My proposal is to utilize transparent bubbles as a means of communicating the success and usefulness of a given thread. Initially, my idea revolve around the fact that I wanted to show interaction and the amount of interaction taking place. Bubbles of various sizes can be utilized to show how these interactions are taking place. I had trouble with this concept at first because color was the only indicator that I thought could be used to show if a thread was helpful or not. However, I came to the realization that there must be another dimension to be utilized, that of the actual size of the growth of the bubble. With both color and size as measurements of success, the bubble concept seems reasonable. Here is how I answered the suggested questions:

Think about:

☐ How people are represented?
   People are represented by color in the bubble scheme. Assuming that everyone in a small forum can be stored using unique identifying colors (10-20)

☐ How posts are represented?
   Posts are represented by adding additional transparent bubbles outside of the initial bubble. Each additional post will generate an extra layer on top of the existing bubble

☐ Are you also representing the content of the messages?
   Content of the messages will be categorized as useful and not useful - useful meaning that it either facilitates additional thoughts or answers the questions and not useful being interruptions, spams, flames, so on.

☐ Do you want to visualize threads?
   Because the size of the bubble will only grow with each useful reply, we can visually see that the bubbles with the most open space will be threads that are the most useful. To distinguish useful threads against useless threads, we can measure the density of these bubbles to see which ones are less dense (has the least useless layers) and float them according to their weight/density average.

☐ How would you represent a ‘lively’ conversation? Flames? Spam?
   Lively conversations will be large airy bubbles that float on top of a 3d field while flames and threads filled with spam will be placed in smaller more compact bubbles that will sink.

Below is a concept model of what these bubbles will look like. Due to lack of photoshop prowess, I was forced to display this in 2d and without transparent bubbles which would look more pleasing to the eye. Please imagine these as round bubbles.
A) A depicts a thread that started by user Black. He then garnered helpful responses from user purple. However, we can see that user red side tracked and use BLUE joined in the efforts of unhelpful posts. Soon, this post becomes a verbal exchange between purple and blue which becomes unhelpful. Because of the amount of unhelpful posts, its size is relatively small compared to other bubbles and its density is the highest which intuitively makes it the heaviest.

B) This depicts a post which has valid interaction among light Blue, Red and Blue. However, we see that Black posted one unhelpful response. This slightly decreased the average density of the entire bubble to be below that of C and D.

C) C and D are used to illustrate the logic of using density and the height of the bubble to show a thread’s usefulness. Even though their post numbers differ, C and D are same in density and thus appear at the top of this display. There is also a relationship between bubble C and bubble B. The creator of thread B provides helpful responses to user Yellow.

D) We can see that user RED is very active in this forum in the sense that its color can be seen in three of the four bubbles.