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**Hack-a-thon Development and User Profiles:**

**Notes and Next Steps**

**July 21, 2010**

**Hack-a-Thon Theme and Goals**

Theme: News + Fun + Community. We want to change the world through news and commentary

All apps created have to be cross-platform (mobile web, smartphone) and include:

* Creative ways to integrate creation and delivery of news/commentary with game mechanics (gaming, fun, interaction, action)
  + *No shooting or war in the games*
* Opportunities to engage users beyond content delivery with the functions of the smart phone (location based opportunities, interaction, sharing).
* Have applications grounded in users’ needs. Help us to think about what the progressive audience needs.

“Like to haves”

* A monetization strategy to be thought about in creation of app
* An opportunity to collect user information and data or ability to integrate with other systems that have user data (i.e. social networking sites)

**What will make the hack-a-thon successful:**

* Branding for “my” (i.e. our) organization – earned media out of doing a hack-a-thon
* Connections to mobile development community
  + New ideas, bringing in outside community perspectives on your issues
  + Knowledge being gained from the event
* Creating foundation for strong mobile future for our organizations
  + Something that we can show what an app can do
  + Have proof of concept and ROI to show potential funders/investors for potential support of top apps
* Having real chunks of code that can be used (Open Source)

**Attendance criteria**

* Publicly we will go for 70. In reality we should aim for 50-60 people in total.
* Attendees will include developers, 80% TMC members and 20% local independent journalists.
* There will be a short form/application for Hackers & journalists to fill out in order to attend hack-a-thon

**Where/When**

* Chicago and SF are proposed locations. We’ll look at costs, talent pool, funding to make final location decision.
* We are aiming for early to mid October 2010

**Pricing:**

$40 per person (discount code $30) (Mobile lab participants do not have to pay)

**Roles & next steps:**  
Hack-a-thon

* Recruitment and Marketing:
  + TMC will work with Hacks/Hackers and other allies about spreading the word for hack-a-thon
  + Attendees will have to fill out form in order to attend and agree to overarching goals of hack-a-thon
* Nail down city and date: TMC will do some analysis to identify best place
* In-Kind Donations/Funding:
  + Mobile lab participants agreed to work with TMC staff to help identify opportunities for potential sponsors of event, or help with in-kind donations (i.e. a free place to work, food, goodies/schwag)
* Develop PR strategy:
  + TMC will work with mobile lab members and Hacks/Hackers to publicize event to media/funders to get promotion about the hack-a-thon and the results

Develop user profile personas:

* + In addition to the hack-a-thon, TMC and mobile lab participants agreed to take the next few months in the run-up to the hack-a-thon to develop “user” personas. In this, we will identify a few of our community members and interview/observe them for a day about how they use mobile. This will help us create “user” personas to think about how our current (and potential) community is and wants to use mobile. TMC will also work with mobile lab participants to recruit additional TMC members to participate in the process. Goal: 10-15 community members interviewed/observed that can be analyzed and personas can be created.  
    Outreach to other TMC members including: MoJo, Care2, The Nation, Feministing, Campus Progress, ColorLines

**Digital Innovation Studio – Mobile lab In-Person Meeting**

**July 21, 2010**

**Notes Overview**

1. Meeting Goals
2. A-ha moments from the group. What a-ha moments have they had during last few weeks?
3. Lynn Smith/Mobile Roots presentation on gaming and mobile
4. The Current and Future of Mobile: Visioning session results
5. A Hack-a-thon overview: Lessons learned from past hack-a-thons + planning a hack-a-thon

**Meeting Goals:**

1. Practice big picture visioning on the current and future landscape of mobile and media
2. Iterate core concepts and next steps for TMC sponsored Hack-A-Thon.
3. Discuss and prioritize additional mobile experiment ideas.

**Goals/A-ha moments from the group:**

Jason – ID key goals we can all agree on to accomplish this experiment. A-ha moments came thru NPR presentations and just how successful mobile has been for them. And how much they can grow their user experiences. Could be the future of our industry

Rod – He hadn’t thought about the importance of the middleware layer. Anything collaboratively is making sure that we can all get their web content into it.

Erin – Aha – the concept of middleware and creating a structure with a long term benefit. And the developing demographics and the potential to crack into new audiences, ie: young people, POC, etc. and thinking about how we’re reaching out to them

Mike McIntee- Always taking it from the perspective of the person pushing the buttons and think about why and how can the app make people’s lives better.

Burt Herman – excited to talk about the Hack-A-Thon and lessons learned

Lynn Smith – Mobile Roots – background is as a tech architect. This technology is the wave of the future and how we can interact with the world. And she’s going to talk about mobile strategy and how to work on user experience.

Chris Dykstra – interested

Jessica Stites – middleware was her a-ha moment – and NPR visual of taking little bits of content and use them in different ways. Also, a mobile app that’s for Christians, and it gives you the counter-arguments for seculars who say there’s no god, and it gives you a simplified answered. 1.Good argument-style application. Also, there’s Skeptical Science and provides all the arguments of people who are denying global warming. It’s the idea that apps can penetrate the social and use your content to get into some of the conversations people are having.

Roxanne Cooper – interested in ideas that aren’t shovelware.

**How media can \*pwn the mobile landscape**/Lynn Smith – Mobile Roots

User experience and tech projects have seen a lot of projects where people are going into the same space with different projects. When sites are stickier, more of a gaming feel, they tend to be more successful. You have a base ability to provide content but then add in gaming elements of stickiness it can improve your site greatly.

Why is mobile important:

* 42 % of the population has a smartphone: iPhone 28%, Android 9%, Blackberry 35%

It’s moving beyond being a novelty and more of an expectation. Platform stats change on a daily basis. It’s less about which phone is more popular, and more about how many platforms can it be accessed from. 80% of people polled want an iPhone or Android for their next mobile phone.

User experience:

How can you apply game theory for stickiness. A theory by Mark Rosewater based on the popular card game of Magic, The Gathering. One of the things they did in design was thought of the 3 different personality types that were interacting. To make the cards in the deck interesting to the 3 diff personalities.

1. Timmy – is enthusiastic about winning big. Slaughter opponents, and walks away feeling successful. Wants people to feel in awe of him, and is very into the quality of his wins.
2. Johnny – likes to win with style. Still very social but more about trying out every card and having a good experience. Wins are on his own terms. If there is something unexpected, he’s happy.
3. Spike – wants to win all games, doesn’t care how. It’s about the adrenaline rush of competition. He leaves unhappy if he hasn’t won everything.

Think about these three qualities when applying to apps. If you satisfy these 3 motivations you can excite people to come back. Even with tasks that are non-gaming tasks.

Ie: Foursquare – you can see users behaviors. Provides reward systems for all 3.

If we had a mobile app and the idea was more geo-caching, maybe articles in a magazine, etc. if you could make them all in reasonable space that people live. Sometimes certain elements would discourage some of the user-types, which gives an example of thinking about each user type in your design.

Geo-caching could be a good use of crowd-sourcing. Ie: we’re looking for X content from X spots and then you task users to go get this info.

Ie: creating profiles – MPR has different programs and they do member drives, but instead of having a $20 member fee, people could go in and designate which shows they want their $$ going to, and then perhaps that could show up on their profile. Which would excited people to interact with the system.

How do we apply this on a national scale?

* Make small social connections, or find a way to display their interests. Making connections is most important.
* Also providing a way for people to take direct action, and build in a backend point structure so that people can see how they’re interacting with it. So they are developing some sort of identity on your site.
* Unlocking different tools or awards or access points for the number of times individuals are interacting with the site.
* Social/viral – the idea of the ease of use of where you are right now is crucial. Garner the idea of “right now I can do something.” Engaging people where they are to take action in that moment.

**How to have a successful Hack-A-Thon/**Burt Herman, Hacks/Hackers

Computer science is now more blended with psychology.

Hacks and Hackers – developers are driven by mission and passion.

* Care about freedom of information ie: open source movements
* Do what it takes to get the job done
* See their work as art

The differences bw journalists and developers

Simplicity vs. Complexity: Journalists like simple. Coders/Developers LOVE complex. They want to figure something out.

Myth of perfection vs. Ready, Fire, Aim: Journalists like to perfect something before they go public. Developers just put stuff out there to see what works and how it can be built upon.

Competition vs. collaboration: Journalists are more naturally competive with each other over scoops and audiences. Developers like to work together.

Burt discussed the Hack-A-Thon in May in California and gave some great examples of apps developed during that event. A panel of judges included a venture capitalist, tech entrepreneur, journalist

Lessons learned from hack-a-thon:

1. Constraints foster good design. Have some guidelines for the hack-a-thon that allow both focus but also creativity.
2. Don’t preach. Don’t spend a lot of time talking. Let people mix it up and start working.
3. People come with ideas – be open to people having their own ideas.
4. Prizes aren’t always motivation. Developers want recognition and their stuff to be used even more so than monetary prizes.
5. Hackers are vampires. They will be up ALL NIGHT working on the app-so have a place that can stay open all night.

Other need to knows

* Focus – what is the problem that we’re trying to solve
* Know about the users you’re trying to build for
* Interaction – have experts on hand for participants to ask questions
* Have certain types of data before the event

**Other thoughts/Potenial Projects in the future**

Additional ideas that came up through meeting that might want to pursue at some point:

* Long-term: Building an API for all TMC members to use/integrate. Or an industry standard/protocal for transmitting data
* Solving filter failure--Figure out a way to aggregate TMC member content. How to create the best progressive content delivery system (with added benefits)
* Build mobile web apps that encourage repeat usage and sharing of multimedia news and commentary.
* Mobile device that will help us spread the progressive news message.