REDESIGNING BLOOMBERG’S COMMUNICATION TOOLS

About the Product
Our email (MSG) and instant messaging (IB) applications are the primary communication tools on the Bloomberg Terminal. Users rely on these applications in the process of conducting financial transactions and other daily tasks, sending more than 200 million messages and upwards of 20 million chats a day.

Background
Over the past 30 years, the Terminal has earned a reputation for power, speed, customizability, and richness of content. It has also evolved from a command-line interface into a hybrid command-line and graphical user interface. Rich content coupled with two interface paradigms and overlayed with customizability can result in compromised usability. Grappling with these challenges excites our designers.

Challenges
When it came to redesigning the existing desktop communication suite and expanding it to mobile platforms, there were clear challenges:
• Preserve efficiency while making the overall experience more straightforward, accessible, and delightful.
• Adapt features to meet evolving user needs and various contexts of use.
• Create robust and scalable design patterns that work across major mobile platforms.

Desktop Roots
The previous desktop email (MSG) and instant messaging (IB) applications included powerful, but sometimes complex features. MSG, for example, was optimized for performing common tasks via keyboard shortcuts, while IB was almost exclusively reliant on mouse interaction. Over time, the applications evolved independent designs for similar tasks.
Extending to Mobile
Bringing the powerful functionality of MSG and IB to mobile devices presented another set of challenges. The interaction paradigms supported by today’s mobile platforms are radically different than traditional mouse and keyboard inputs. Enabling users to efficiently multi-task within the confines of a touchscreen environment requires careful content architecture.

Customer Focus
We use contextual inquiry and other research methods to learn about our customers’ tasks and (often unstated) needs. We validate our designs with clients in our usability lab.

Outcome
The redesign, which is entering the final phases of rollout, has been a qualitative and quantitative success. The mobile apps have been downloaded thousands of times and received industry accolades. Users feel empowered when handling their daily communication tasks and overall usage of the new MSG and IB has increased significantly.

Fig. 1
Collaborative whiteboarding and idea exploration.

Fig. 2
Low-fidelity generative sketches.

Fig. 3
Mid-fidelity mock ups made by one of our MSG designers.

Fig. 4
Prototype validation in our usability lab.