PodDeus Project
Case Study

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Fifty students from the Podcast Secrets 2007 (http://www.PodcastSecrets.com) training program opted to purchase the PodDeus box and additional training for a $97 test price. The offer was made at the end of the 7-week class to students excited about the potential of new media delivery through the Casgle product.

The test audience had previously purchased access to the Podcast Secrets course (http://www.PodcastSecrets.com) at $697. They were not averse to "paying for content."

There was no specific promise of content delivered during the beta test, and there was no expressed price-aversion from the test audience.

Most students utilized a simple USB-stick MP3 player for content reception. A few students utilized a USB thumb drive, and one caught the course content on a spare iPod. Some students consumed the content on the MP3 player while others pulled the content from the thumb-drives and consumed on their computers.

The students went through one firmware upgrade towards the end of the program.

The testing period ended with a 5-day **"Social Media Marketing"** course delivered in such a way that students would have to dock with their PodDeus system each day or miss a specific class.

The goal of the beta test was to determine the following:

- Is the PodDeus product an effective platform for higher-ticket premium content delivery?

- Would there be any technical difficulties in content reception for the audience?

- Would any findings in this field test require software changes?

- What are the best practices for content delivery utilizing PodDeus?

The Beta Test

For a three-month period, training material, in audio form, was sent on an informal basis to the beta test participants. The final session "Social Media Marketing" was delivered on a daily basis over a 7-day period.

Two audio round-table discussions (via telephone bridge line) with beta test participants were held and recorded.

Many elements of the beta test were made publicly available at a Blog found at http://www.thepodiumproject.com.

The Response

Overall response was very favorable. No one asked to return his or her box.

Setup was taught via a 3 minute YouTube video. All surveyed students indicated that setup was easy to do and was met with no problems.

Recommendations by the students of notification at content delivery and the firmware upgrade to ensure the "blinking light" at cold boot were easy to implement.

The final delivery of the "Social Media Marketing" class that, unlike the rest of the content, required daily docking to receive all content had the highest degree of consumption by all students.

When asked about this model for eLearning delivery, all responding participants expressed satisfaction with the model, suggesting that it was a viable adjunct to traditional eLearning options.

Many students preferred not to keep the box plugged-in on a regular basis. A percentage of students would unplug the PodDeus after each download waiting to be updated when new content was to be made available to them. This brought to light a bug that required re-initialization of the base station for the blue light to be reactivated.

At the first forum call, the beta group was considerably uncomfortable with an un-announced delivery schedule. The initial concept of "checking the light" to determine content availability wasn't an acceptable because of the bug mentioned above. After this was understood, students were updated via email and project blog, and a firmware upgrade was undertaken.

The firmware upgrade reset the connection with each cold boot to insure the "blinking light" feature was triggered when required. Once the firmware upgrade was completed, no students expressed problems in obtaining course content.

The announcement and predictable availability of content triggered considerably more student access. When content was made available online without notification, approximately half of the audience wouldn't download the content. When an external notification mechanism was used, in conjunction with the firmware upgrade, almost all active participants downloaded (and consumed) the content.

The ability of the course director to monitor the participation levels of all students was termed both "refreshing" and "powerful." Having Casgle handle the content management let the director focus on the production of content, not the mechanics of delivery.

"The opportunity to deliver course content through a closed and completely managed channel changes the paradigm for eLearning" said Paul Colligan, beta test director, "This will become part of my business process for all future paid content delivery options."

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction in having their content delivered through the PodDeus system. This non-traditional delivery channel and timely delivery mechanism suggested a premium element for the material.

- The usability of USB/Stick type MP3 players varies greatly. The ease of use offered by this model should be matched with a similarly accessible content player.

- The strongly-expressed student aversion to informal content delivery without external notification should direct all users to utilize some such external mechanism or adhere strictly to a regular schedule for content release. External validation will also have the effect of multi-modal interactions with the students to help them better conceptualize the reality of virtual content delivery.

- eTraining delivery through a system such as this should follow a dependably regular schedule and/or supplement an additional content delivery channel.

Authors

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