

Alternative Handshakes

Challenge

Blink's annual professional conference, ConveyUX, was scheduled for March 3–5, 2020, just as news broke of COVID cases in Washington.

The evolving situation presented a few communication challenges: how might we communicate clearly and calmly to keep our attendees safe, while staying true to the playful, earnest, nerdy brand?

Solution

In addition to clear communication with attendees with email, social media, signage, and in-person announcements, we created alternative handshakes buttons. The alternative handshake buttons encouraged attendees to not touch in the early days of COVID when that behavior might have felt a bit strange. By prompting attendees, we were able to diffuse some of the awkwardness and provide a prompt for conversation.

Team

Brent Summers, co-lead
Mike Weinstein, designer
Mel Johnson, project manager
Mark Gsellman, photographer
Joe Welinske, conference program manager

Timeline

Planning, Dec. 2019
Campaigns, Jan. - Feb. 2020
Conference, Mar. 2020

No handshakes? No problem.

We created a suite of “alternative handshake” buttons to playfully discourage attendees from shaking hands at the conference.

Remember: this was there first week most people had heard of COVID-19, so it took some getting used to for folks to not shake hands at a professional conference.



Our attendees embraced it.

The buttons were so popular that we printed up blank button worksheets — modeled after the concept card template we use for projects at Blink — for attendees to design *even more* alternative handshake buttons.

Our designer Mike, working in Boston three-hours ahead of the Seattle event, turned around polished illustrated versions of the attendee-submitted buttons in a snap.




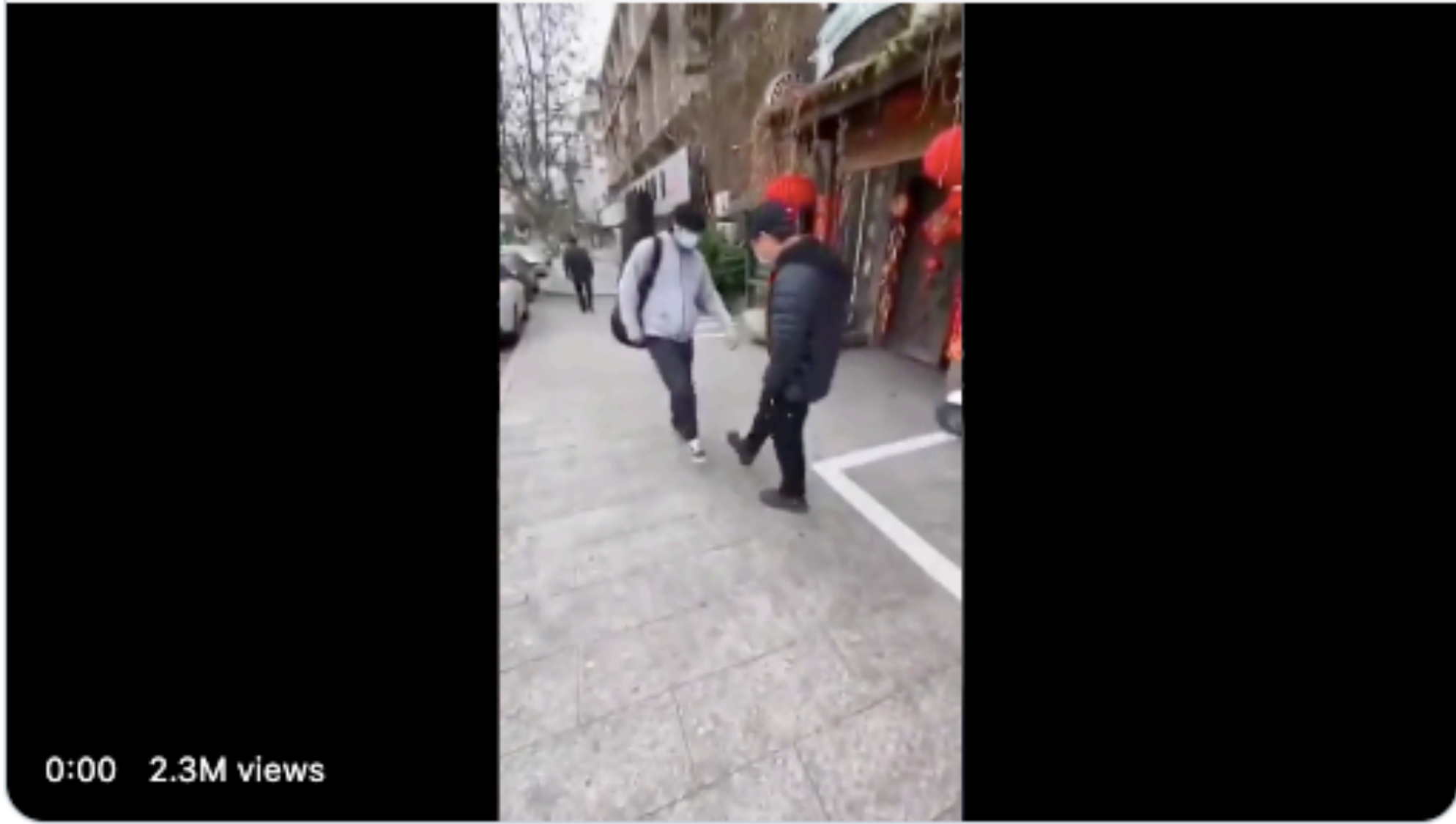
From Twitter to IRL

The alternative handshake buttons were inspired by a tweet from one of our speakers, and the ConveyUX account's popular response.

 **Mark C. Webster**
@markcwebster

Can we all agree this is the official greeting at @ConveyUX next week?


 **Marina Rudyak 卢玛丽** @RudyakMarina · Feb 28
What to do if you can't shake hands? #coronavirus #creativity #china



9:15 AM · Feb 29, 2020 · Twitter Web App

 **Brent Summers**
@BrentSummers

My choice of shoe just became more important.


 **Mark C. Webster** @markcwebster · Feb 29
Can we all agree this is the official greeting at @ConveyUX next week?
twitter.com/Rudyak

11:21 AM · Mar 1, 2020

1 Quote Tweet 2 Likes

 **ConveyUX** @ConveyUX · Mar 1
Us, networking at #ConveyUX2020 this week:



 **Brent Summers** @BrentSummers · Mar 1
My choice of shoe just became more important.
twitter.com/markcwebster/s...

1 Reply 2 Retweets 4 Likes

ConveyUX Retweeted

Alex Chandler
@AlexDChandler

#ConveyUX2020 #Seattle #Conference is
#innovatingUX #innovative #alternativehandshakes
#COVID19seattle



1:42 PM · Mar 4, 2020 · Twitter Web App

ConveyUX Retweeted

Kapellmann
@Kapellmann

Apparently people at a conference called
#ConveyUX2020 decided to share recommendations to
be safe from #Coronavirus. This was their way to address
the problem, loved it! 😊 #AlternativeGreetings



6:42 PM ·

ConveyUX Retweeted

Roxanne Kenison
@roxken

There's love in a time of cholera, and there are
conferences in a time of COVID-19. #CoronavirusSeattle
#ConveyUX2020



5:52 PM · Mar 4, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

4 Retweets 15 Likes

Tweet

ConveyUX Retweeted

julianne burke
@julianne_burke

day one of @ConveyUX ✨



ConveyUX Retweeted

Kaleigh Flynn
@kal_flynn

Loved the alternatives to handshakes at
#ConveyUX2020 this year! Stay heathy everyone!



4:25 PM · Mar 3, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

From Twitter to IRL

Social media also helped us to validate the button concept in real-time. Like an ad hoc concept evaluation, we took the positive feedback from Twitter into our development of the second set of buttons.