

## OPIM 654 – January 5-8, 2009

### Lessons Learned

#### On Screen Styles

- Iterate often and early
- Easy, fast, inexpensive to test a concept
- Hire a webpage designer!
- Don't have to be 1st to market
- Can differentiate by user experience
- People like our site and concept in general
- People like validation on the internet
- Offer a Look For Less or Shopzilla function
- Reduce scope early when looking for feedback
- Get beer and pretzels
- Use time zones to your advantage (e.g. developer in Indonesia)
- Course could partner with CS majors - assign one to each team to do the development - win-win
- Liked the speakers - more?
- Lesson from Trip: Blast email to the Harvard CS Dept to find the best available programmer!
- Recruit the videographer to do your scripts!

#### Gloo

##### *High-level*

- first pitch was too high level (conceptual) – we were too focused on the roadmap of the grand design vs. the hook to get users excited about the user experience
- keep concept singular and simple
- focus on the need/ problem you're trying to solve and articulate that clearly
- find a hook to grab people's attention
- business/ revenue model vs. “cool concept – figure it out later” is still debatable

##### *Execution*

- version control is critical
- outsourcing really can save you a lot of \$\$ - Rent a Coder, 99 Designs
- Feedback early and often – iterate, iterate, iterate
- Taking time to build the wire frame/ layout/ blueprint first saved us a lot of time when we actually had to start programming/ coding
- don't try to build the entire roadmap at once – give the user a taste of one experience to capture them
- prioritization – nice to haves vs. must haves

#### DinnerVenue

- Big disconnect between what was shown on the splash page and what our web-page was about. Part of this was driven from internal confusion with the group. The core was clear, but we didn't know how to implement, so we narrowed it down and it caused us to really limit ourselves and lose focus.
- Need to look at things from the customer perspective – we were so caught up in our vision of what we thought should be on the webpage that we missed out on what it looked like to someone who had never seen the page or heard our original pitches – example given of someone thinking they could have their favorite food delivered when our website was about bidding

- Surprised at the amount of time it takes to build a page and gather information from so many different sources. And even when you think you have something done, it still isn't perfect and you have to keep refining it

### **TextFor.org**

- It's okay to fail.
- "Not for profit" is a VERY powerful brand
- There are 2 ways to approach ideas. The first is the revenue approach (which most of us follow every day). The second is just coming up with a great idea and ignoring the \$ aspect initially. Most of us focused on the former too much and it really stifles creativity.
- An original idea isn't always necessary: Execution is critical. Structure to your approach and your passion is more important. Most successful sites usually aren't the first to market.
- Importance of tournaments and the critical factor of generating tons of ideas and later whittling the list down to a handful of GREAT ideas.

### **DocASAP**

- Easy to Integrate with Sites like Google using APIs
- You can use tournament theory to get better quality work
- Technology is just one small piece of getting a web based venture off the ground
- There are a lot of bad sites out there
- Plus all the things Tom (On Screen Styles) mentioned...

### **PennyCare**

#### *Primary*

- Outsource: Whenever possible, leverage the ability to outsource tasks. This results in higher quality work and time efficiencies. It also may be necessary -- with a small team of 3 or less people, outsourcing is not just cost effective but also essential to get everything done with limited expertise. Our group contracted through one of the recommended 99designs artists for our logo. The service was easy, responsive and produced a much nicer and more professional product that we could have designed.
- Get Feedback: Seek feedback early and often. The early feedback was instrumental in setting us on a strong initial course for our product and allowed us to shape the direction and purpose of our site before we became too entrenched in the process. Also, iterative feedback along the way ensured we were staying on course and preserving the user experience as we developed.
- Focus on Core Purpose: Ensure to maintain core purpose and core product offering even as the site morphs and adapts to feedback. We found ourselves occasionally going down a path where we were adding or modifying features that obscured our original value proposition. Each time, we decided to scale back the excess to preserve our core functionality and features.

#### *Other concepts*

- brainstorm as a group but break out duties on separate teams to be more efficient when working
- use all of the many free and easy tools out there to help design and improve the site such as domain name creation tools or analytic feedback tools, instead of always relying on guessing, hoping, or brute force brainstorming
- have a very detailed and specific "About Us" section on the site that serves as a safety outlet for users in case they can't follow or don't completely understand the idea
- strive for predictability and consistency in appearance and user experience across site pages for recurring items such as colors, logo, font, page template, menus, etc.