

Focus Group Test Summary Report: BeReal "RealTalk"

1. Introduction

We tested "RealTalk," a conceptual, text-only feature designed to bring raw, anti-vanity discussions to the BeReal ecosystem. The core mechanics included a strict 5-minute composition timer, a blocked copy-paste function, and a completely vanity-free feed (zero likes or follower counts). The objective was to determine whether these strict constraints create psychological safety that encourages authentic posting, or if they introduce unwanted friction that deters engagement. We tested this prototype with a panel of 5 target users representing diverse social media habits.

2. Methodology

We conducted a 40-minute remote focus group utilizing a high-fidelity, interactive Canva prototype. The session consisted of five distinct phases: a habit-based warm-up, an unguided hands-on prototype demo, a structured qualitative discussion to uncover emotional responses, and a 5-question post-test quantitative survey to measure Net Promoter Score (NPS) and intent for Daily Active Usage (DAU).

3. Key Findings

Finding 1: The 5-Minute Timer is a Psychological Double-Edged Sword

While the countdown timer successfully bypassed the "overthinking" phase for spontaneous users, it acted as a severe friction point for the majority. For privacy-conscious and strategic users, the artificial urgency felt manipulative and paralyzed their desire to post.

- **Survey Data:** The most common response (Mode) for the timer's impact was "Made me anxious."
- **Observation:** Users actively resisted the push notification, viewing it as a demand from their device rather than an invitation to connect.

"The 4:59 countdown timer was such a rush! It literally forces you to stop overthinking and just type." — Chloe (Enthusiastic Adopter)

"That red clock is a complete nightmare for quality control... Those ticking red digits are just a cheap psychological trick to manufacture urgency." — Marcus & David (Detractors)

Finding 2: The Anti-Vanity Feed Fosters Safety but Kills Creator ROI

Removing likes, follower counts, and clout succeeded in neutralizing social anxiety for passive

users. However, without these validation metrics, users who post to build a personal brand or gauge audience interest saw no reason to participate.

- **Survey Data:** The most common response (Mode) regarding the absence of likes was "More comfortable/authentic."
- **Observation:** The lack of visual hierarchy meant users had to read the text to find value, shifting their focus away from the creator and onto the content itself.

"The complete lack of likes and vanity metrics is the best part of the app. It lowers the social stakes entirely." — Sam (Passive User)

Finding 3: The "Anti-Paste" Rule Sparked Unintended Backlash

Designed as an anti-cheating mechanism to ensure raw authenticity, the blocked copy-paste action was widely viewed as a hostile design choice.

- **Observation:** Users who rely on drafting text in their Notes app for spelling or tone checks felt the system was intentionally forcing them to make impulsive, permanent mistakes.
- **Takeaway:** What PMs intended as "authenticity," users experienced as a loss of control.

Finding 4: Niche Feeds Drive Passive Engagement

Users who found the Global Chronological feed too overwhelming or noisy naturally gravitated toward the topic-based Niche Feeds (e.g., #Metalcore).

- **Observation:** The lack of vanity metrics combined with highly siloed tags was enough to convert a chronic "lurker" into an active participant.

4. Recommendations

Based on the synthesis of user friction and survey data (Overall NPS: 3.8/10), the product team should take the following actions prior to engineering handoff:

- **PROCEED: The Vanity-Free Niche Feeds.** The complete removal of likes and follower counts successfully lowers social anxiety. Proceed with the chronological, text-only feed and the topic-tagging taxonomy.
- **REFINE: Privacy and Audience Controls.** The current public feed triggers massive anxiety. Add a simple "Audience Selector" toggle (Global vs. Close Friends) to the composition screen. This allows users to retain control over their raw thoughts and restores psychological safety.
- **PIVOT: The 5-Minute Timer & Anti-Paste Mechanics.** The strict time constraint and blocked pasting suppress engagement for 60% of the tested user base. Pivot away from a countdown timer initiated by a push notification. Instead, allow users to drop a raw thought on their own schedule, preserving the BeReal ethos without manufacturing toxic urgency.

5. Conclusion

RealTalk successfully taps into BeReal's core mission of stripping away performative social media pressure. The anti-vanity feed proves that users crave spaces free from the popularity contest of modern algorithms. However, to achieve sustainable MAU growth, the feature must pivot away from manufacturing artificial urgency. By softening the strict time constraints and giving users basic audience controls, RealTalk can evolve from a stressful, high-pressure experiment into a truly safe, authentic global town square.