

IPRO 353

Web Based Groupware for Team Collaboration

Objective

The goal of IPRO 353 was to determine whether the group-collaboration software, iGroups, can generate a return on investment, and if so, how?

Basic Organization and Tasks

IPRO 353 delegated responsibilities to small groups. During the first half of the semester, the tasks the groups worked on were: primary market research, secondary market analysis, naming, website/marketing, and legal issues. During the second half of the semester, the tasks the groups worked on were: primary market research, secondary market analysis, and the website.

Accomplishments

IPRO 353 made significant progress. We determined our target market to be focused primarily on academia but also includes small committees. We determined our place in the industry by conducting competitive analyses. We also obtained a better understanding of customer needs through surveys and focus groups. A public version of iGroups was created in an effort to allow iGroups access to non-IIT students and faculty. iGroups was also redesigned and a Gantt chart feature has been implemented.

Critical barriers and obstacles

The primary market research team had a difficult time getting survey responses and adequate focus group attendance. The subgroup also experienced information barriers with professors and students. The secondary market analysis team experienced information barriers in regards to getting information about other companies/competitors. The legal team's obstacles were in regards to user information security. Changes in our target market definition made some marketing work obsolete and/or redundant. Technical issues involved learning new code (PHP) as well as contacting the iGroups coordinator.

Conclusion

It was decided that the marketing of iGroups will be delayed. iGroups will be kept within Illinois Institute of Technology to further improve the program. Additions to iGroups, including Instant Messaging, can easily be made by developers. Once iGroups is commercially appeasable, it will be easier to cater to our target market.

Next steps

While we have had a lot of success this semester, there is still a lot that needs to be done. iGroups should be further polished from its current feature set and improved in regards to usability within the iPRO department. iGroups should be promoted to all students for non-iPRO projects. iGroups should be integrated into IIT's student web application suite (via the myIIT portal). We hope that future semesters can get professors from various departments to encourage its usage for collaborative projects. In the future, students should re-visit the idea of marketing the software if they find that the software becomes useful outside of the iPRO department.

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