The Fellows Forum

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What is the fellows forum?

- Web and mobile technology based network
- Promotes academic and professional development
- Medium for exchanging ideas, finding career and professional advice, and connecting with peers
- Gateway for students to pursue ambitions inside and outside of school
Context

- Telmex Fellows
  - 10,000 students from low-income areas with excellent academic records
  - Enrolled in colleges throughout Mexico
  - Receive stipend, computer, and net access
  - Huge potential to impact social development of their communities

*How do we help these students realize the value that they can generate together?*
Solutions

Current Solution:
www.interactuando.org

- Bias towards social networking
- Underutilized
- Lack of focus

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Needs Assessment

How do we refine the existing solution?

- Conducted survey to inquire about internet use and mobile use
- Approx 1300 responses gathered
- Audio conference
Needs Assessment

- Results
  - Agreement on desire to have exclusivity

Would you be interested in being part of an exclusive social site for the community Fellows Telmex?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

the fellows forum
Needs Assessment

- Results
  - Agreement on desire to have exclusivity
  - Academic and professional advice over social connection

How useful would it be to collaborate with other fellows and discuss topics such as:

- Academics
- Career Opportunities
- Hobbies
- Others (specify)
Needs Assessment

• Results
  • Agreement on desire to have exclusivity
  • Academic and professional advice over social connection
  • Preference for internet and SMS, but should be low cost

What functions do you use your cell phone for?
Needs Assessment

- Results
  - Agreement on desire to have exclusivity
  - Academic and professional advice over social connection
  - Preference for internet and SMS, but should be low cost

How often do you connect to the Internet?

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- A few times a week
- Once a month

On average, how much do you spend each month on cell phone?

- less than 200 pesos
- between 200 and 400 pesos
- between 400 and 600 pesos
- more than 600 pesos
Our Solution

- Online (and mobile) network to foster lasting connections and motivation among students.
- Network has two main activities for the students:
  - Posting and responding to Challenges
    - Open-ended questions that are chosen to promote discussion
  - Sharing Goals
    - Post career goals on personal profile
    - Get feedback from peers and alumni
System Layout

Database

Web Page

SMS Bridge

Post /Respond to Challenges/ Goals

Post Challenges/ Review Goals

Students

Alumni, Companies

Alumni, Companies
Usage scenario 1: Sharing Goals

1. Fellow posts career goals on profile
2. Goals are reviewed by alumni, given intermediate steps
3. Fellows report progress on steps
4. Fellow gets “points” for completed steps
Usage Scenario II: Challenges

Demo
Sustaining the Costs

- Operational Costs
  - server management
  - labor for website

- Student Costs
  - local cost for SMS

- Generating Revenue
  - advertising on website
  - companies paying to be members of network
  - companies post challenges
Sustaining the Concept

FELLOWS:
- Appeal of “Challenges”
- Website aesthetics and functions align with student preferences
- Create exclusivity and sense of community

FOUNDATION:
- Ensure fresh content
- Transitioning: independent committee to handle the network
- Building status and reputation; furthering scholarship
Conclusions from our work

Developed a possible structure for networking:
- Encourage participation of group members
- Encourage planning for future

Testing Prototype...

Open questions:
- SMS component
- Incentivization
- Success?
Future Outlook

- Metrics for Success
  - Usage: number and speed of responses / users
  - Focus group feedback
  - Attendance at other Telmex Foundation events

- Applicability
  - This can be used for any environment that calls for a unique, productive way to connect its members
    - Especially those looking for academic/professional discussions
  - Universities
    - Programs within a university (i.e.: MITES program)
  - Scholarship/Fellowship Programs
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