CASE STUDY #2

Designing Shipt's In-app Notification Center.

From fragmented channels to a unified, member-first system

The current communication experience with Shipt is unreliable for delivering time-sensitive order updates leading to users being dissatisfied with their orders, missed opportunities for app engagement.

Specifically...

Current notifications are unreliable for sending Order Status updates

Lack of granular control over what notifications they receive

Low opt-ins to push notifications

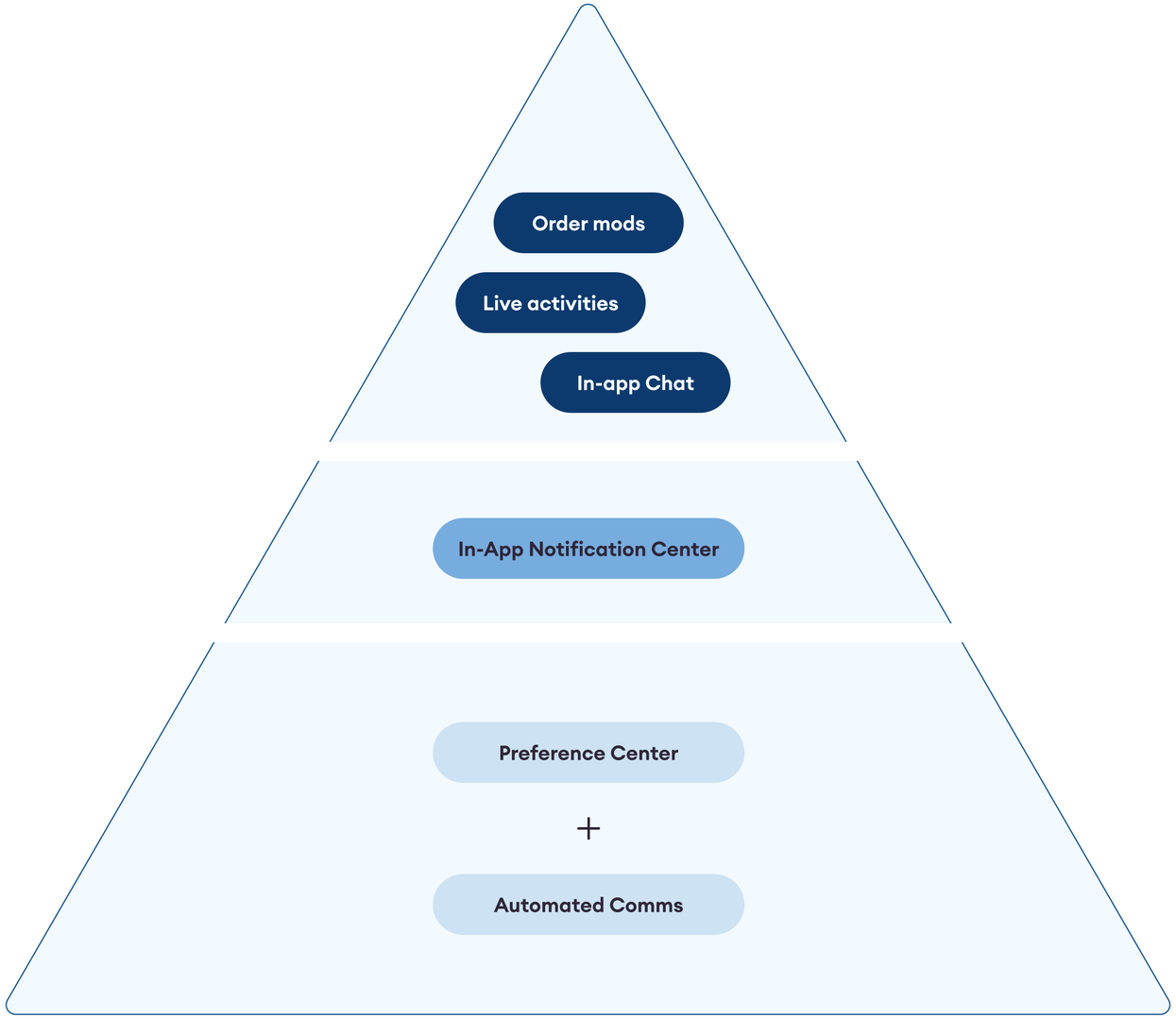
No way to view promotions & deals passively

Low engagement with marketing communications

What was the solution?

Current notifications are unreliable for sending Order Status updates	→ Automated Comms
Lack of granular control over what notifications they receive	→ Preference Center
Low opt-ins to push notifications	
No way to view promotions & deals passively	→ In-app Notification Center
Low engagement with marketing communications	

Prioritization



Ease of use features

Second layer of the foundation

This solves reach without opt-in dependency.

Foundational, most important

Automated comms makes Order status notifications reliable, this is most basic. The preference center gives members control over what notifications they receive, and how.

GETTTING UP TO SPEED

Notification Preference Center drove meaningful engagement.

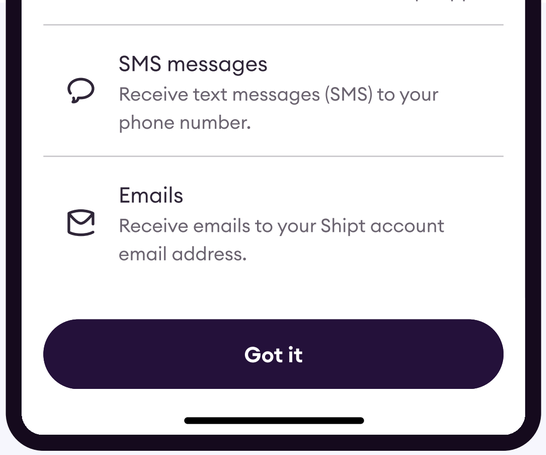
My role: Lead designer

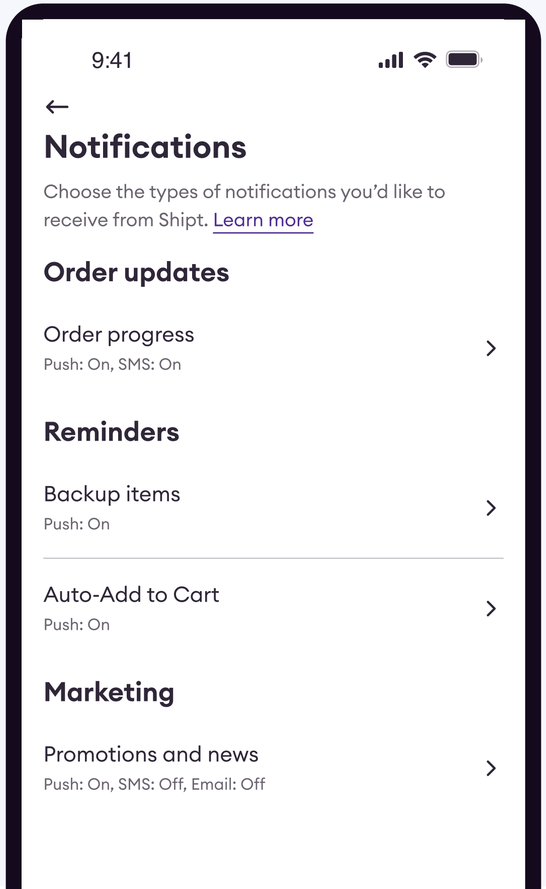
+71%

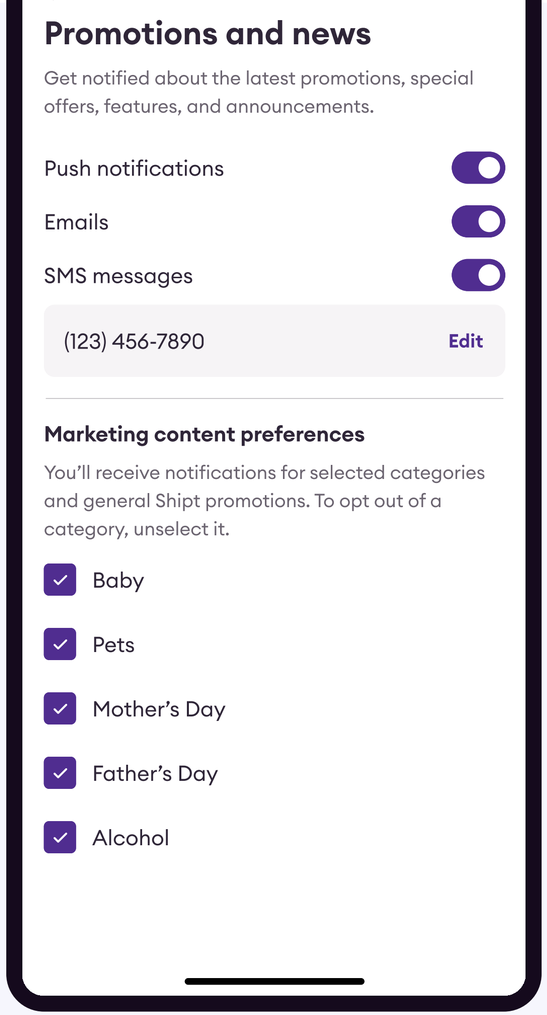
increase in e-mail click through rate

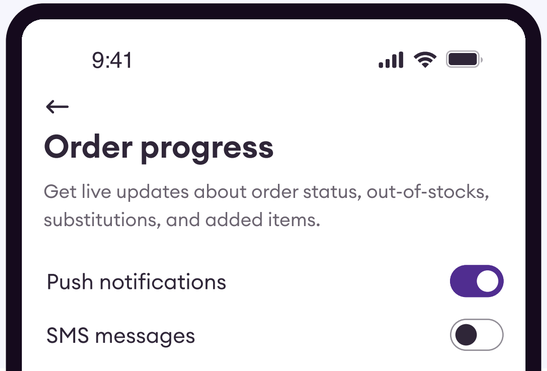
+106.19%

increase in Push Open rate









In-App Notification Center

What was the Problem?

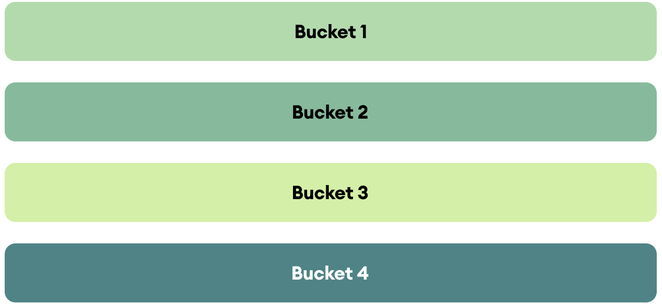
Our existing channels were not doing enough

- Email reached users but didn't convert – 55% open rate, 1.1% CTR. SMS was already overloaded with shopper comms, making additional sends feel intrusive.
- Push opt-ins were too low to rely on for broad reach.

No channel could consistently reach all members, and none provided a passive, always-available surface for non-urgent content

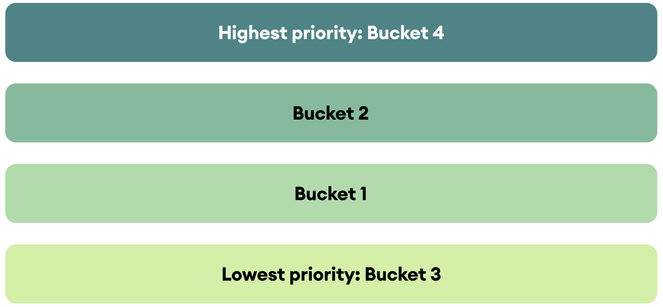
The Design Approach

Before designing a single screen, I needed a framework – one that defines what belongs here, how it's prioritized, and how it looks so any team can plug in consistently.



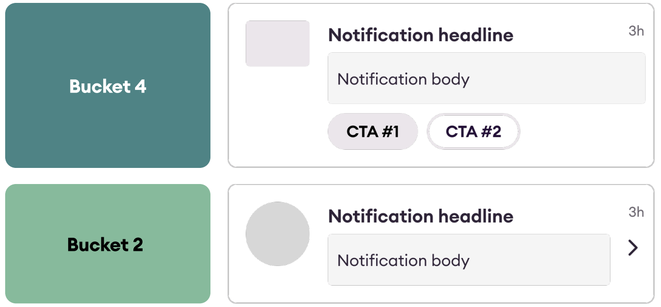
Step 1: Listing use cases and organizing them in buckets

We started with listing out all types of notifications we could have in this space. We did this by setting up a brainstorm session with Product & Marketing. We then grouped these notifications into buckets.



Step 2: Ranking the Buckets

We then organized these notifications into different buckets, which we arranged from most to least important.



Step 3: Template System

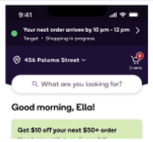
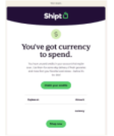
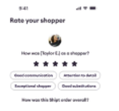
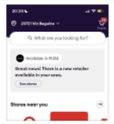
Defining reusable notification components by bucket so any team can add to the center without a design review from scratch.

Notification Audit

I led a cross-functional brainstorm and data gathering session between Marketing, Product, Research & Design.

Existing notifications (through other channels that fit well within the notification center)

Exisiting notifications and their sources/owned teams

Notification	Frequency (how often do we send these today?)	Proposed Duration in Notification Center	Is it time sensitive?	Is it personal?	Existing channel	Example
Delivery Tracker						
Delivery tracker would persist on the top of the OHP if there's an active order and would update with the status accordingly and link to the order page	available for all users who have an active order	While order is active	Yes	Yes	In-App experience & links to web map view	
Lifecycle - Iterable (triggered)						
Credit about to expire	Triggered for qualifying audience	7 days (push notification 7 days before expiration) could send another on the last day	Yes	Yes	Email/Push	
Post First Order follow-up	Triggered for qualifying audience	2 weeks	No	Yes	Email/Push	
Retailer Nudge (all retailers)	Triggered for qualifying audience	2 weeks	Kind of	Yes	Email/Push	
Abandon Cart	Triggered for qualifying audience	2 weeks or until the user places the order. If they add another item to cart and still do not purchase, 2 weeks starts over again	Yes	Yes	Email/Push	
Ad-hoc - Itearble						
New feature announcements	Quarterly product newsletter, ad hoc app modals	2 weeks	No	No	Emails and sometimes in app modals	
Promos / campaigns [ad hoc]	Ad hoc	duration of promo	Yes [can be]	Yes [can be]	Email/SMS/push	
Upcoming/Current Order - Push Notification Sender Service (eng)						
Back Up Nudges - Select substitutions	Every order	Every order where applicable prior to the shopper the order then disappear once the order is no longer active	Yes	Yes	Push	
Weekly delivery - Auto ATC	Weekly	since you would get a notification for this every week and it may only live for a day, does this make sense to even be in here?	Yes	Yes	Push, email	
Post-order - Aviator?						
Rate your delivery / shopper	Every order	2 weeks or until member rates their delivery/ shopper (users are forced into this experience today and it opens every time they open the app until they complete)	No	No	In-App experience/Push	
In-App (Modals and Banners)						
CS60 On-boarding notification highlighting Shipt's Value	Once	2 weeks	Business critical	Yes	Email/Banner	
New Retailer Announcemwnt	Once	2 weeks	Business critical	No	Banner	
Operational: Inclement Weather & store hours	Once	2 weeks	Yes	No	Banner	

New notifications (that fit well within the notification center)

new notifications

Notification	Frequency (how often do we send these?)	Duration	Is it time sensitive?	Is it personal?	Existing channel
Currently Prompted via In-App Experience but no notification exists					
Preferred Shopper	When you rate your shopper 5 stars	one and done	Yes	Yes	Landing page within Shipt prompt after rating
Tip your shopper	If pre-tip not done	2 weeks or until the user tips their shopper	No (should it be yes?)	No	Post order in app experience and confirmation email
Confirm / review personal details	When we know details are incorrect	2 weeks or if the user updates/reviews their personal information	No	Yes	Comms preference center
Turn on Device Notifications	When device notifs are off	2 weeks or until they turn on their notifications, then display every 90 days	No		OHP
No Current In-App Prompt or Notification					
Product Reviews					
Item notification approval flow (TBD if this is the right place since we will be sending automated updates and shopper will reach out) not sure where approval flow looks like or where it's located					
"Special Moments" - birthdays "purchased party supplies, n it someone's birthday), Shipt anniversary					

The bucketing exercise

I led a cross-functional brainstorm and data gathering session between Marketing, Product, Research & Design.

Tier 1: Live order Updates

Time-sensitive, tied to a current order or require immediate user action. These should appear at the top of the inbox and/or be pinned until resolved.

- Active Order
- Choosing a sub for upcoming order/s
- Previous order actions: rate Shopper/ Shipt, tip shopper
- Item Notification Approval flow (new notification)
- Operational update: Inclement weather

Notes

These impact core member experiences and should be prioritized above all else

Tier 2 - Requires action within days — tied to a KPI or expiring opportunity

Requiring the user to take action soon prompting to place a new order or ladders up to a enterprise KPI/initiative (C360, order volume & cross shop)

- Credit expiring
- C360 onboarding
- New retailer announcement
- Abandon Cart

Notes

Tier 3 - Time-boxed promotional value — drives conversion but not order-critical

Limited time offers or incentives to drive conversion or order volume. Still time sensitive but not related to an active/recent order

- Global promo - $10 off a $75 order (all retailers)
- Retailer promo/merch promo ex - $5 off target snacks
- Buy again on sale

Notes

Ad hoc notifications that are promotional based at any level but campaigns are passive prompting discovery so in Tier 5

Tier 4 - Informational — no action required, engagement-oriented

General announcements to increase engagement with new updates

- Turn on notifications for real time updates
- Auto ATC
- Product feature announcements
- Review contact details
- Operational update: Store hours

Notes

Tier 5 - Behavioral nudges — passive, personalized, lowest urgency

Helpful nudges based on past user behavior

- Retailer nudge (not new retailers but others in your area)
- New products within a retailer
- Product recommendations based on past purchased
- Marketing campaigns prompting discovery - special moments
- Post First order nudge
- Product reviews

Notes

Goals of Research

I partnered with research to run moderated interviews and a MaxDiff study with our members.

Core questions: Does our priority model match how users actually value different notification types? How do users mentally group notification content? And what level of control do they expect over their feed?

Research insisghts

1.

Content & Prioritization

- Members consistently ranked active order updates and financial incentives highest. Generic engagement content – not time-sensitive, not personally relevant – ranked last. This validated prioritizing Tier 1 and 2 content.
- Recommendations:
  - Prioritize order-critical updates and financial incentives at the top of the feed.
  - Differentiate urgency through visual styling (icons, highlights, urgency cues).
  - Use purchase history & behavioral data to personalize promos and recommendations.

2.

Filter nomenclature & Categories

- Card sorting produced eight categories, but significant overlap – particularly between reminders and deals – indicated users don't draw hard lines between content types. This directly challenged our 5-bucket model.
- Recommendations:
  - Main filters - Orders, Promotions, For You, Other.
  - Merge weaker/overlapping categories (Account, General, Reminders, Updates) into a single “Other/Activity” tab.

3.

Design & Layout

- Users described good notification feeds as scannable in under five seconds. That translated directly into our design decisions: compact timestamp, bold headline, truncated body, single action affordance.
- Design principles:
  - Bold headers + concise text for clarity.
  - Icons/subtle imagery for quick recognition.
  - Consistent spacing to improve scannability and reduce cognitive load.
  - Visual differentiation for urgency and importance.

4.

Features & Controls

- Users want control to reduce clutter and tailor relevance.
- Desired actions: delete/dismiss, adjust preferences, see more/less of a type, occasional “remind me later.”
- Allow filtering or muting by category.
  - Group informational updates (e.g., new retailers) for clarity; keep promos individually visible for impact.

5.

Placement & Access

- Top right corner of the homepage is the dominant expectation (aligned with common app patterns).
- Some users suggested contextual banners on the homepage for ongoing orders, above “Stores near you.”

Pivot after research

These insights made us rethink our initial 5-bucket model

- I used these findings to challenge our original model. The 5-bucket structure optimized for content type but ignored how users actually read a feed – chronologically, with urgency as a secondary signal.
- Second, having separate templates per bucket would have created clutter and inconsistency.
- So we pivoted: simplifying down to 3 broader buckets, balancing priority with recency, and unifying the design system so the Notification Center feels cohesive and easy to scan.

PIVOT!!!

The Updated Buckets

We moved from 5 buckets to 3, unified the template system, and rebalanced priority with recency.

Tier 1 - Upcoming, Current or Past Order

Tier 1 is now a pinned dynamic order module – not just a static notification – reflecting the research finding that order status was the dominant mental model users brought to a notification center.

- **Always at the top - Updates to the delivery tracker (dynamic banner that updates as the shop progresses)**
- Choosing a sub for upcoming order/s
- Previous order actions: rate Shopper/Shipt, tip shopper (new notification), rate an item (new notification)
- Item Notification Approval flow (new notification)
- Operational update: Inclement weather

Tier 2A - Business critical/Actionable

Tiers 2 and 3 seemed equally important based on our user's ranking, so we merged them into one bucket.

- Credit expiring
- Abandon Cart
- C360 onboarding
- New retailer announcement

Tier 2B - High Value/Time-Sensitive Promotional

- Global promo - $10 off a $75 order (all retailers)
- Retailer promo/merch promo ex - $5 off target snacks
- Buy again on sale

Tier 3A - Informational / Passive Updates/ Non urgent actionable

Tiers 4 and 5 merged into a single passive/informational bucket. Research showed users couldn't reliably distinguish between 'passive updates' and 'behavioral nudges'

- Turn on notifications for real time updates
- Auto ATC
- Product feature announcements
- Review contact details
- Operational update: Store hours

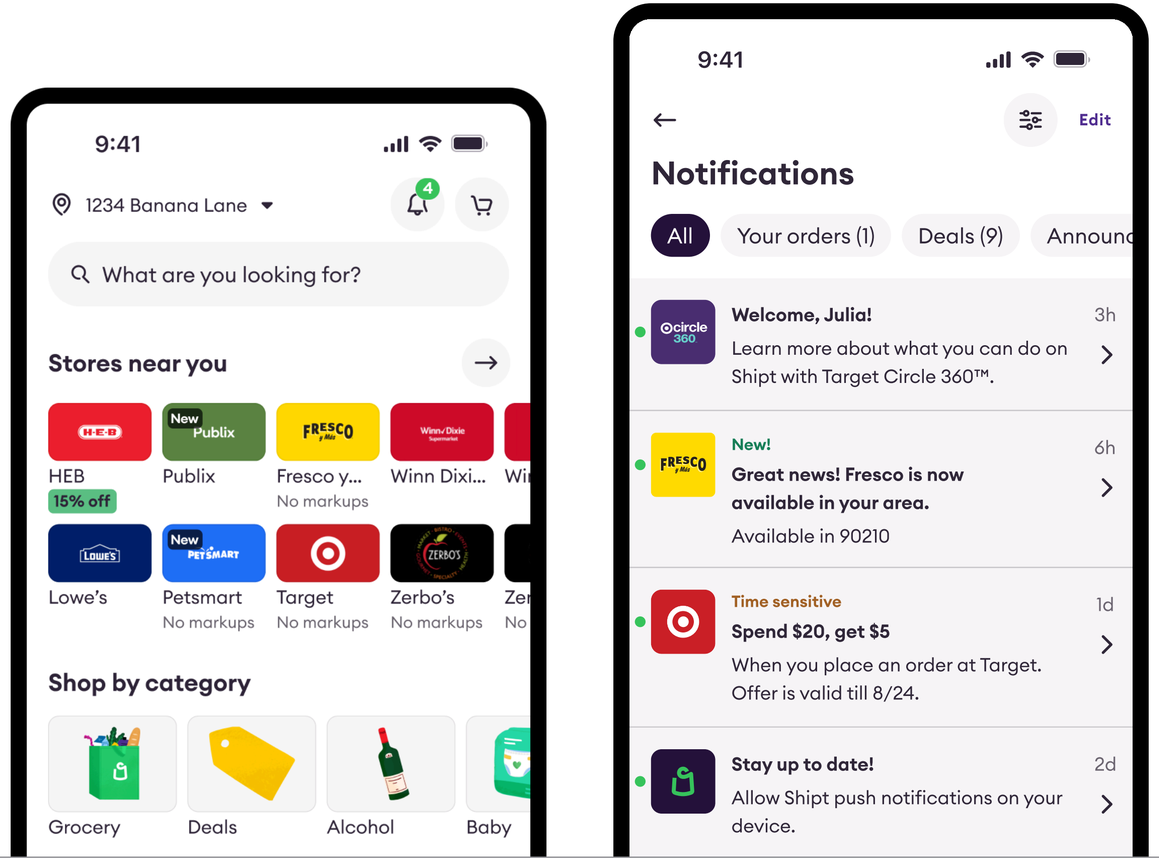
Tier 3B - Product & retailer discovery

- Retailer nudge (not new retailers but others in your area)
- New products within a retailer
- Product recommendations based on past purchased
- Marketing campaigns prompting discovery
- Post First order nudge

Design explorations

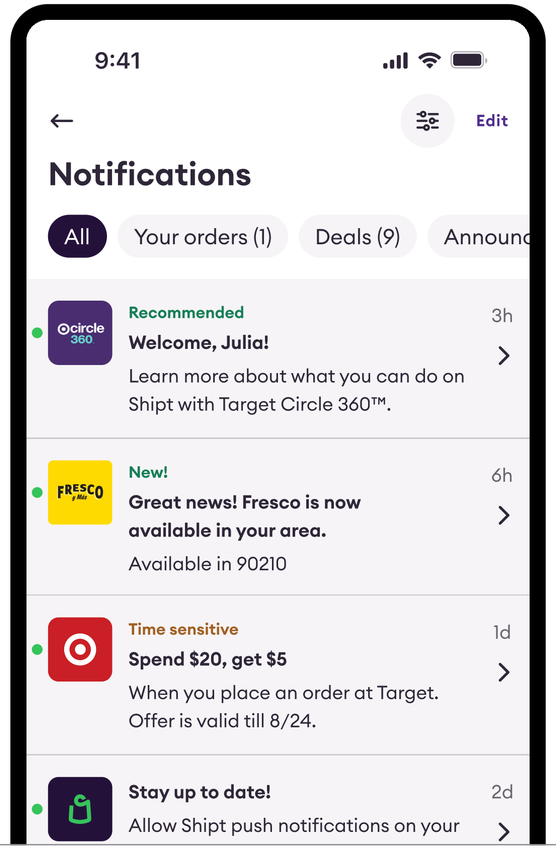
An entry point on the Shipt homepage

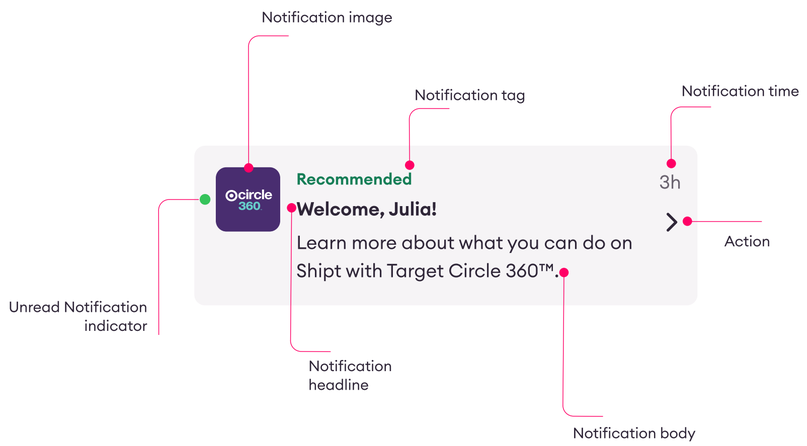
An entry point on the top right of the homepage aligned with both user expectations, and industry standards.



Designing the Notification

Reducing Cognitive Load in a High-Volume Feed



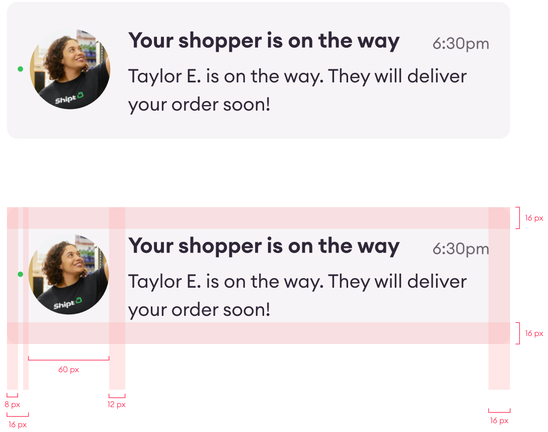


Notification Card specs

Notification Layout Exploration

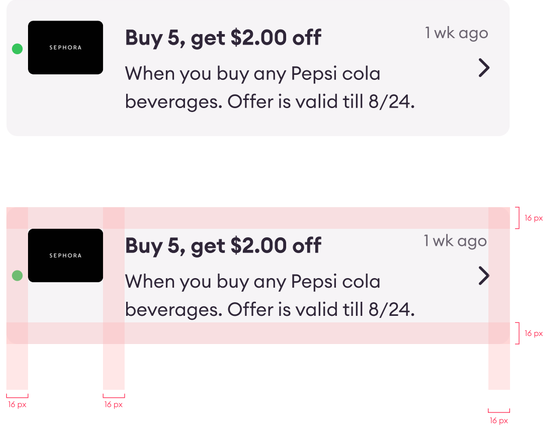
Some other patterns I explored for the notification card layout.

Iteration #1



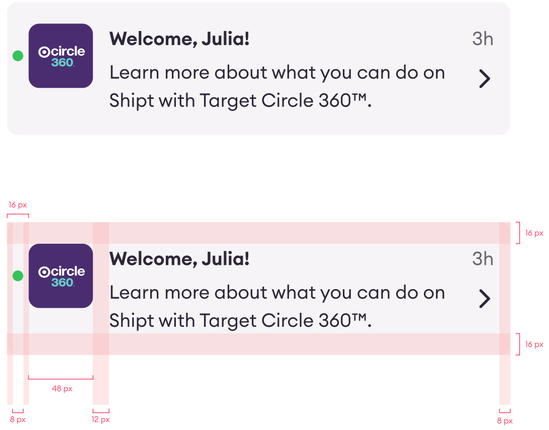
- Big, clear image
- Unread indicator too small
- Notification does not look actionable
- Follows prior DS patterns
- Not enough room for content

Iteration #2



- Follows new DS patterns
- Timestamp takes too much space
- Lesser space for headline
- Looks actionable
- Not enough room for content

Iteration #3

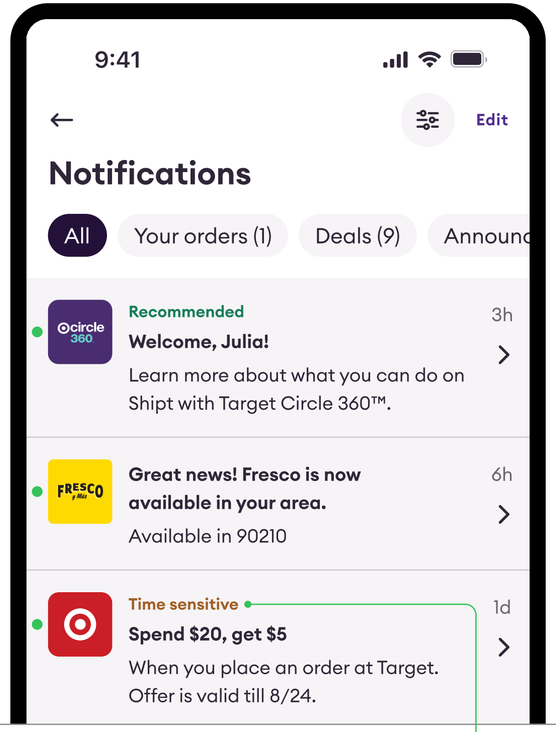


- Follows new DS patterns
- Looks actionable
- Small timestamp leaves room for headline
- Most room for content

How did we create visual hierarchy?

Users noted that they wanted to be shown which notifications are more urgent than others, while maintaining consistent patterns.

Tags for visual hierarchy



To create a visual hierarchy or to denote urgency, I added tags in notifications.

Why tags?

Users mentioned wanting to differentiate urgency through visual styling (icons, highlights, urgency cues), while at the same time expected consistent spacing to improve scannability and reduce cognitive load.

What are the different Tags?

Recommended For you

Time-sensitive

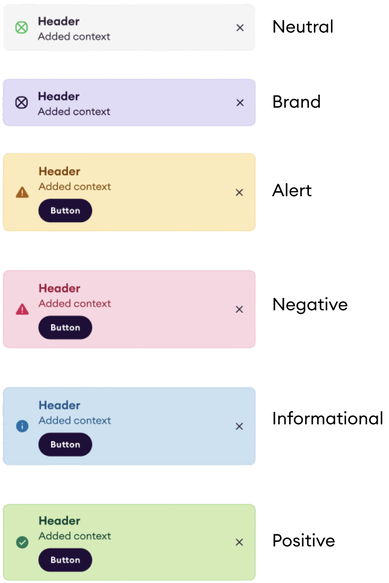
Limited Offer

What notifications get Tags?

- C360 on-boarding Recommended
- Credit expiring Time-sensitive
- Global Promo [$10 off $75 order] Limited Offer
- Retailer / Merch Promo Limited Offer
- Buy Again on sale For you

Why these colors?

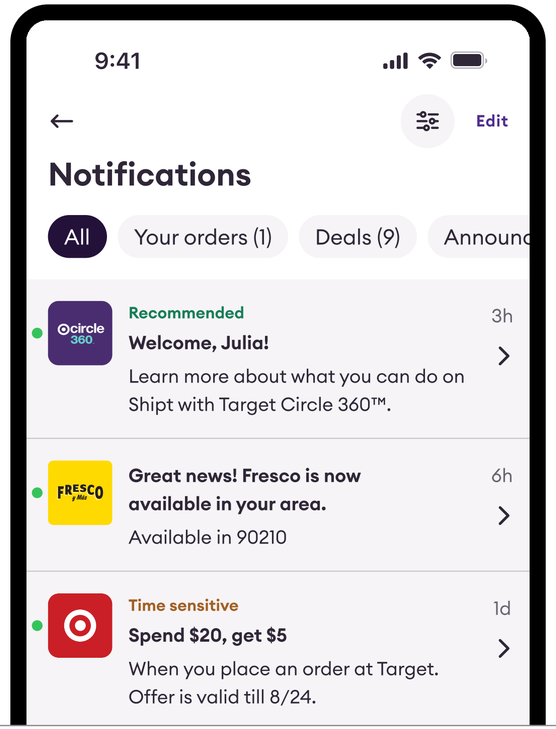
I mapped tag colors directly to the existing DS semantic token set – success, warning, informational, alert – so the urgency signal leverages learned behavior from elsewhere in the product rather than introducing new visual vocabulary.



How did we create visual hierarchy?

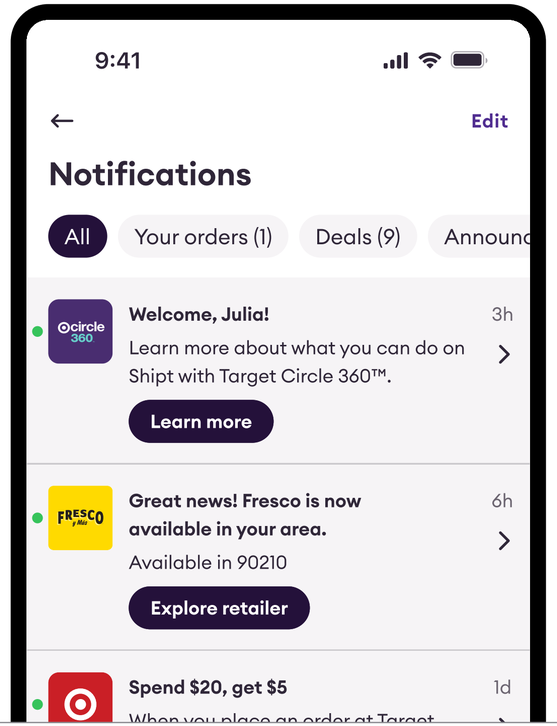
Some other options I considered, but did not go ahead with.

Tags for visual hierarchy



To create a visual hierarchy or to denote urgency, I added tags in notifications.

Alternate Option #1: CTA's in important notifications

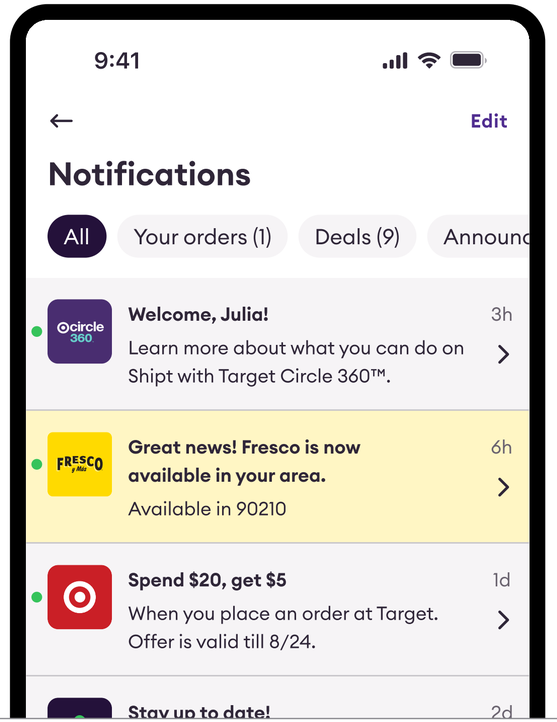


Large CTAs disrupt scroll scanning

These took too much vertical space

These buttons stood out more than the content of notifications

Alternate Option #2: Change Notification Background

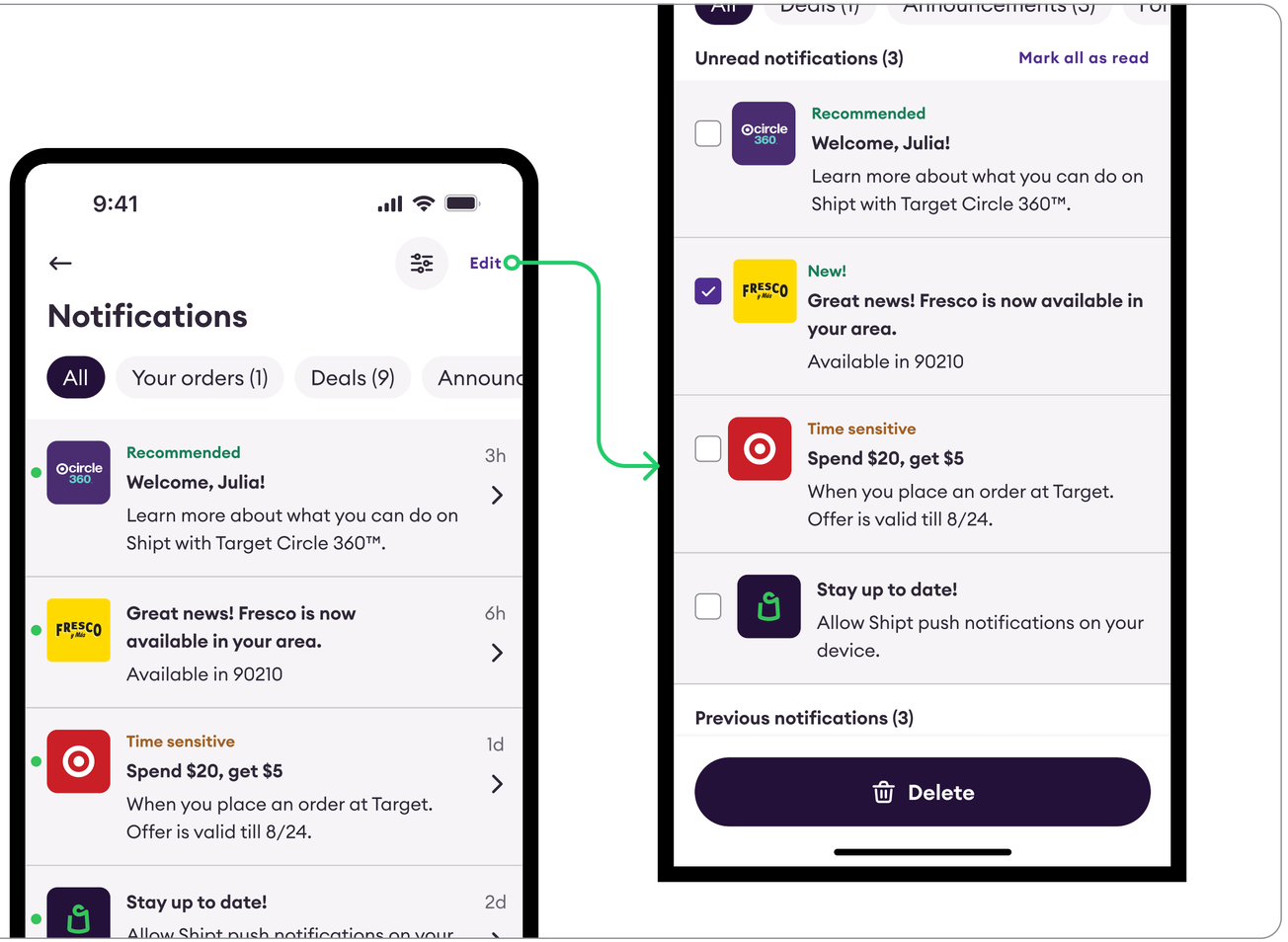


Not feasible, too many different BGs would be needed

Cognitively heavy

Managing the feed.

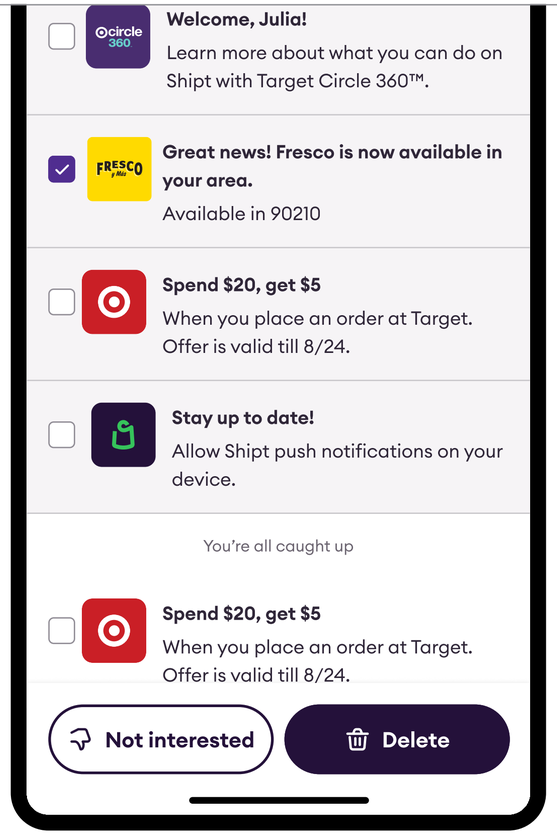
Inbox controls, delivered.



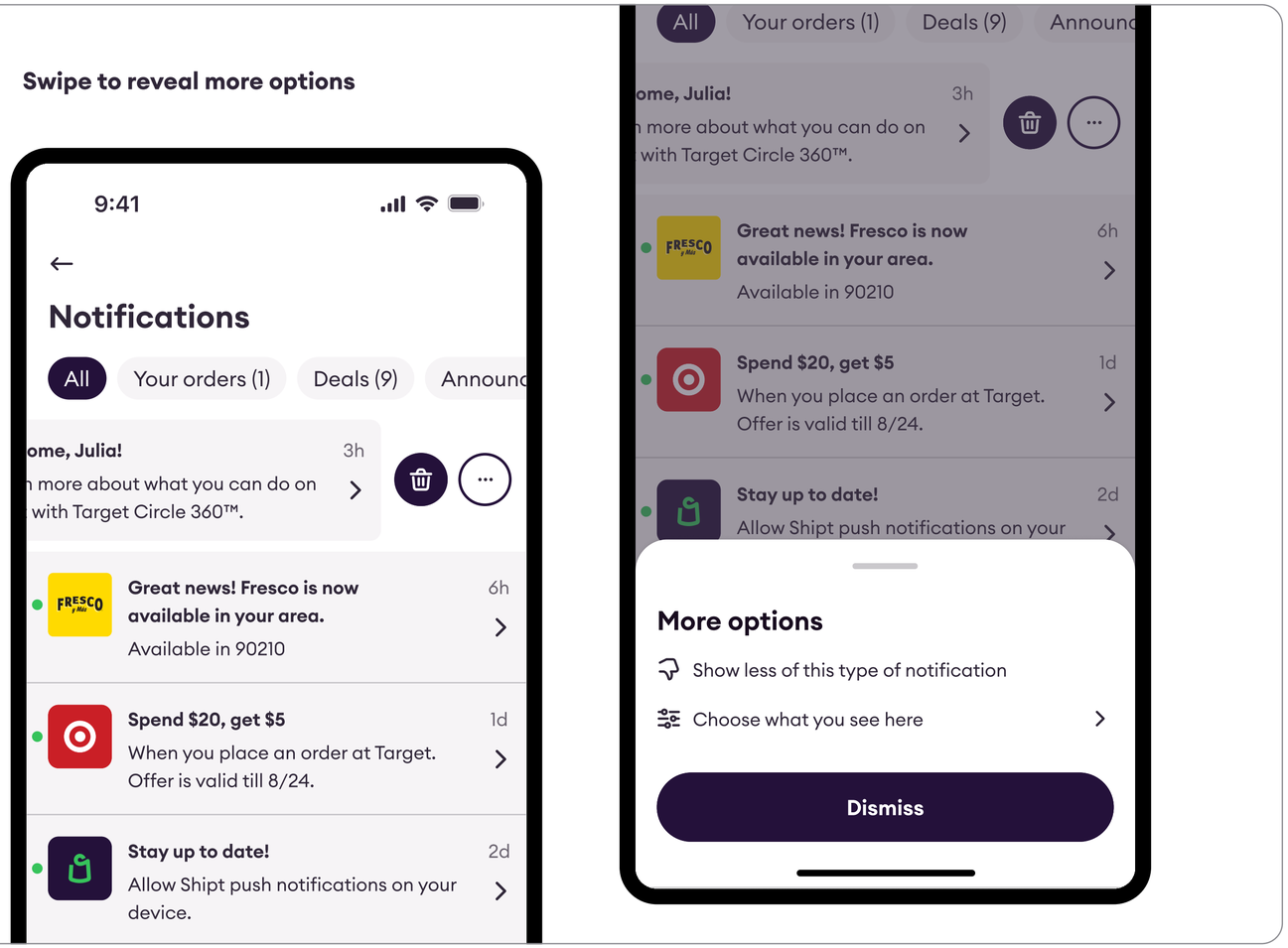
Edit mode exposes two controls: mark all as read and delete. I deliberately limited it to these two – research showed that more granular controls ('show less of this type') created ambiguity about what would actually change, eroding trust in the feature.

Managing the feed.

Alternate options considered.



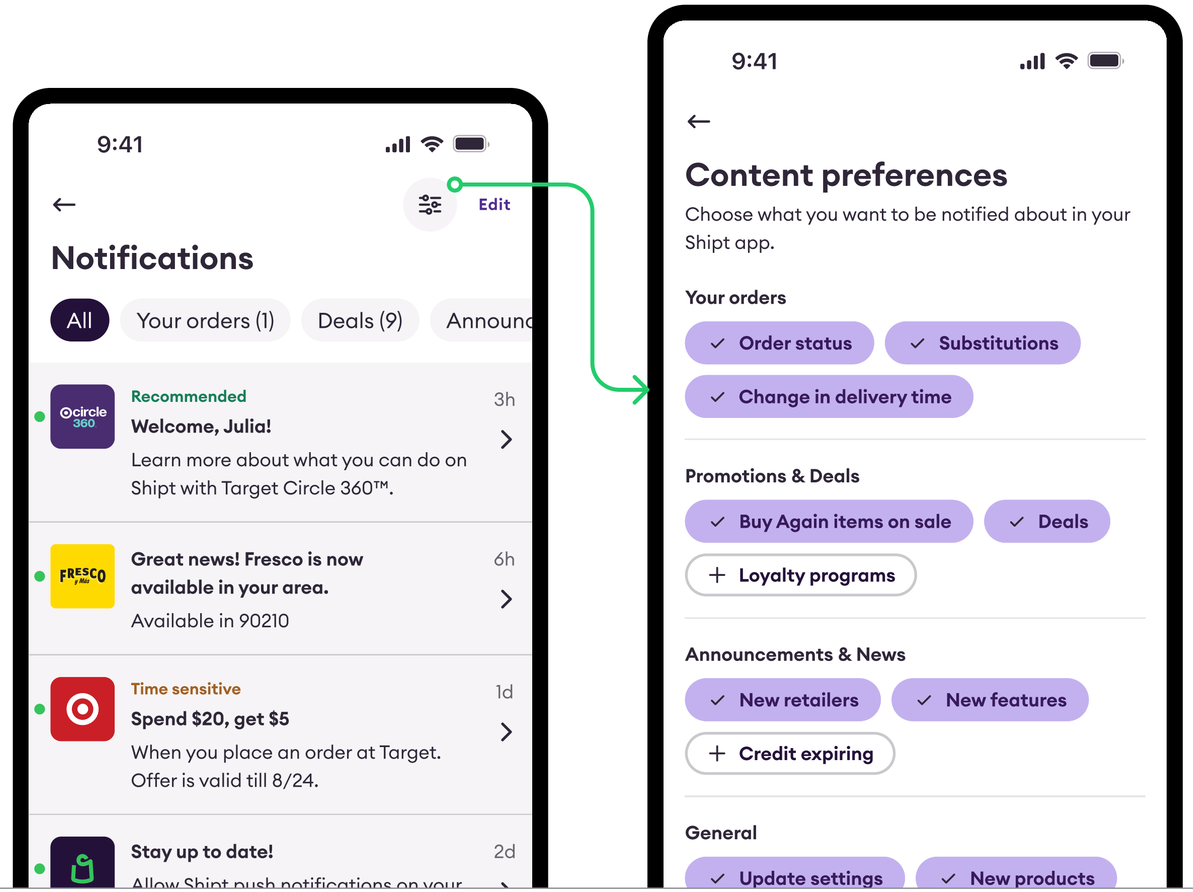
I removed 'Not interested' and 'Show less' after defining what they would actually do in the backend – neither mapped cleanly to a single data action, which meant we'd be shipping a control that created expectations we couldn't fulfill."



I rejected swipe-to-reveal because discoverability requires prior exposure to the pattern – it's not intuitive on first use. Shipt's member base skews older than typical consumer apps, making this a meaningful accessibility risk, not just an edge case.

Helping members make their feed, their own.

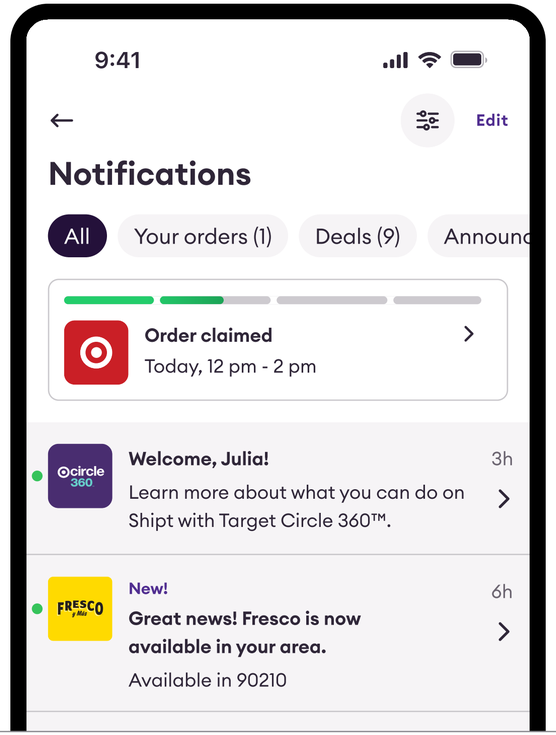
Members expressed wanting to be able to control what notifications they see in this space.

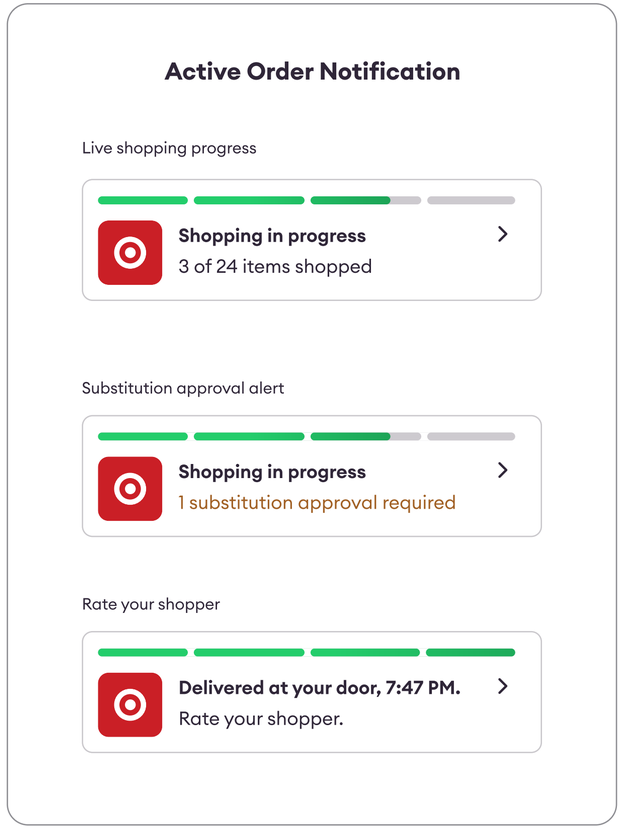


Members can control the content they see by opting in or out of categories, using the familiar chip selection pattern already established across the product.

Active Order updates.

I designed a dynamic order status notification that lives at the top of the feed while an order is active.





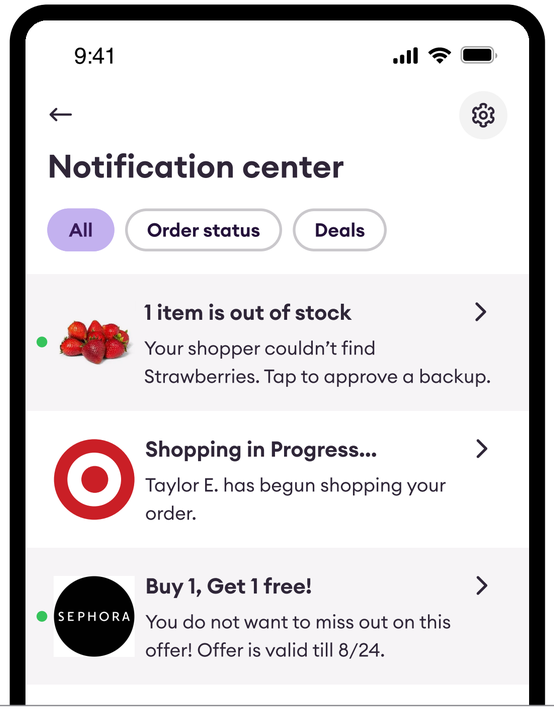
I designed a dynamic order status module that appears at the top of the feed while an order is active, ensuring real-time updates are prominently surfaced without disrupting the overall feed structure.

- Dynamic and self-updating.
- Clean, and organized
- Visually aligns with a standard notification

Active Order updates

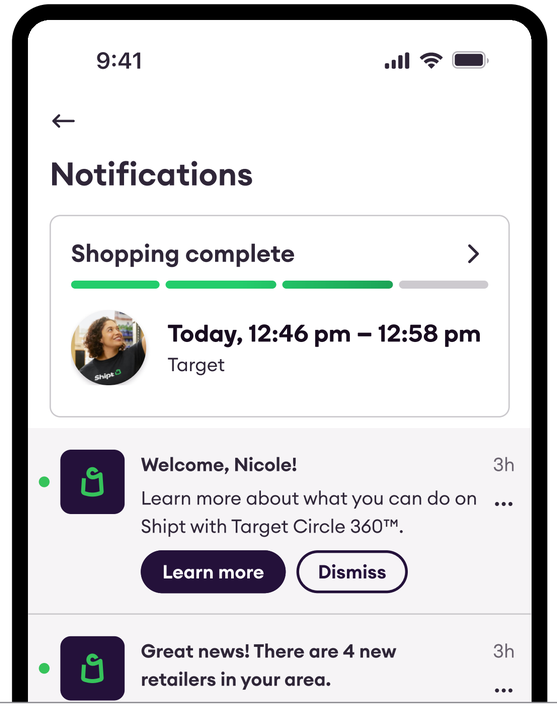
Other options I considered.

Individual Order status Updates



Individual status updates would crowd this space too much

Alternate Order Notification Design



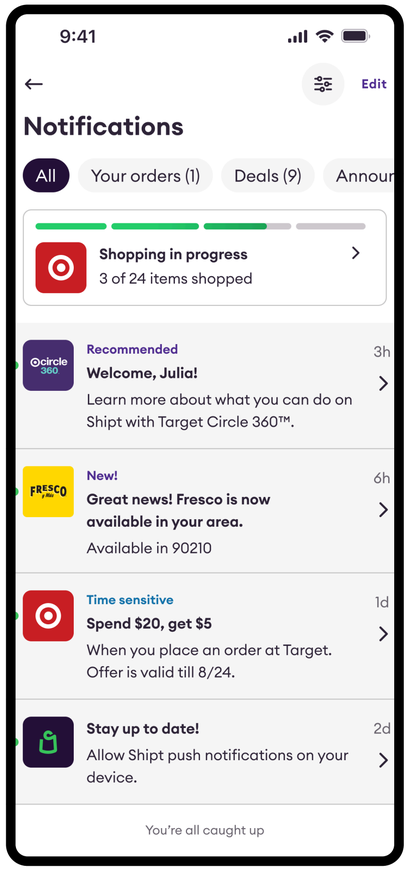
Took too much space

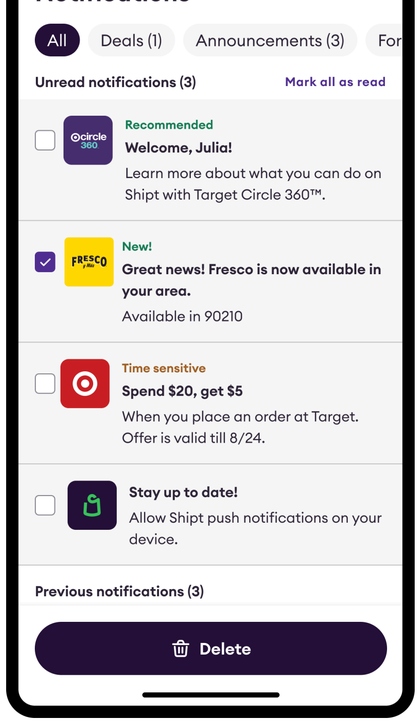
Wasn't a visual fit into the notification center

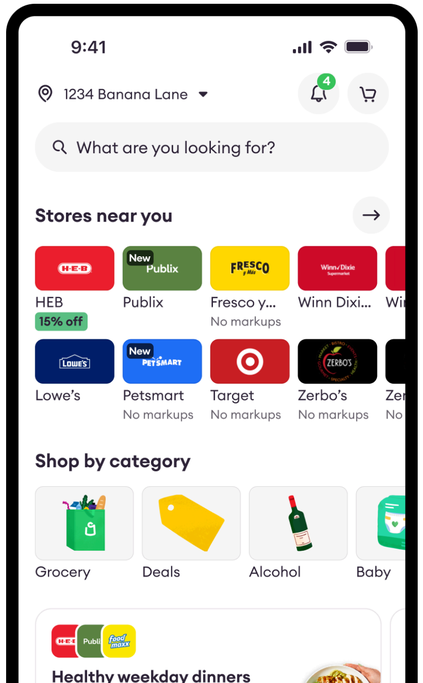
Matched existing Order Card designs

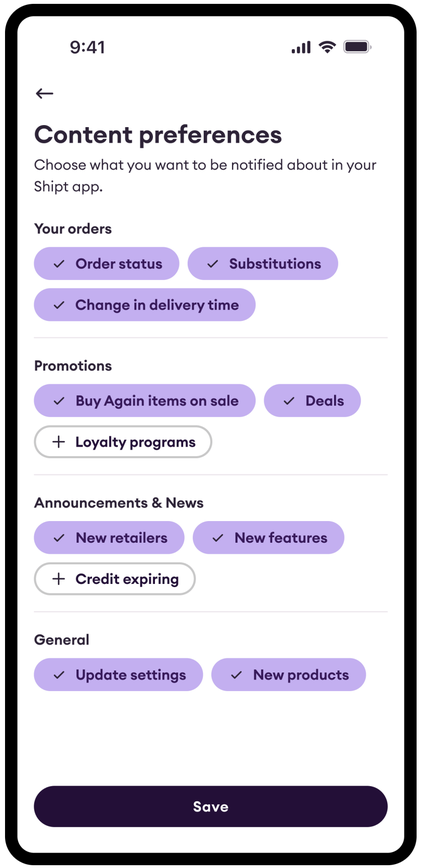
In-App Notification Center

1. Pinned dynamic order module – Always-on, real-time, zero opt-in required
2. Tag system – Urgency signal using existing DS semantic tokens
3. Content preferences – User control without exposing backend complexity









Thank you!