

Building Social Applications

Cautionary Tales

- Basecamp and the federation of work
 - What's the problem with basecamp
 - Every account is completely separate from others
 - Why can't I see all my basecamp projects in one view, independent of account?
 - More than a single login
 - Pervasive static models, hardly any flow
 - Move things from one account to another
 - You also can't do things that are reasonable
- Outside.in
 - Great example of failing the social tipping point
 - Hyper localized social networking system
 - Zip code level
 - At launch of site -- Stowe registered and there were no people
 - Where's me?
 - Where's the people?
 - They lost the first launch opportunity
 - Founder wrote to say "We had a chicken egg problem"
- Blinksale
 - You can get by with much less content when you give people the ability to interact
 - 3 days later another company did the same thing
 - Stowe -- Wrong order
 - Found of 2nd company did the same thing
 - People are so quick to go to market that they get the big thing wrong
 - Don't race to market with less than the minimum social features that will allow it to spread
 - One way to stand out is to not fumble the launch
 - Invoices and send them to people
 - The case of the missing market
 - You can see it in email
 - You can login to see actual invoice
 - Where's the market?
 - App has been around a long time
 - They do not have time to pursue the bigger market
 - LessAccounting.com is a competitor that will likely eclipse

Deep Design

- Last.fm
 - Introduced you to people who were listening to
 - One thing wonderfully right
 - Now they have a database
 - You can see trackbacks from last.fm to blog posts
 - bridges network in a virtuous cycle
 - Blog post link/name checker
 - Why are tags not groupings? Instead, they have old-style groups
 - They think of thing to concretely and have architected around that
 - Even a winner can make mistakes
 - Can't search for groups
- Upcoming.org
 - Built on a really smart premise
 - Give you a plug-in that listens what you listen to on iTunes
 - No manual catalogue
 - Massive attack
 - Boyd
 - How do you determine which events to go to
 - One of the interesting things is finding out who else is going?
 - Often the best you get is 'who was there last year?'
 - Upcoming.org shows you who will be there
 - Very interesting: What events will my friends be going to in the next couple of weeks?
 - Comments -- they allows discussion
- Facebook
 - Finds it to be more flow oriented in design than Linked in
 - Better than linked in in that people can stream RSS and other content in
 - You can record when you met people -- like a yearbook
 - Groups not groupings
 - Share things with friends
 - Does a very good job around recommend cool stuff that people might want to buy.
 - Mostly around design stuff
 - The role of the recommender drives the entire site
 - Recommender is the organizing principle
 - Livingstones Lounge
 - Chairs that look likes rocks
 - Followed link to other people to discover their things
 - Found lists of other peoples lists
 - Like looking over the shoulder of interior designers as they find stuff
- thisNext
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Exercises

- Some group exercises
 - Room may be too big
 - Bio break in the middle
 - Form groups
 - What are the most important functions of the social applications you use most?
 - #1
 - What is the 'market' that they create, and what is made more 'liquid'?
 - Form groups
 - Social iTunes
 - #2
 - What would it look like?
 - Why are calendars so hard?
 - Social browsing

Common motifs in successful apps

- Tags
 - Tags matter for social reasons
 - They allow grassroots to create the way in which stuff is classified
 - Instead of having to file things in pre-built categories
 - But the words we use to tag things depend on our intentions and our social context.
 - Find people who tag items the same way you do and you will find a social group based on shared ways of thinking and speaking
 - Text messaging is now getting adopted in US
 - What if people don't use?
- Discovery
 - The primary abiding motivator: Discovery
 - Things (a red herring: the functional domain)
 - Places (the third space)
 - People (who fill the places)
 - Discovery of:
 - People (who fill the places)
 - Self (at the still point of the turning world)
 - People will put up with really bad experiences
 - It's only through being connected to other people that people figure out who they really are
 - Not the places you build
 - Stowe was followed by vatican nun and echoed his sentiments at LIFT -- people's
 - Anyone know where this is from?
 - The still point of the turning world
- Groupings and Groups
 - Accept the asymmetry of nets
 - Groupings: ad hoc assemblages of people with similar interests
 - Groups: Symmetric nets
 - Remember the community of tags idea
 - Discovering themselves?
 - Help them feel hipper? Cooler? Happier?
 - Remaking themselves?
 - Why do people create identities?
 - Projecting themselves?
 - Cool app
 - Ships passing in the night app
 - Doeppler?
- Infollowing to you
 - What's wrong with power?
 - Vox Populi, Vox Humana
 - People violate accepted social norms (digg)
 - Gaming Systems
- Inexorable Power Law
 - He posts something on Ning -- Marc Andreesson comments 20 minutes later
 - Yahoo has all these social apps but no integration strategy -- someone calls him to discuss
 - Examples
 - He likes power
 - People wants advice from trusted authorities
 - Picture of "Vox Humana" sign
- Reputation and Swarmth
 - How to ensure, how to reward?
 - 10,000 hour rule
 - Anthropologists posit that it takes 9 years to get mastery of something
 - Stowe is a big advocate of money
 - When systems get big, people ultimately want money
 - Harnessing nets: Swarm intelligence
 - All nets are not the same: Is the swarm fungible?
 - Reputations do not usually transfer to different networks
- Media Traffic: Different Registers
 - Dynamic
 - Rich
 - Social relationships
 - Identity = aggregated flows, not static
 - Links to the world
 - Social networks
 - Creation and discovery of social affiliation
 - Conversation
 - Swarm intelligence
 - Wisdom of crowds applied to identity
 - Absolutely essential to create a reputation engine
 - Reputation: Swarmth
 - Not exactly quantifiable
 - Reputation is measured in links via the blogosphere
 - Conversation flows through networks = Traffic
 - Push is now working -- RSS, twitter
 - Media holds the pieces, but not the sense of the conversation
 - You can't get it unless you are using them
 - Can't explain it to people
 - Got to do it
 - Can't learn Karate by thinking about it
 - To understand the sense of what is being said, you have to be in the flow, not outside.
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Setting

- Web 2.0 Expo
 - Moscone West
 - San Francisco, CA
 - 2007-04-15
 - 9-30 AM
- Stowe Boyd
 - Message
 - Bio: Social tools and their impact on business, media, and society
 - Contact: stowe.boyd@gmail.com
 - (703) 966-9854
 - 625 2nd St, San Francisco, CA 94107
- Artifacts
 - Slides will be on Website
 - Creative Commons with attribution

Questions

- What makes social apps? Or anti social apps?
- How can we make apps more social?
- What are common factors of successful social apps?
- What is worth building?

Participant Goals

- Why here?
- How to get 1st time users to get social?
- How do you get critical mass?
- How do you make long term social spaces?
- How do you make money?
- How do you differentiate in the social web space?
- How do you attract people not using web?
- Social web for busy people?
- Online & offline models?
- How do you take web 2.0 in enterprise?
- What are the roles of registration gates and moderation?
- Where do babies come from?
- How do you keep long term users engaged (folks who want more features) while new users are coming in?
- How do you solve chicken egg problems?

Apologies and Explanations

- Japanese presentations start with apologies -- I am not worthy to present
- Presentation may not have a beginning middle or end
- It was blogging what done this to me
- Fragments, conjectures, cheap shots biases
- I am biased
- No pretty box with a bow

Back in 1999

- "A new category of software is emerging, software intended to augment social systems"
- Software intended to shape culture
- Message -- 1999
- "Social Tools: business Culture in the Post-Everything Economy"

The New Third Place

- We spend more time on the web, we connect with other people
- Ray Oldenburg
- Father of 'third space' phrase
- 'The Great Good Place'
- Web Culture and the future of humanity

Social = Me First

- When the title of the talk gets people angry, you know you are on the right track
- Social apps are first about the individual
- The individual is the new group
- My passions
- Me first
- My people
- My Markets
- The edge dissolves the center
- Bottom Up Belonging
- Not Kiwanis
- Not national guard
- Not national guard
- Only light at the end of the tunnel is the internet
- Couldn't join "Music to Fuck by"
- Last.fm
- They have rules at last.fm
- He could not join group because
- Temporary groups
- 5 people in a hallway conversation -- twitter maybe

Asocial Apps

- iTunes
- bestbuy.com
- All big catalog portal sites
- Pandora
- eBay
- Netflix
- Friends is on a separate tab
- Amazon
- We'll put a social module on the edge of this thing
- Basecamp
- Fried disagrees
- Calls Stowe and edge case

Buddy List is the center of the universe

- Social apps is the world that IM has made
- I am made greater by the sum of my connections, and so are my connections
- It's mostly connections
- Stowe gives up personal productivity for network productivity
- I sacrifice for the group
- Some people want to bat him up
- And throw food
- GTD crowd poo poos this because it dings personal productivity
- How many IMs you got?
- Twitter?
- Only a handful of people on it in room of 300 ish
- Some younger folks think of email as a corporate tool
- Like mobile phones but hate voice mail
- email/IM?
- Will this change?
- Sometimes for real change to occur, you need to wait for a generation to die off

A structural View:

- Me, Mine, Market
 - Me
 - Picture of a dude with a crown
 - Must satisfy a need
 - Me does not last
 - Mine
 - Social relationships of people like me
 - Market
 - Social apps help make exchanges in relationships more liquid
 - Could be goods (cds) or perspectives
- Functional Domains v Socializing
 - Clients often have domain architecture (functions)
 - But, they do not have a social architecture
 - Fashionista recommendation is a different UI than a feature lookup (size, color, etc)
 - This causes folks to rethink the UI
 - Playlists
 - Query changes
 - No longer -- show me a bunch of black dresses
 - Becomes -- Who knows where to find the most fashionable stuff
 - Recommendation commission will become a norm
 - Black dress?
 - Question: If the community knows the recommender is making money, doesn't that bring down the community in a sense?
 - Example
 - Stowe blogs about Nokia phone
 - Because he get's a free phone
 - Nobody is going to think that he would sacrifice his honesty for the price of a phone
 - Even though he gets a free phone
- What happens when the money gets serious?
 - Hundreds of thousands of dollars
 - TechCrunch? Is no longer a blog perse
 - It is a media property.
- Reputation is fragile in both places
- Squander your rep and CBS may fire you
- How do you keep people from cheating?
 - Digg is probably the best example of this so far.
- Example: I need to track time for this project
 - Invite PM to review timesheet
 - Ultimately the invoicing for project can be based on timesheet and people can bill
 - Why do the apps not bill? And be the bank?
 - Who is doing the Skype of bank transfers
- Good to set functional docs down and map out via social objectives
 - Stowe often plays psychologist for social apps
 - Sets it on the couch and asks about childhood