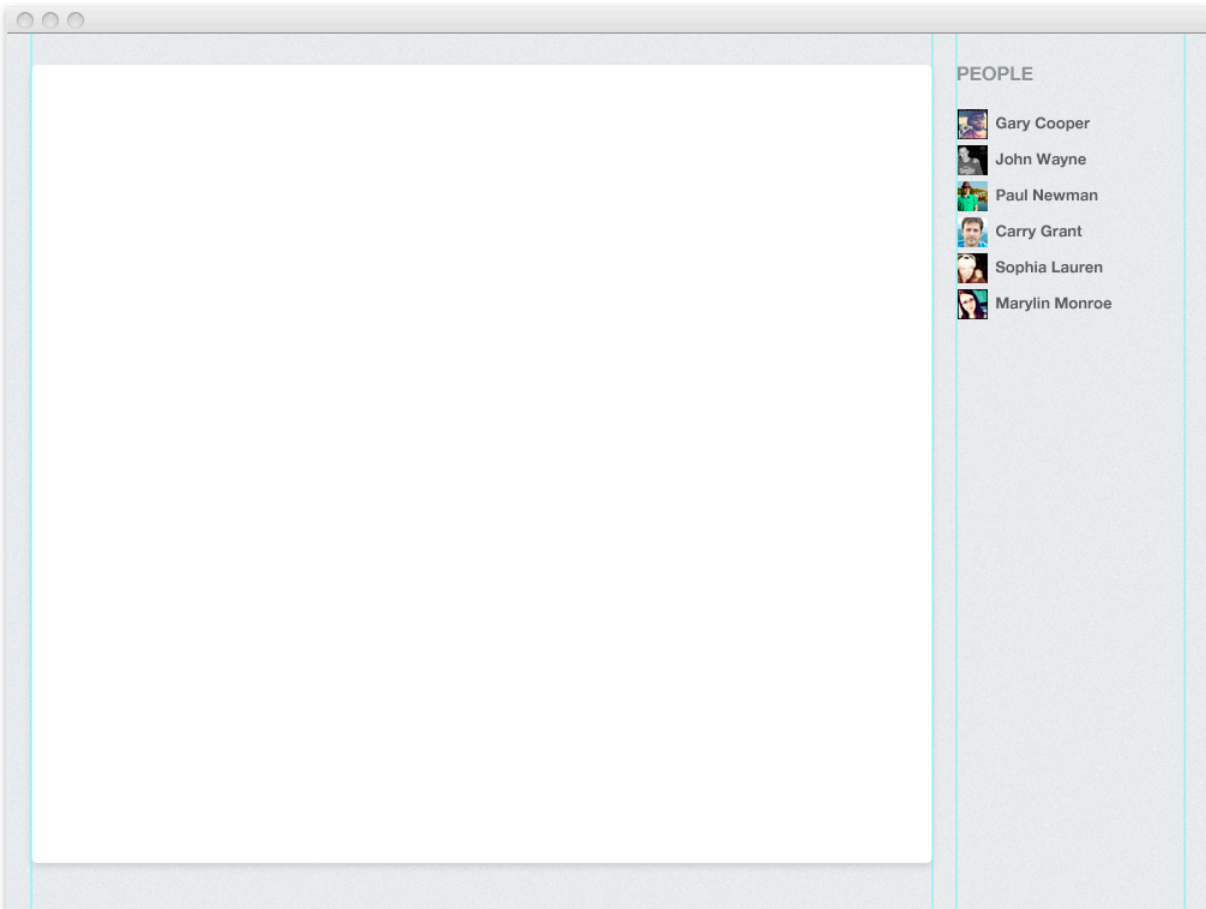


Step 2: Main Area & User List



Now let's put in a list of people and a big white area for our main conversation view. You'll notice that the conversation zone is white while the rest of the screen will have a grey background.

This goes back to well-defined priorities and good use of **contrast**: we want to put the most important thing forward, and a white background with strong contrast achieves that goal.

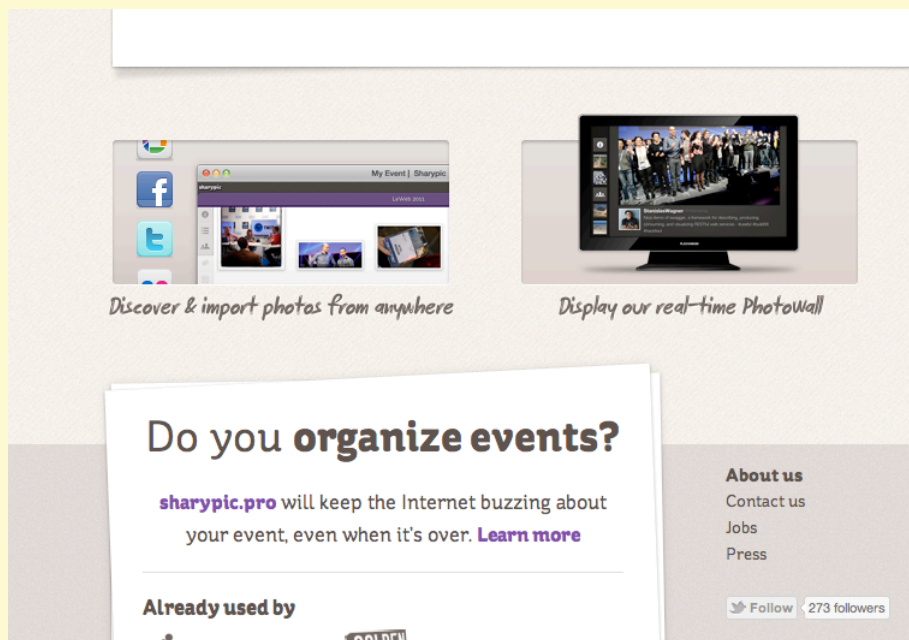
We'll make that contrast even stronger by giving that whole area a faint shadow. This way it'll seem like it's closer to the user compared to the rest of the interface.



Depth

Although UIs are two-dimensional (at least, they should be if you want your users to keep their sanity) it helps to think of them as being composed of **multiple layers**.

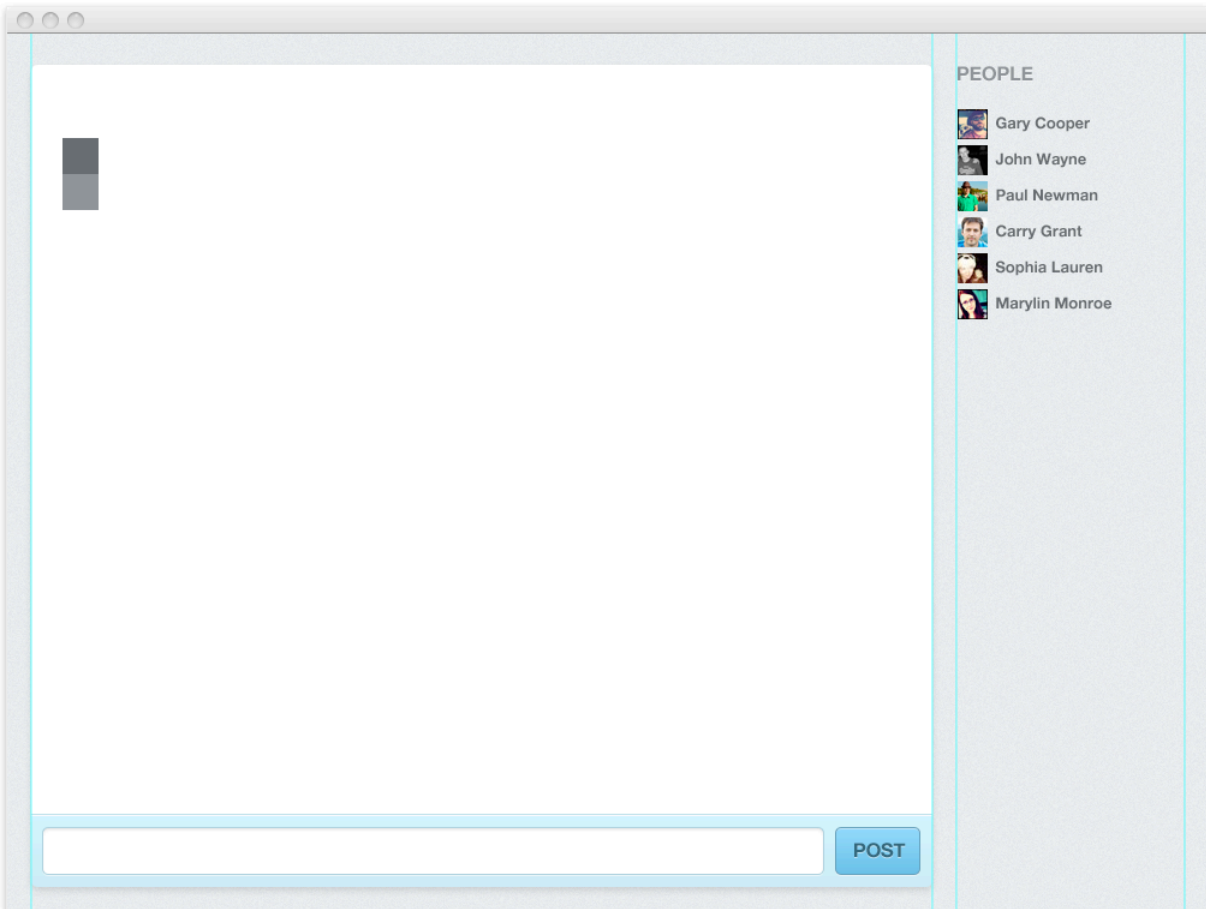
Think of **depth** as one extra way to differentiate elements, along with, say, **color** or **size**.



DESIGNS CAN OFTEN COMBINE 3 OR 4 DIFFERENT DEPTH LEVELS

But be careful! Once you enter the third dimension you can't go back! Make sure everything stays realistic otherwise you'll introduce ambiguities and incoherences in the UI (think M.C. Escher as UI designer...).

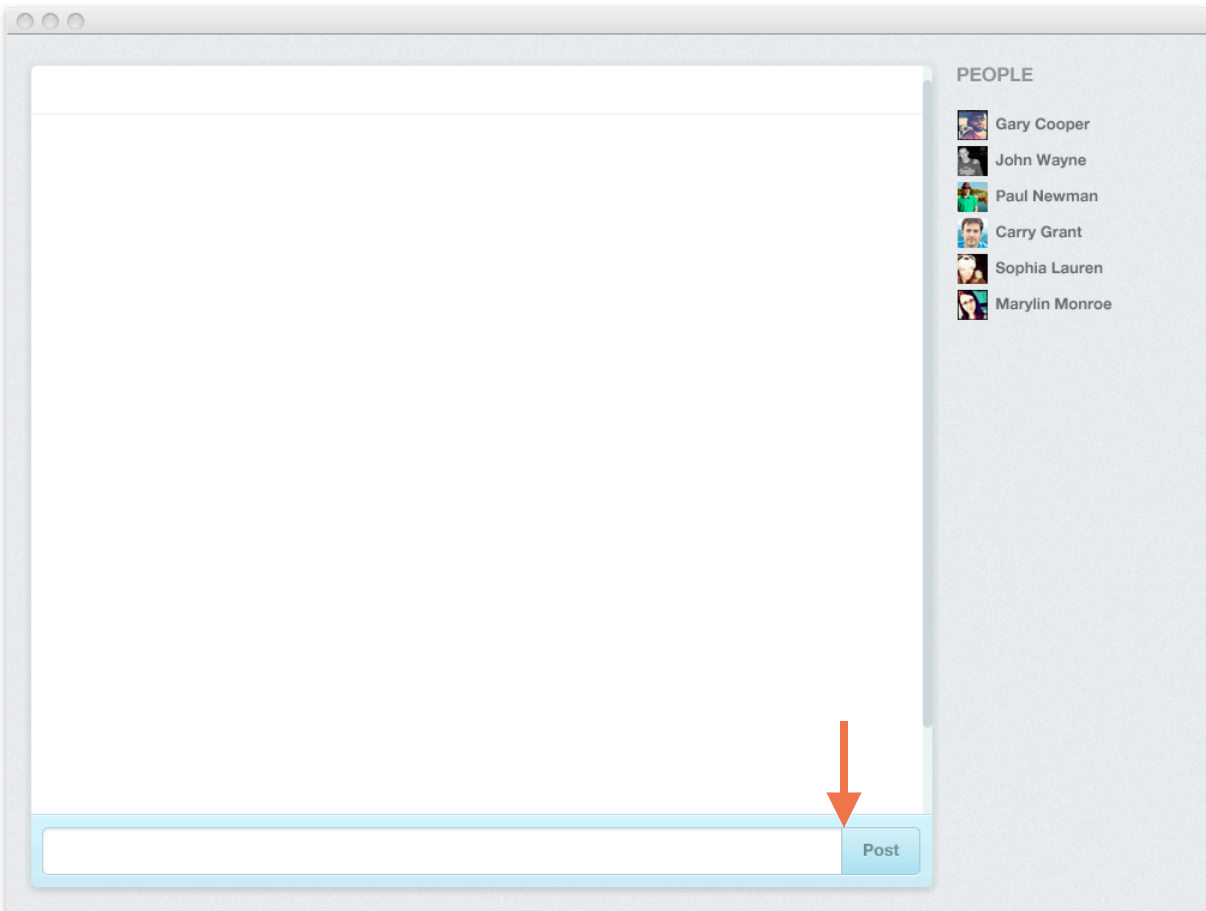
Step 3: The Text Field



The third item on our high-priority list is including a way for people to participate in the conversation, i.e. a text field.

This looks ok, but how can we improve it?

Although *Post* is the whole interface's main action, most people usually simply press enter to send their messages. Having the button there is still useful for people using a touchscreen, but it doesn't need to be that visible.



We can also get rid of a couple lines and some visual complexity by gluing the button right next to the textfield.



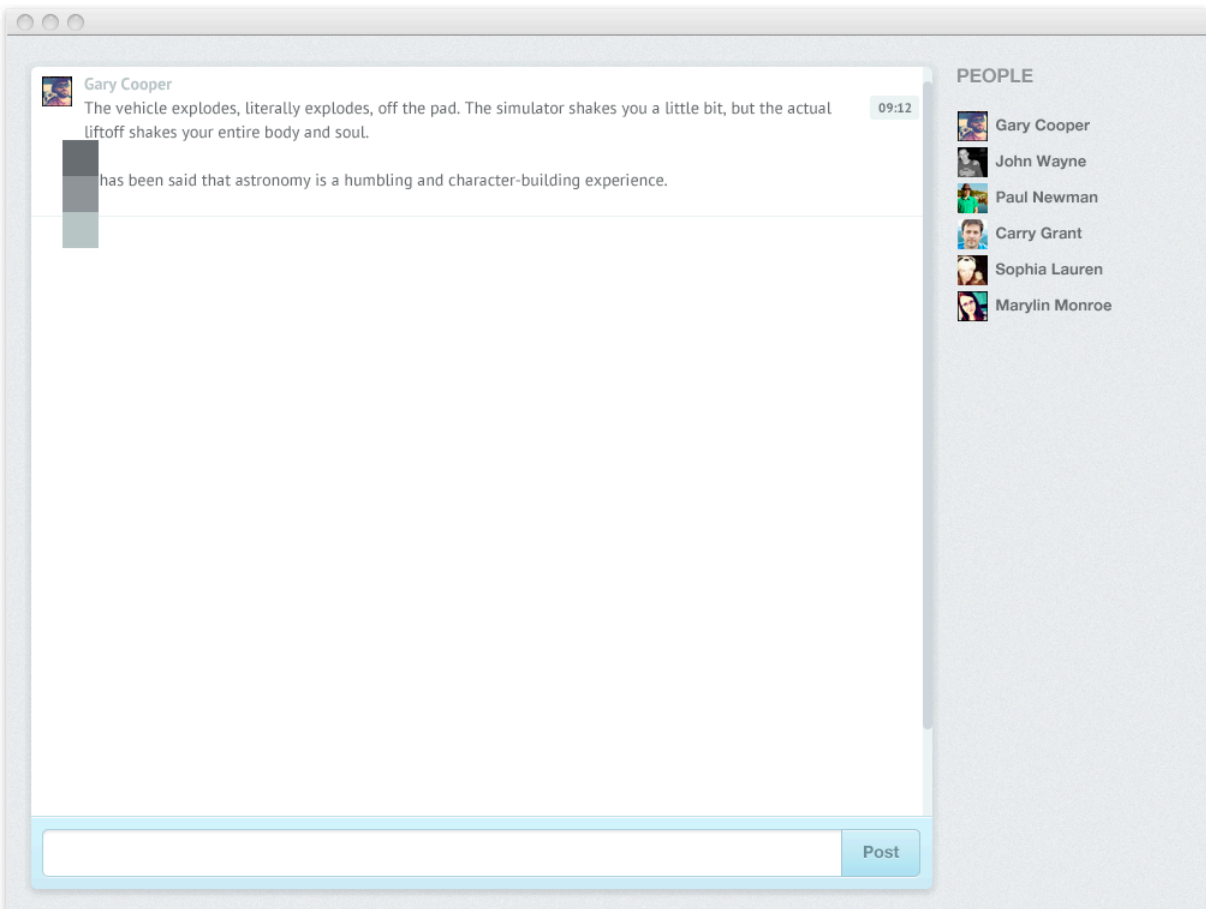
Proximity

Related elements should be positioned next to each other. Even small spaces or lines can confuse the user if misused.

There should be only **one single unambiguous way** to parse your UI, and paying attention to proximity is a good way to achieve this.

Step 4: Conversation

Now let's start fleshing out the main conversation view.



At this point, you might notice that I've introduced a new typeface for the text, the excellent free font **PT Sans**¹ (I had been using **Helvetica** up to now).

Helvetica is a good, safe default choice (in part because Helvetica makes everything look iPhone-y and modern), but I

¹<http://www.fontsquirrel.com/fonts/PT-Sans>

wanted to give the design a little more personality, so I'm trying out PT Sans for a while to see if I like it.



Typography

Type is the web designer's **secret weapon**. A great font can single-handedly set the tone for the whole design, make boring text look appealing, or become your company's new brand identity.

There's no easy recipe to master typography, you just need a lot of work. Here are a couple sites to get you started:

- **MyFonts** (premium fonts)
<http://www.myfonts.com/>
- **FontSquirrel** (free fonts)
<http://www.fontsquirrel.com/>
- **Typekit** (fonts as a service)
<https://typekit.com/>
- **ILoveTypography** (typography blog)
<http://ilovetypography.com/>
- **Fonts In Use** (real-world examples)
<http://fontsinuse.com/>

By the way, in case you're wondering, those squares floating over in the top left corner are my color palette. It helps me set colors quicker with the eyedropper, and keeps the UI's colors consistent.