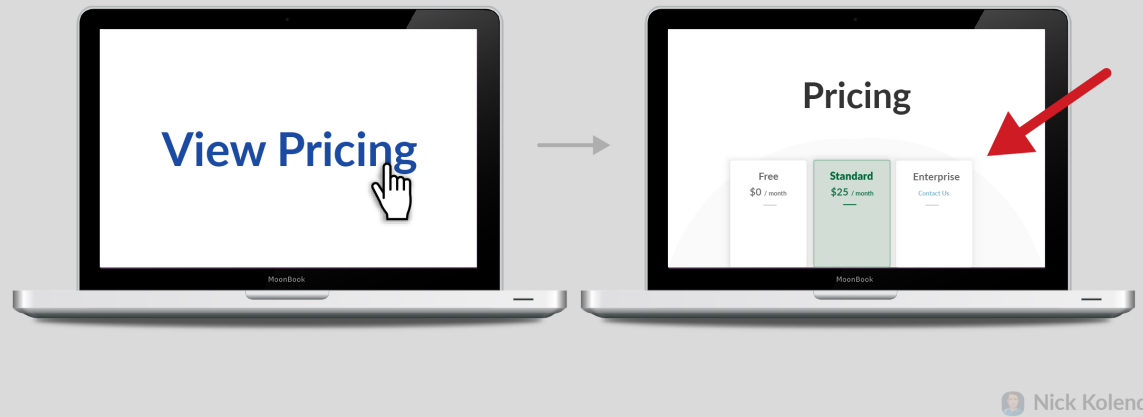


MATCH THE USER'S EXPECTATIONS

☐ Stay Consistent Between Links and Destinations

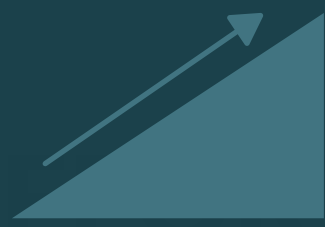
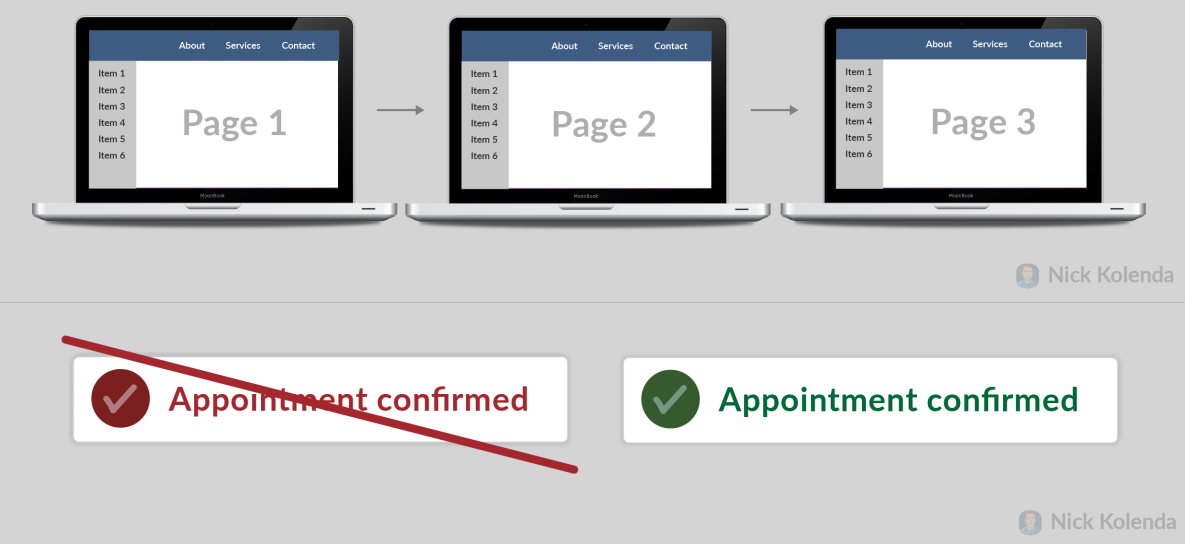


☐ Show the Primary Essence Upon Loading



Understanding (continued)

- ☐ Adhere to a Consistent Layout
- ☐ Choose Semantically Meaningful Colors

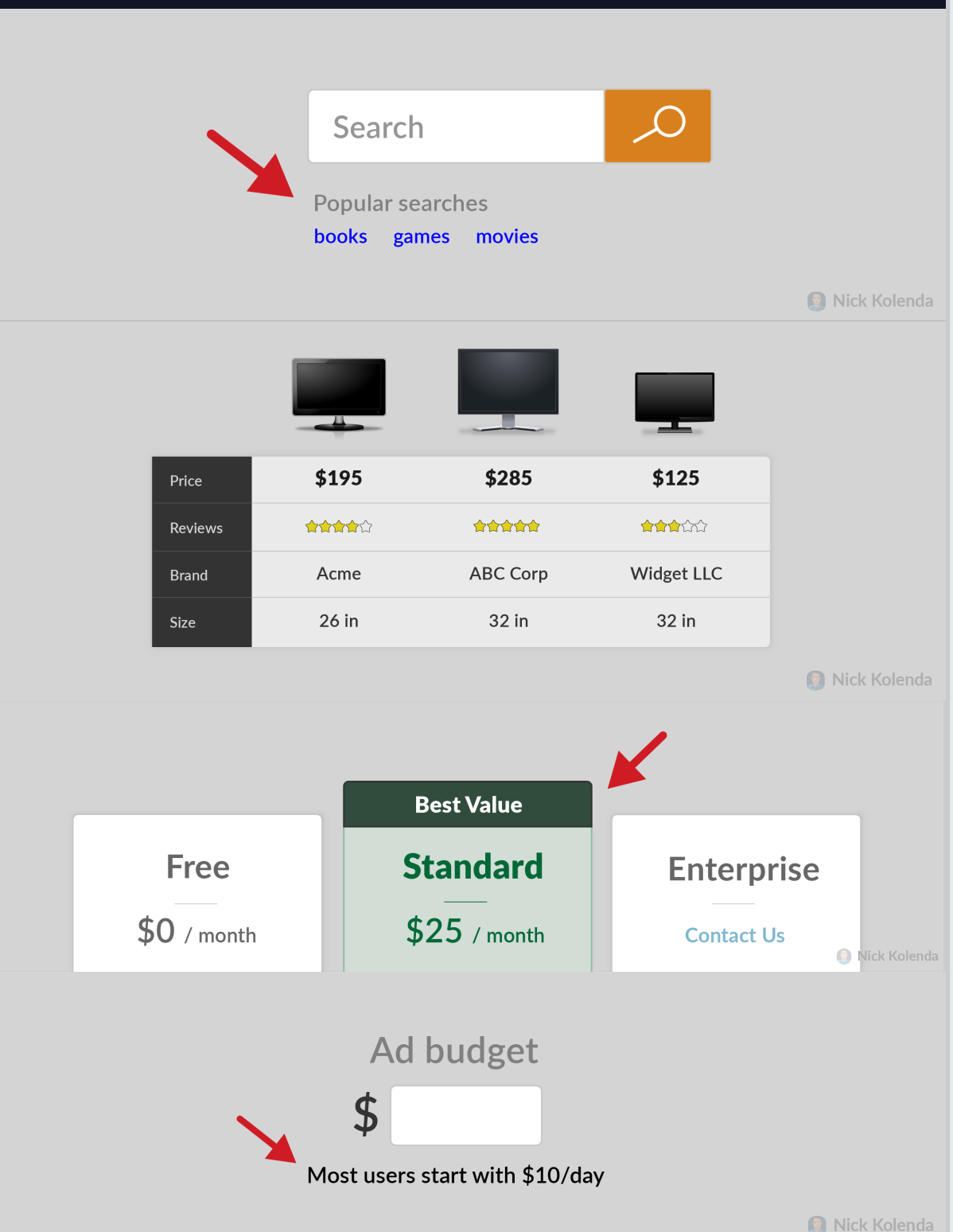


GUIDELINE 3

EFFORT

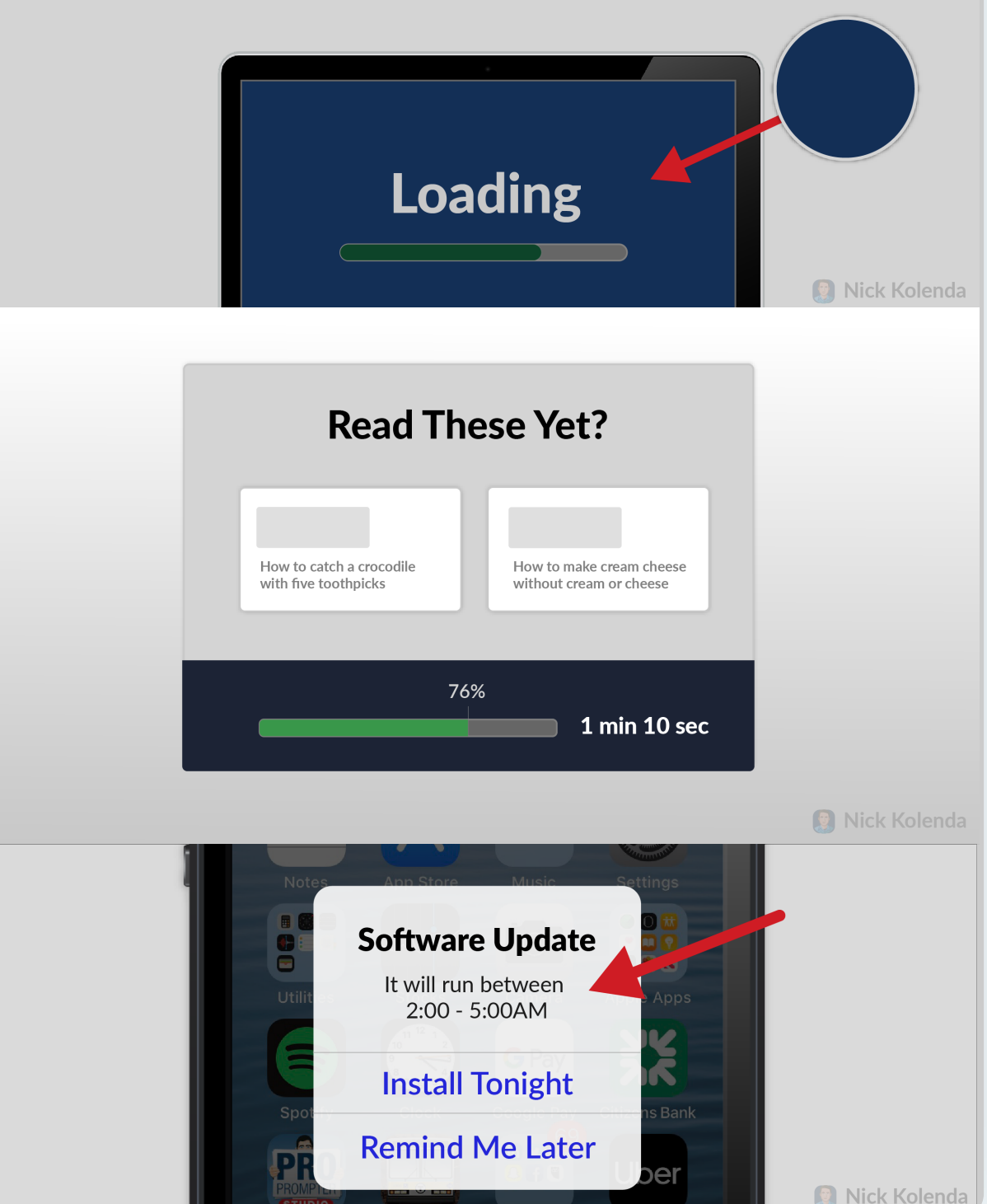
HELP USERS CHOOSE OPTIONS

- ☐ Suggest a Starting Point
- ☐ Compare Options Across Attributes
- ☐ Recommend an Option
- ☐ Show the Typical Answer



MINIMIZE THE DETRIMENTS OF WAITING

- ☐ Decrease Their Arousal With Cool Colors
- ☐ Keep Users Engaged While They Wait
- ☐ Align Machine Downtime With User Downtime



☐ Populate the Interface With Placeholders While Loading



MINIMIZE RELIANCE ON CALCULATIONS AND MEMORY

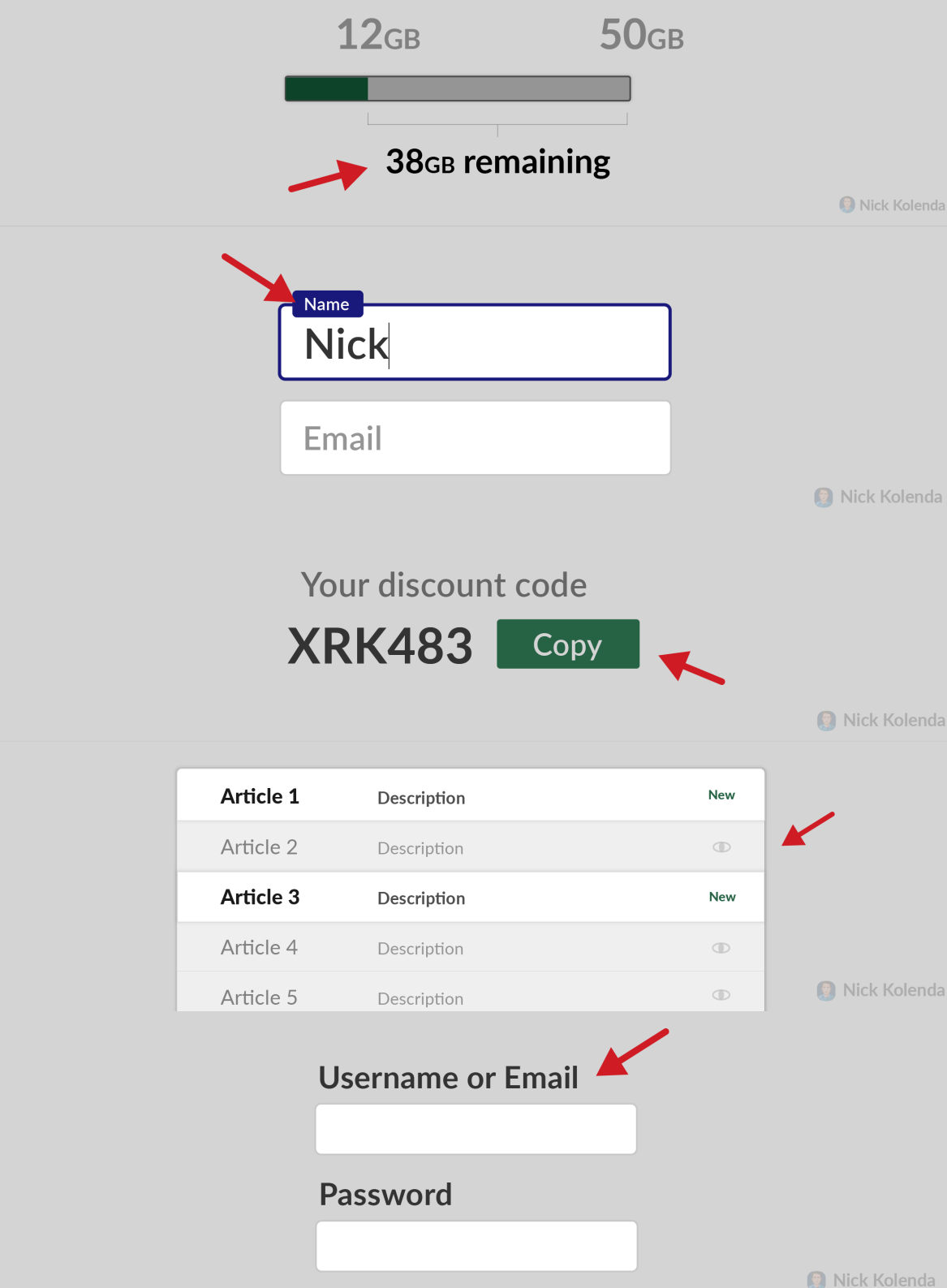
☐ Calculate the Number of Items Remaining

☐ Keep Pertinent Information Visible

☐ Let Users Copy Information

☐ Indicate Which Items Users Have Already Viewed

☐ Minimize Credentials That Are Specific to the Interface

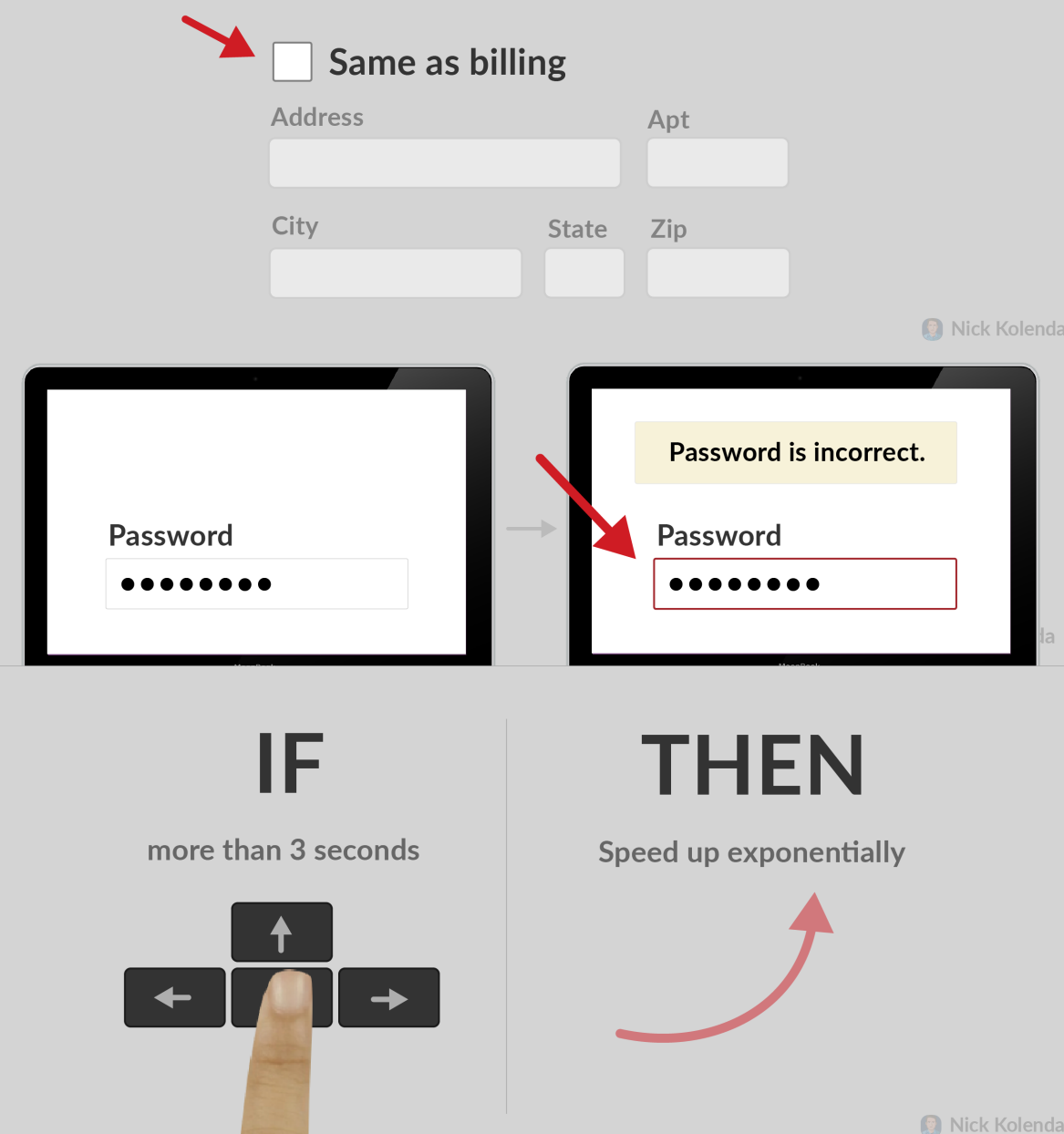


MINIMIZE REDUNDANT TASKS

☐ Let Users Duplicate Past Input

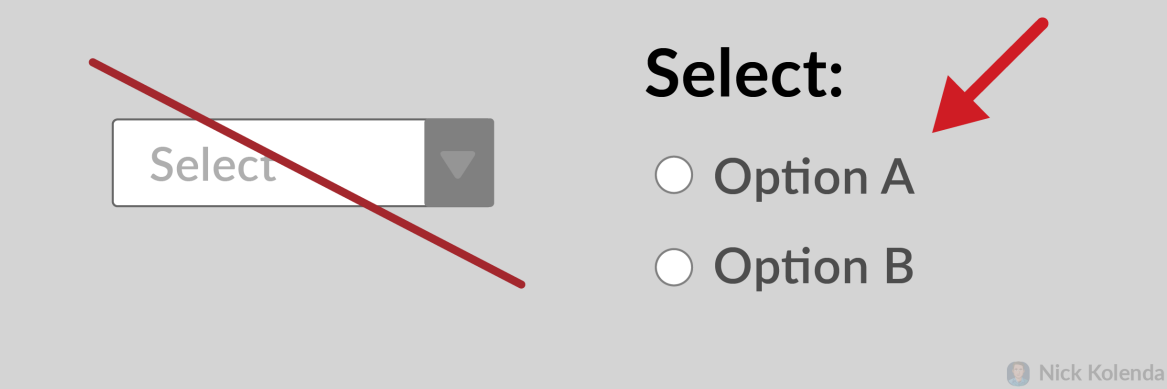
☐ Preserve Input During Interface Changes

☐ Monitor Excessive Input or Repetitions



PLACE FREQUENT INTERACTIONS CLOSER TO USERS

☐ Keep Options Visible in Small Assortments



Effort (continued)

☐ Prefill Input Fields With Common Responses

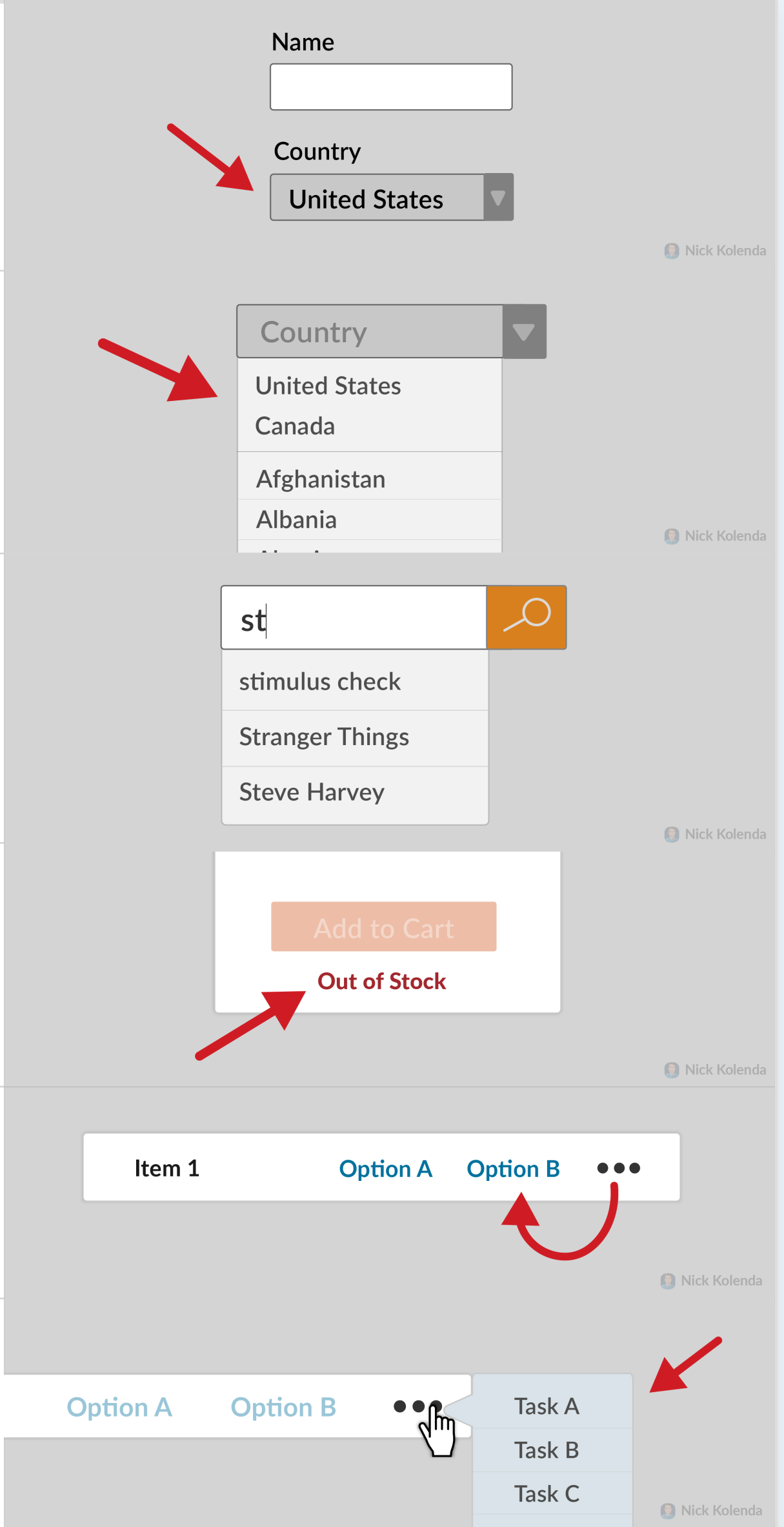
☐ Position Common Answers At the Top of Lists

☐ Offer Suggestions From Predicted Input

☐ Keep Pertinent Information in Front of an Interaction

☐ Keep Frequent Interactions Visible

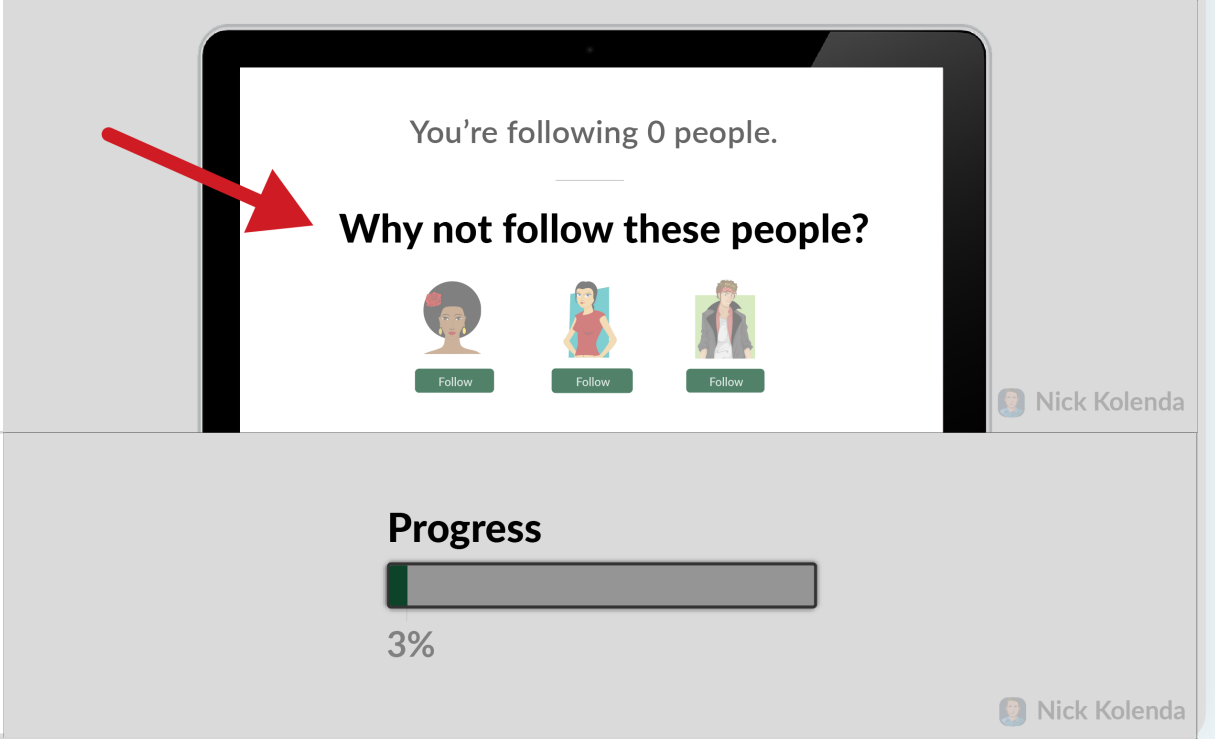
☐ Hide Infrequent Interactions



GUIDE USERS TOWARD THEIR GOAL

☐ Nudge Users Toward Value

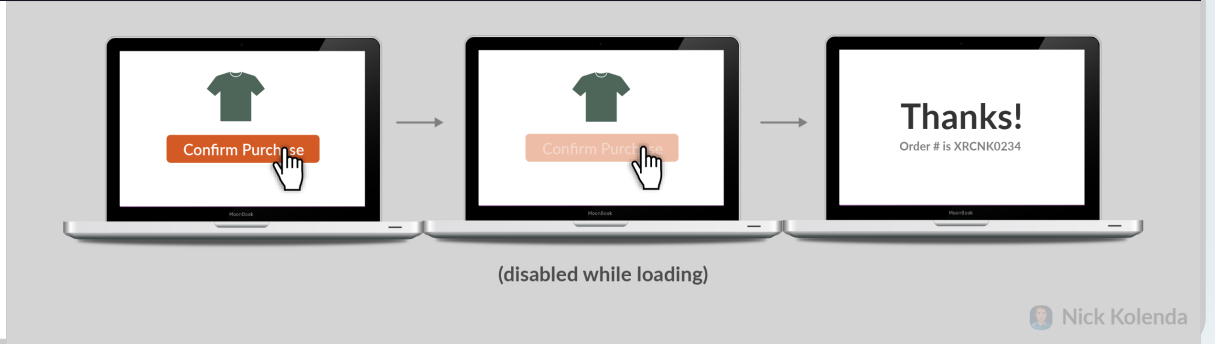
☐ Start Progress Above Zero



GUIDELINE 4
ERRORS

GUIDE USERS TOWARD THEIR GOAL

☐ Disable Buttons When Users Click Them

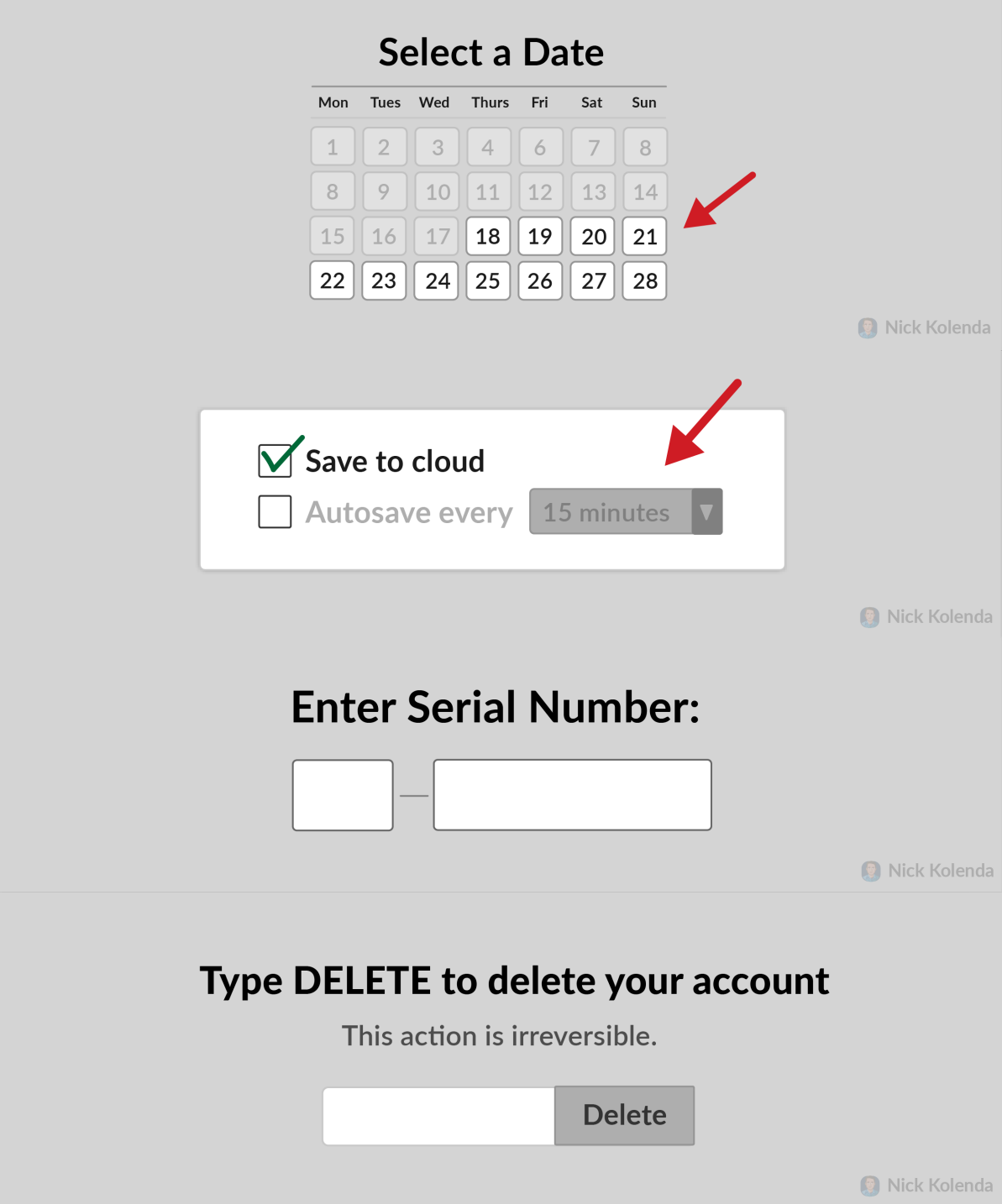


☐ Only Offer Inputs That Are Acceptable

☐ Enable Functions Only When Necessary

☐ Structure Text Fields to Match Input

☐ Add Constraints to Irreversible Changes



COMMUNICATE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INTERACTION

☐ Describe the Necessary Input

☐ Describe the Necessary Parameters

☐ Populate the Units or Parameters

☐ Match Form Sizes With Input Sizes

☐ Indicate Which Elements Are Required

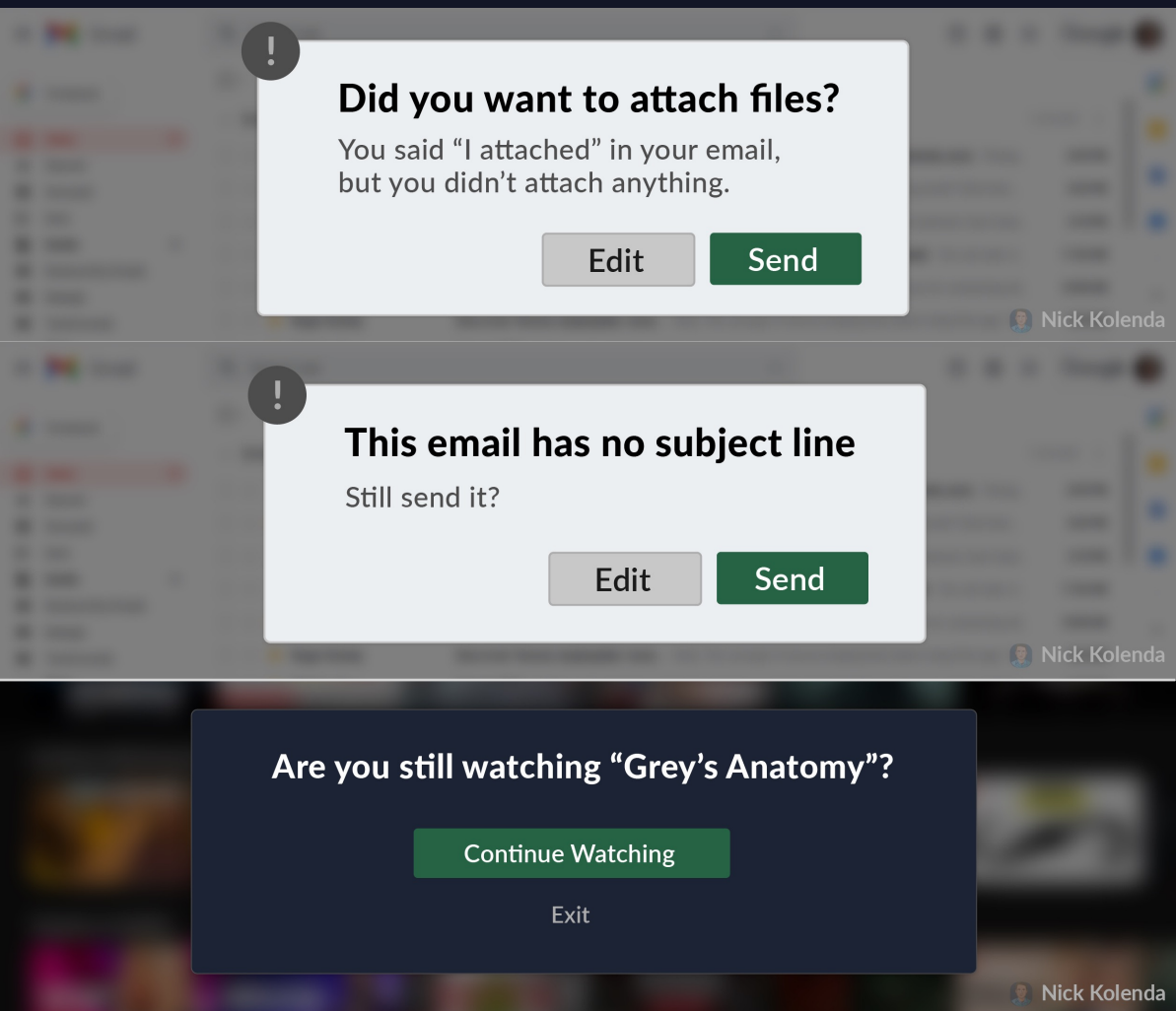


MONITOR SIGNALS THAT ARE TYPICAL IN ERRORS

☐ Monitor Wording That Contradicts Intent

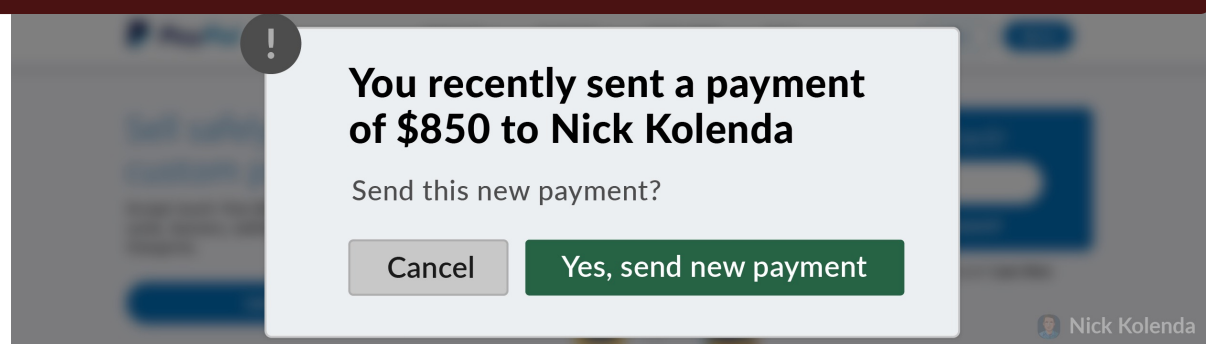
☐ Monitor Empty Submissions

☐ Monitor for Inactivity



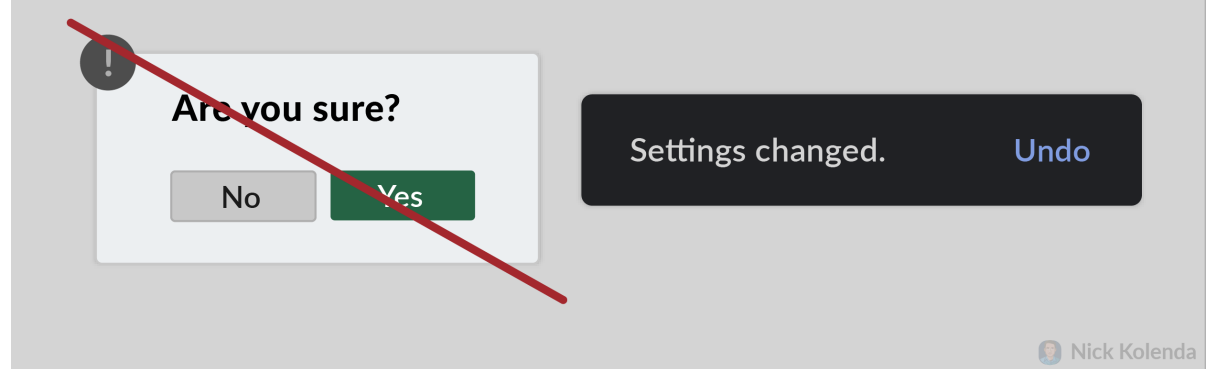
Errors (continued)

- ☐ Confirm Whether a Repeated Action Was Intended

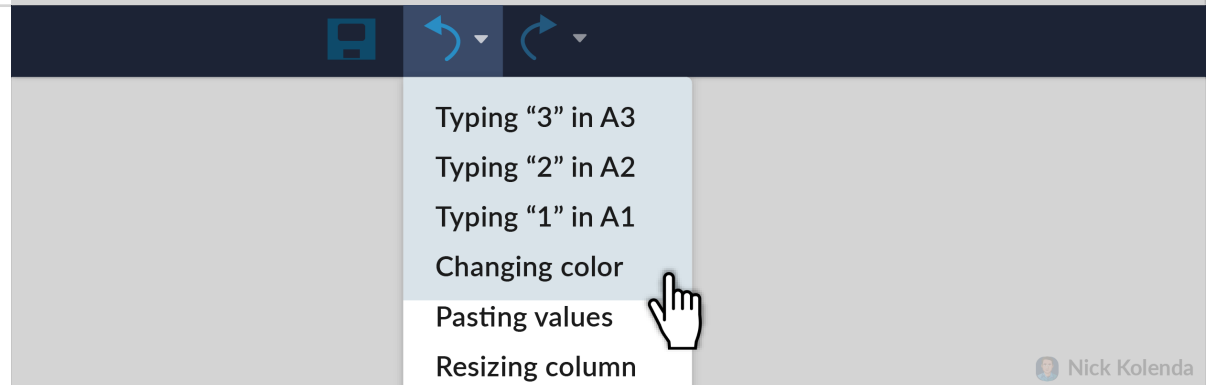


PROVIDE EASY WAYS TO ESCAPE OR REVERT

- ☐ Skip Confirmations in Reversible Decisions

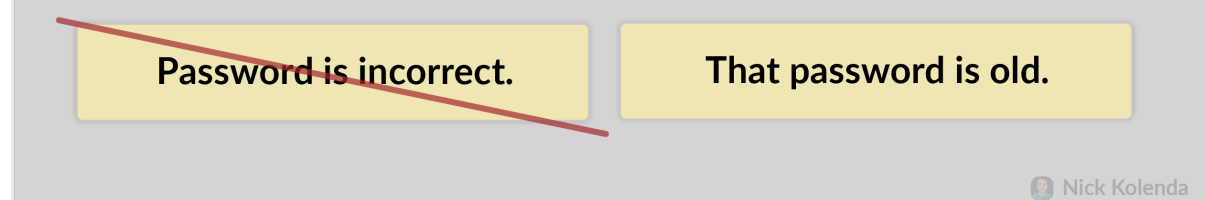


- ☐ Let Users Undo Multiple Levels of Action

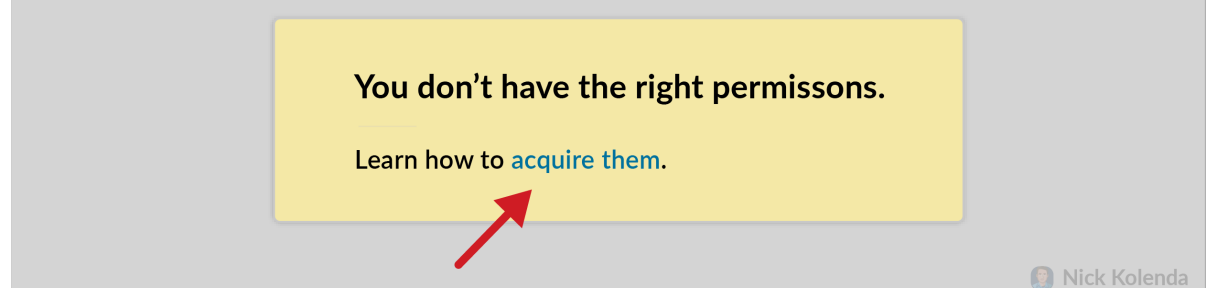


HELP USERS RESOLVE THE ISSUE

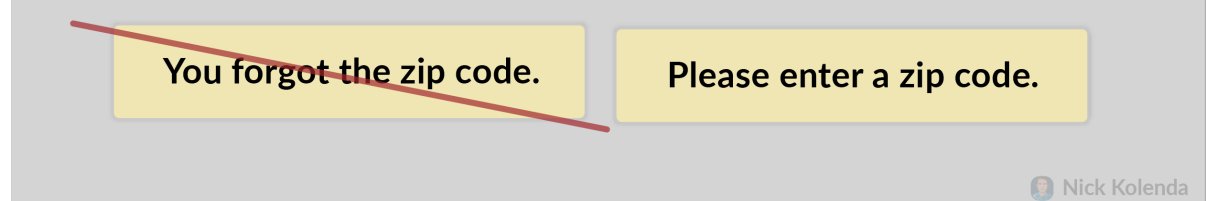
- ☐ Identify the Problem and Solution to Errors



- ☐ Point Users to Support or Documentation

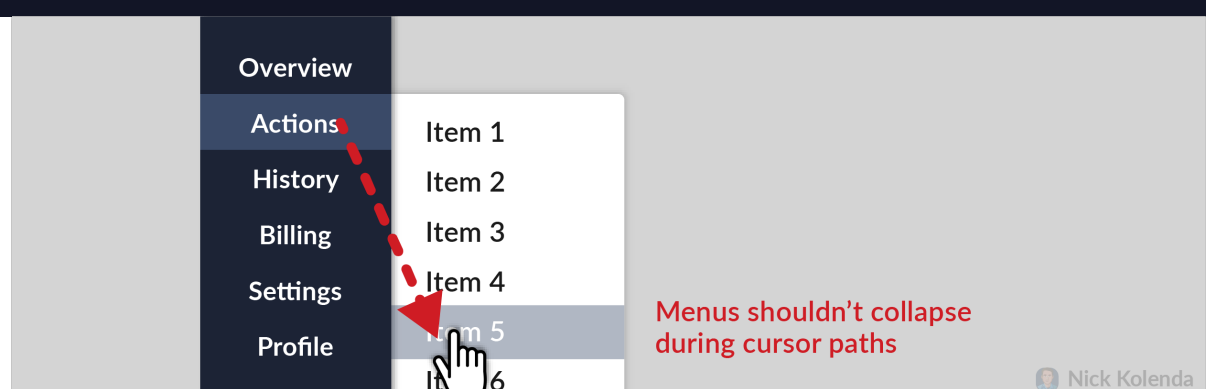


- ☐ Avoid Saying "You" in Error Messages

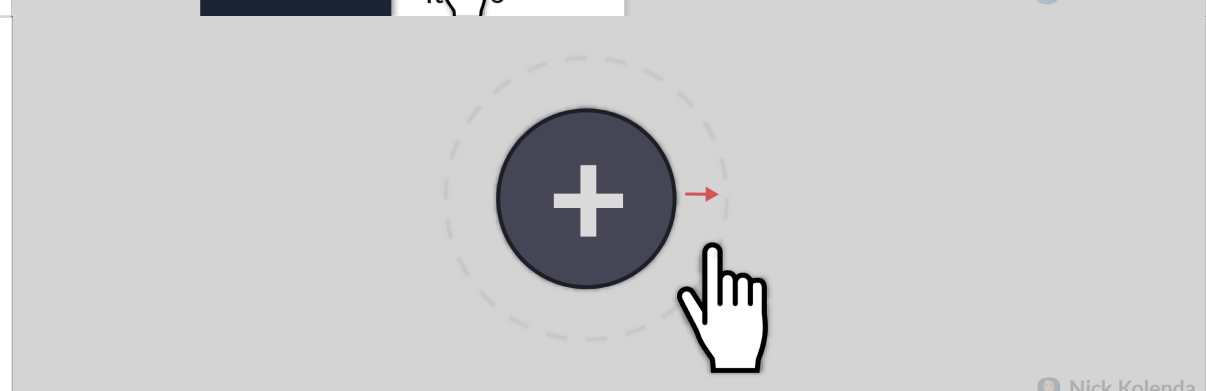


EXTEND MOVABLE PATHS AND CLICKABLE AREAS

- ☐ Delay Hover Animations By a Few Milliseconds



- ☐ Add a Transparent Button to Small Buttons



- ☐ Hyperlink the Full Background of an Item





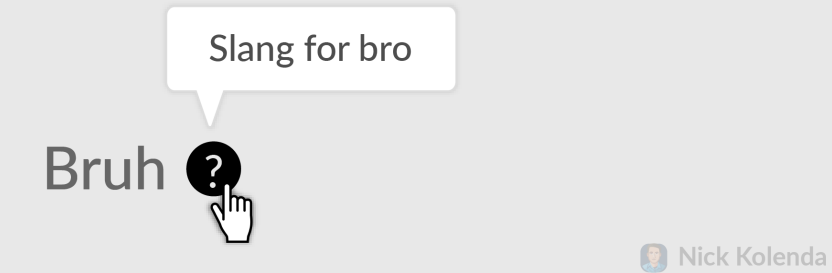
COMPATIBILITY

ACCOMMODATE THE USER'S SKILL OR KNOWLEDGE

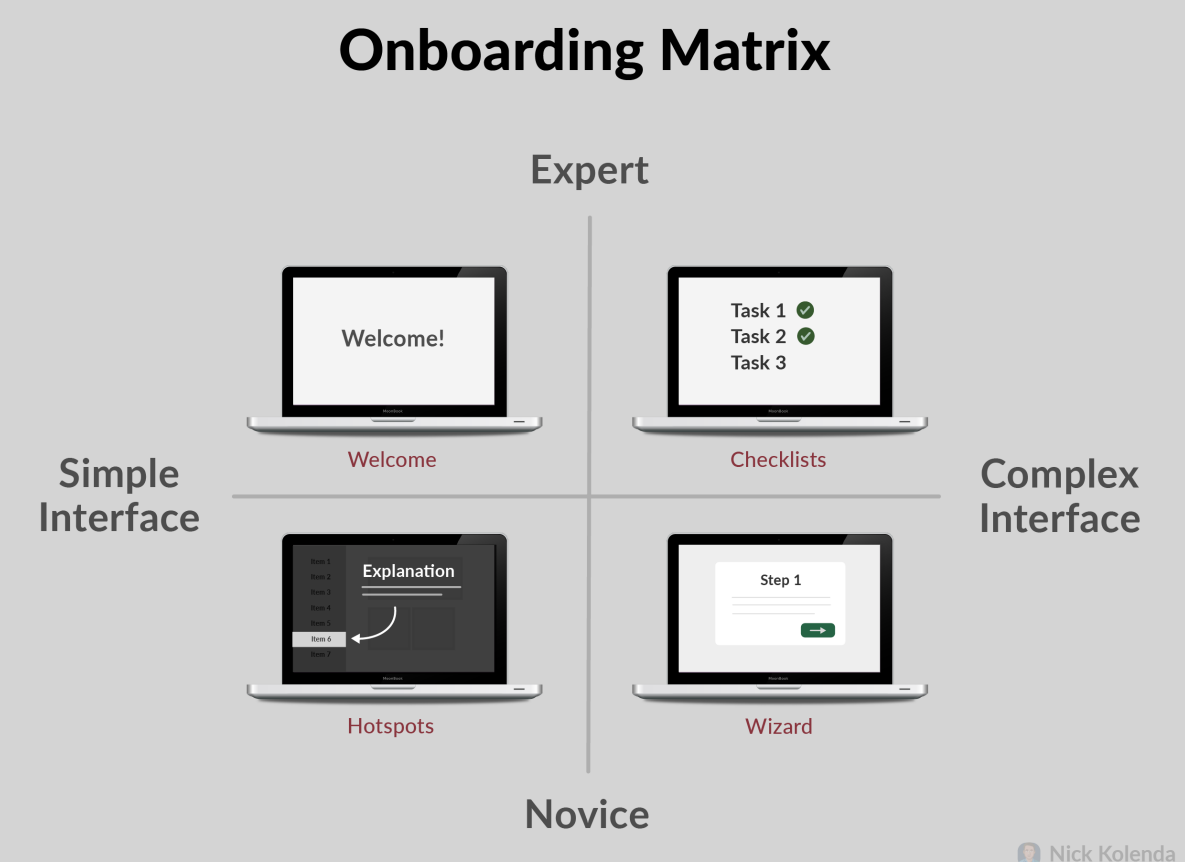
☐ Help Users Understand Unfamiliar Languages



☐ Help Users Understand Unfamiliar Terms

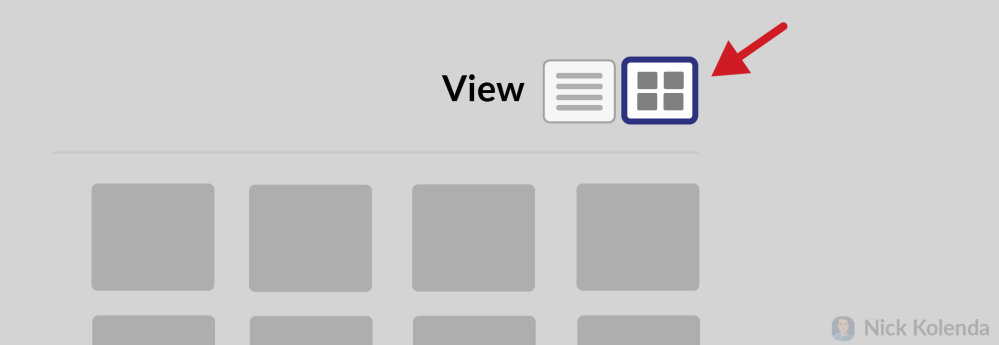


☐ Onboard Users Based on Their Expertise

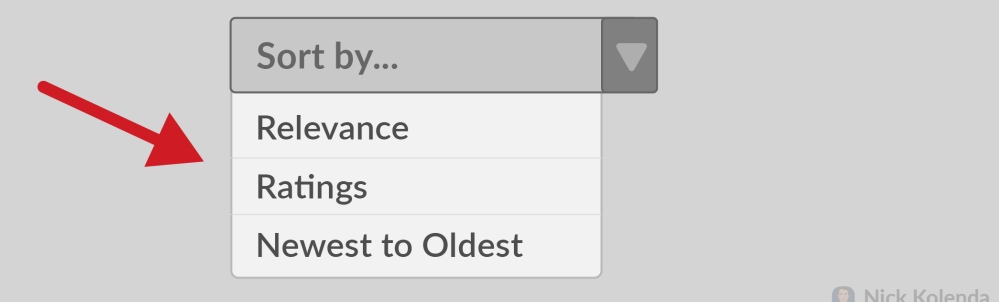


ACCOMMODATE THE USER'S GOAL OR WORKFLOW

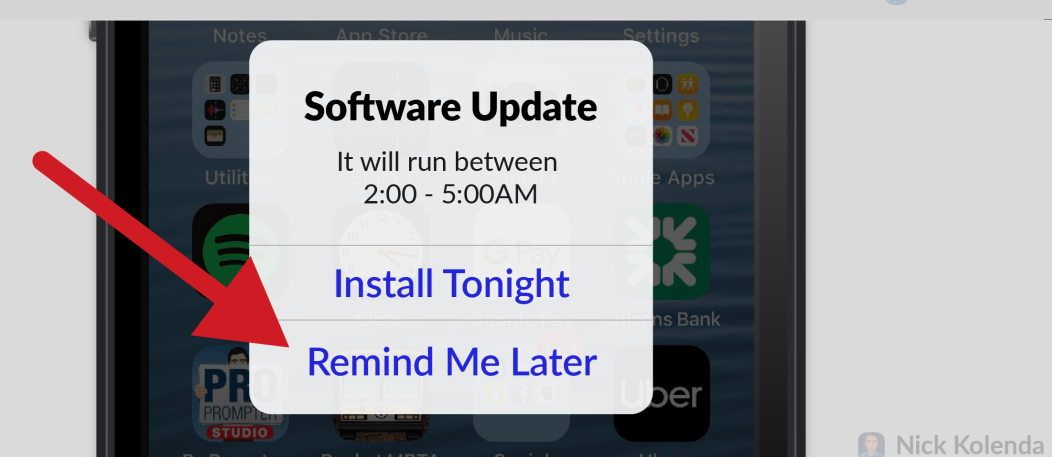
☐ Let Users Control the Appearance of Elements



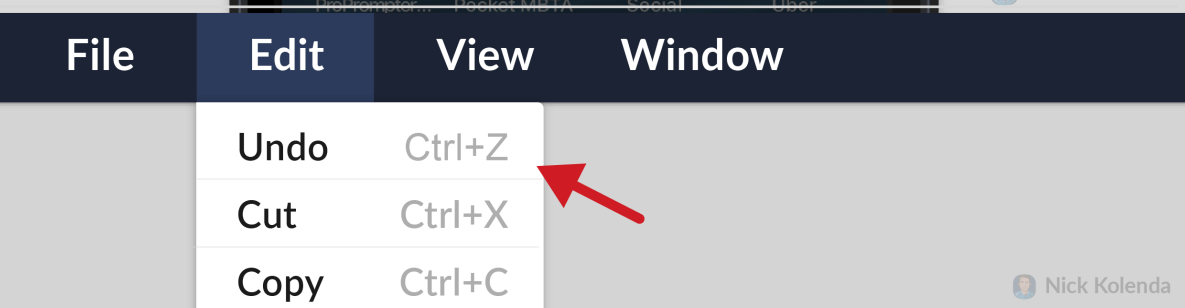
☐ Let Users Control the Order of Elements



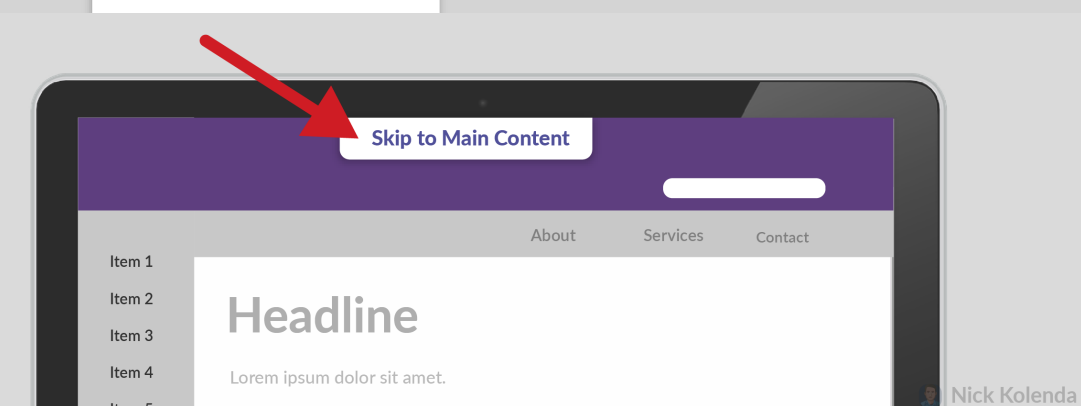
☐ Let Users Postpone Unnecessary Tasks



☐ Offer Multiple Ways to Accomplish a Task



☐ Let Users Go Directly to a Location

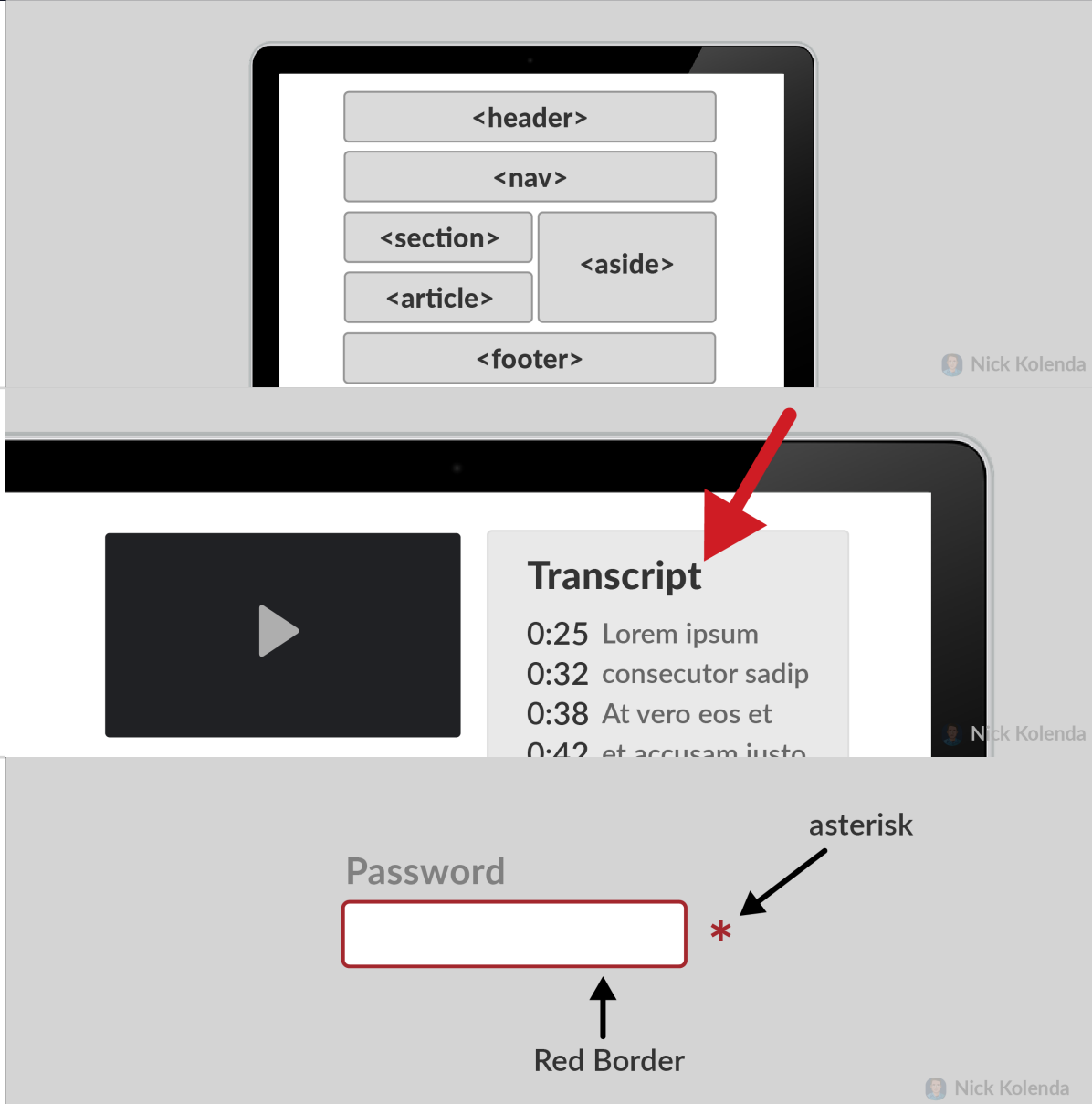


MAXIMIZE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR INTERFACE

☐ Categorize Elements With Semantic Markup

☐ Provide Alternative Formats of Content

☐ Communicate Information in Multiple Formats

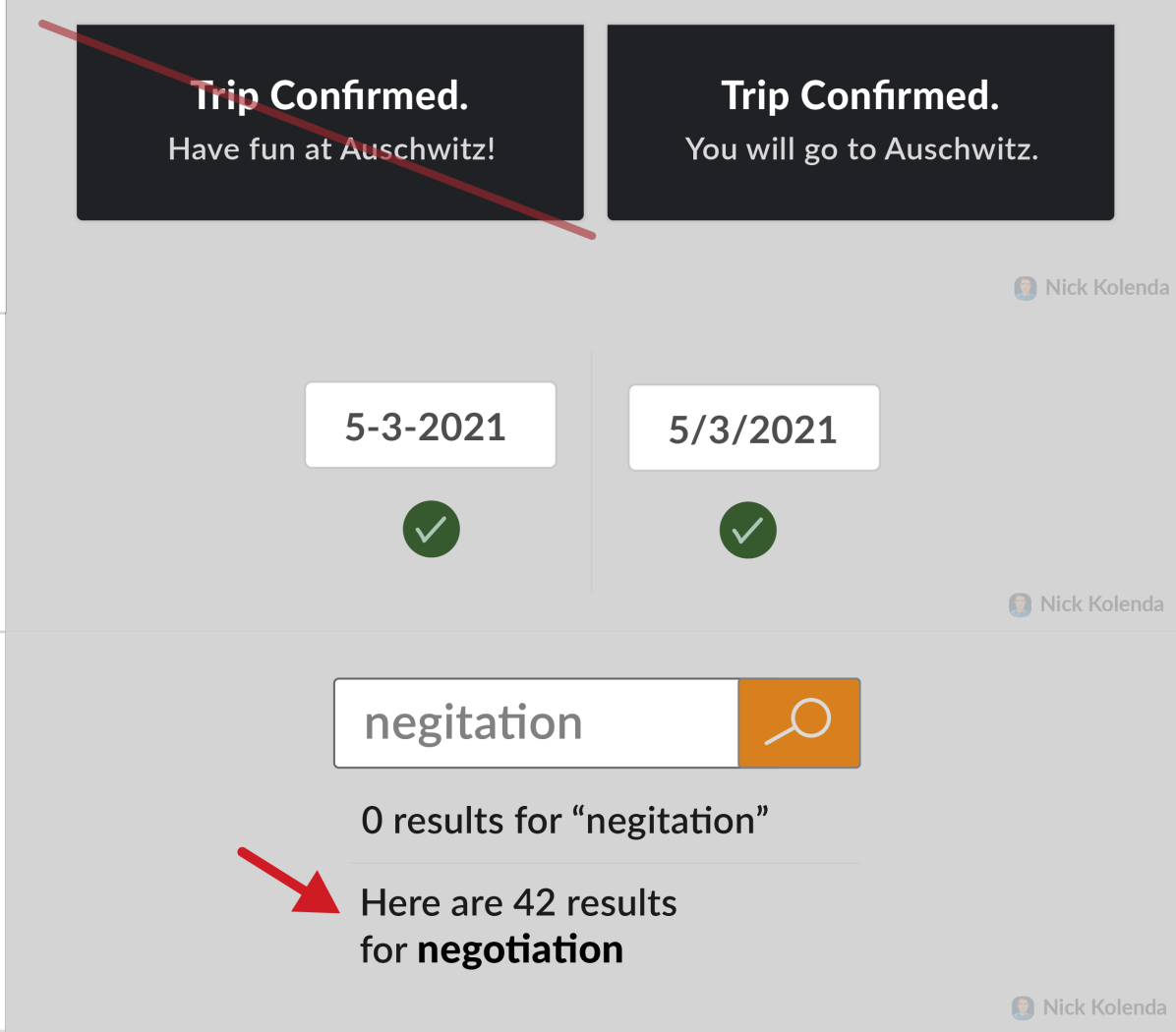


MAXIMIZE COMPATIBILITY FOR ALL INPUTS AND SCENARIOS

☐ Ensure That Messages Apply to All Scenarios

☐ Accept Various Formats of Input

☐ Handle Inputs With Improper Formatting



Next Step...

You can create a sleek interface.

But there's still a missing piece: How can you make it **persuasive**?

For this step, check out my course on Website Behavior:

www.NickKolenda.com/video-courses