

I PRO 353 - PUBLIC OUTREACH TEAM

Background & Problem

BACKGROUND:

The Fab Lab brand began as a community outreach program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) providing digital fabrication tools for rapid prototyping to the public.

The Fab Lab at the Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) in Chicago was completed in 2008. This state of the art facility received financial support from the National Science Foundation and Argonne National Laboratories among other donors. They ultimately helped to create the finest Fab Lab out of the entire US Fab Lab network.



PROBLEM:

The main problem that arose was the complete underutilization of the lab. Presently, the Fab Lab at MSI mainly caters to high school student groups and remains closed to the general community.

GOALS:

-Promote the capabilities of the Fab Lab and improve its utilization.

-Create website



-Obtain interviews/testimonials from target users for direct feedback on the functionality of the Lab

-Organize workshops to increase hands on interaction by target user groups

-Conduct case studies that follow and represent the user experience

Research & Approach

RESEARCH METHODS:

The group conducted focus groups and surveys with target users of the Fab Lab to receive direct commentary that would assist in making the Fab Lab more accessible to the public.



FEEDBACK:

"I personally would use the Fab Lab for hundreds of home projects as I have big plans in that regard."

- Elezar Kenig



"The idea of laser 'painting' was new to me... To me, this kind of thing is utterly cool"

-William Komaiko, M.D., M.B.A.

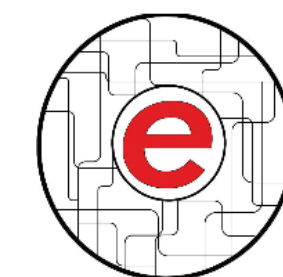
APPROACH:

The means to achieving results was reaching out to the public. The group attended The 26th Annual DuPage Engineer's Week Expo and hosted The Knapp Center's Connectivitiy event to get the word out about the Fab Lab at MSI.



Above: Attendees at Engineer's Week 2010

Below: Audience at both expositions



The Twenty Sixth Annual DuPage Engineers Week Expo

-Middle School Students
-Educators
-Hobbyists



Connectivitiy

-Entrepreneurs
-Hobbyists
-College Students

Results & Moving Forward

RESULTS:

- Participant Fab Lab Familiarity: yes / no
With Fab Lab Brand:
With Fab Lab at MSI:

-Participant Machine Experience Averages:

Laser & Vinyl Cutters:

3D Machines:

-Participant Software Experience Averages:

CorelDRAW:

AutoCAD:

-Participant Feedback:

Fab Lab Experience:

Likely Return:

Below: A prototype produced by a 3D printer for eMotion illustrates the potential of the Fab Lab if made accessible to the public.



FEEDBACK:

"Fab Lab has enormous potential to make a significant impact on the Chicagoland entrepreneurial and inventor's community...By maintaining an open facility, Chicago will gain one more critical element in its drive to be a recognized seat of innovation."

-Ed Suda, Co-founder, eMotion

The focus group results illustrate a definite interest in using the Lab. Among the group there was a low level of experience with the machines & software but the feedback indicates a high level of interest in the capabilities of the machines at the Fab Lab.

Below: www.chicagofablab.org



MOVING FORWARD:

