Assignment #3: Venture Pitch: KidTweet

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Venture Pitch

In 2008, Founder and CEO Chad Perry created Scuttlepad as an online community developed for kids aged 6-11, where kids are free and safe to be themselves in their own online world. Scuttlepad places parents and other trusted adults inside the child's experience to foster online interaction and learning and to help them grow into responsible digital citizens. In a bold move to continue with the rapid pace of social media and rise of mobile technology, Perry announced that it's platform will be adding to its current social media services and introducing a mobile android and iPhone app called *KidTweet.*

This idea to join the mobile revolution didn't come to fruition on its own, Perry using the power of social media, connected with likeminded educators through Twitter. Through this, he connected with and enlisted the support from Canadian educator and UBC Masters of Educational Technology student Jon Patry; whom has began gaining recognition in his own field for pushing the envelope in education and instilling new learning technologies in his own classroom.

KidTweet is like Twitters younger brother, a real-time information network that allow students to connect with other students and teachers with stories, ideas, classroom happenings, or any other interesting facts about what is happening in the classroom community. KidTweet is a simple and powerful web-based and mobile tool that allows students to post messages and participate in authentic discussions in a secure kid-friendly community. Teachers have the ability to maintain complete control over student's messages, monitoring the content posted.

KidTweet- What is it?

KidTweet is a free service that is designed for elementary and middle school teachers who want to provide a real-time information network experience for their students. So why KidTweet and not Twitter? Simply put, Twitter is not for children under the age of 13 and nor do they promote their services or content for users under the age of 13. Within KidTweet, teachers create accounts for their students, maintain complete control of the accounts, which provides features that facilitate and moderate what is being posted and who can see what is posted. Teachers have a range of visibility settings that allow student accounts to range from totally private to fully public. Classroom user creation is easy and doesn't involve any personal information or email activation from the students, and all the only student identifier is a first name.

The Market

KidTweet is appealing to the teachers and students in the K-12 sector, primarily the elementary and middle school years. The public/private K-12 schools, are all-potential paying customers targeted by KidTweet and its implementation in the classroom. For example within the K-12 sector, KidTweet can provide teachers and learners with an authentic experience that enables 21st Century opportunities to engage and discover in ways that would never seem possible. Imagine a Social Studies discussion with another group of students in another province or country. Students will never meet these other students or teachers in person; however, they have all connected via KidTweet. Connecting with professionals via KidTweet again opens the conversations to talk to experts in any field of interest, just by communicating with KidTweet. This type of learning is limitless and allows students to broaden their scope of the world.
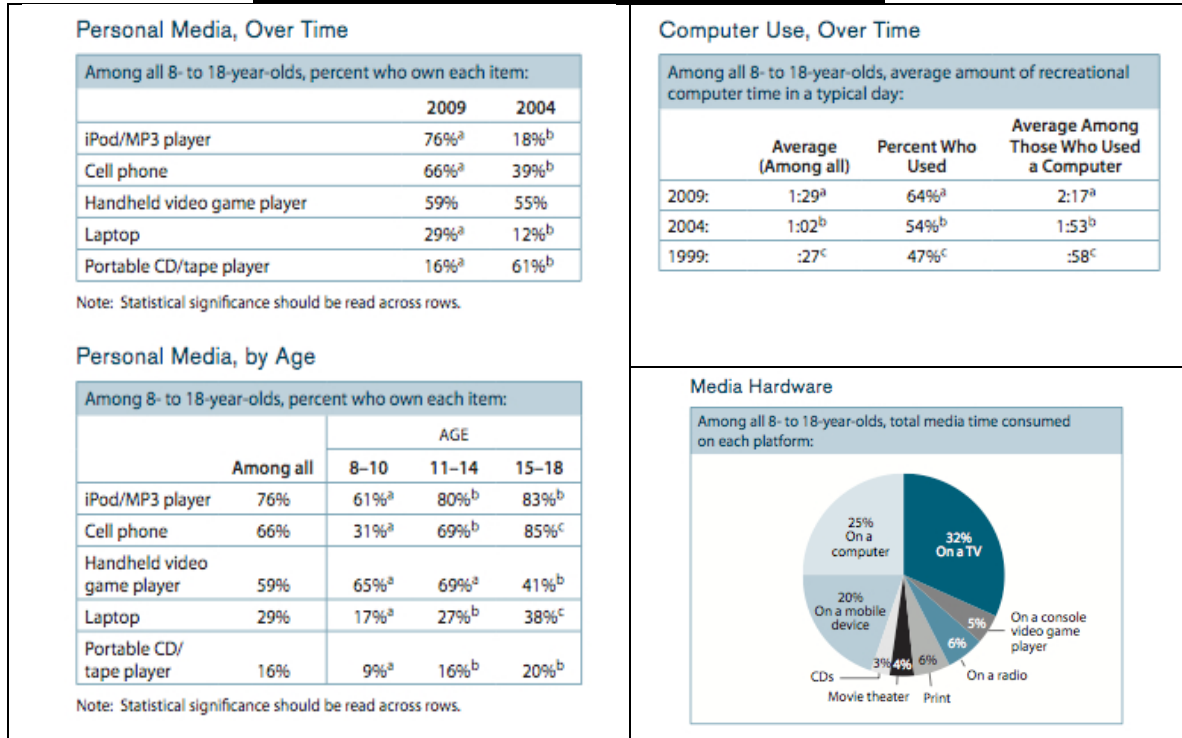
As a classroom teacher it can be challenging to engage and motivate the new learner. Marc Prensky (2001) describes these new learners as "Digital Natives." Digital natives are learners that have grown up in this new digital era. They are learners who use technology as a primary tool for communicating and understanding the world around us. As educators, it can be a challenge to motivate and engage these digital natives. Classrooms today are becoming more immersed and are designed utilizing and educating learners with web 2.0 skills, digital citizenship, personal network building, and social media.

A social media tool such as KidTweet provides an outlet that connects people, allowing groups and individuals to share interests and allow for the distribution of ideas and observations. According to researchers Chee-Kit Looi et al. (2009), the virtues of social media and mobile devices include "allowing multiple entry points and learning pathways, supporting multi-modality, enabling student improvisation, and supporting the sharing and creation of student artifacts on the move." Students can take mobile devices out on fieldtrips and share what they are discovering via a simple tweet. Parents and other students can follow their child's learning and discovery wherever they are.

Social media tools are still not widely accepted by schools as a mean for educational value. Social media isn't going anywhere quickly; in fact it is only going to become more prevalent in our lives. Wouldn't it make sense to educate our students how to properly conduct themselves within the realm of social media? In a 2010 research report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, researchers focused on the influence and usage of media among 8-18 year olds. The study indicated the following percentages of 8-18 year olds: 64% spent time on the computer, 29% owned their own laptop, 66% owned their

own cell phone, and a combined result of 45% spend time using either computer or mobile device for media consumption.

Kaiser Family Research Report 2010 Findings

Personal Media, Over Time

Among all 8- to 18-year-olds, percent who own each item:

	2009	2004
iPod/MP3 player	76%[a]	18%[b]
Cell phone	66%[a]	39%[b]
Handheld video game player	59%	55%
Laptop	29%[a]	12%[b]
Portable CD/tape player	16%[a]	61%[b]

Note: Statistical significance should be read across rows.

Personal Media, by Age

Among 8- to 18-year-olds, percent who own each item:

	Among all	8–10	11–14	15–18
iPod/MP3 player	76%	61%[a]	80%[b]	83%[b]
Cell phone	66%	31%[a]	69%[b]	85%[c]
Handheld video game player	59%	65%[a]	69%[a]	41%[b]
Laptop	29%	17%[a]	27%[b]	38%[c]
Portable CD/tape player	16%	9%[a]	16%[b]	20%[b]

Note: Statistical significance should be read across rows.

Computer Use, Over Time

Among all 8- to 18-year-olds, average amount of recreational computer time in a typical day:

	Average (Among all)	Percent Who Used	Average Among Those Who Used a Computer
2009:	1:29[a]	64%[a]	2:17[a]
2004:	1:02[b]	54%[b]	1:53[b]
1999:	:27[c]	47%[c]	:58[c]

Media Hardware

Among all 8- to 18-year-olds, total media time consumed on each platform:

25% On a computer
32% On a TV
20% On a mobile device
5% On a console video game player
6%
On a radio
3% CDs
4% Movie theater
6% Print

*Information retrieved from http://www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkg.cfm/

The results of the study clearly indicate that children in that age bracket are using technology and social media tools. Yes it doesn't take a lot of effort to update a status, or send a tweet out to the masses, but how are those messages being perceived? The educators using KidTweet will have the control to provide a safe platform to teach students how to conduct themselves in an effective and appropriate manner.

Implementation

With a partnership already established with ScuttlePad, KidTweet is able to coexist within the website platform. For future website and application preparations, KidTweet.ca has already been purchased and the KidTweet.com domain holder has yet to renew which is set to expire in the fall of 2012. If the domain is not renewed by that

time, we will purchase the domain. In the case that renewal occurs, we will actively pursue the owner. The website and mobile application will be the most costly of this social media endeavor. The costs of the website could range in price anywhere from $6000-$35000. The mobile application cost is substantially greater than the website. Craig Hockenberry has been pursued to be a potential application creator for KidTweet. Hockenberry is the creator of the Twitterific application, which has demonstrated to being one of the dominating Twitter applications on the market. Hockenberry's approximate costs for the design and development of a high-end application is $250 000. If Hockenberry's design price isn't realistic or feasible for this venture, a similar design application can be done for approximately $35 000-$150 000.

When KidTweet's website and mobile application are functioning and operating at level that is ready for full classroom implementation, we will begin approaching school boards and school associations for exposure. Advertisements will be placed in monthly editions of provincial magazines, beginning with the Alberta Teachers Associations Magazine. Opportunities are available to participate in local (Calgary City Teachers Association), provincial (Central Alberta Teachers Convention), national (ConnectEd Canada), and international (International Society for Technology Education) professional development conferences.

Why Invest?

KidTweet is an attractive venture to invest in as it is new to this particular user demographic and will be a game changer in social networking tools targeted towards students and educators in the elementary and middle school. Many teachers already understand the impact that Twitter has had on their own personal experiences of learning

and networking. Now, it is a chance to offer these same skills for their students. KidTweet is committed to offering its services free for educators, however there are plans to offer premium services to schools and districts, which will allow for customization for district-wide approaches, and in turn provide revenue for the business.

Social media tools such as KidTweet provide a great means for keeping in touch with friends and family, but it's also one of the more beneficial and worthy learning tools available. Many users don't have the knowledge or understanding of how to use it effectively, or worse, don't even care.

If investors such as you provide the opportunity for ideas such as KidTweet to come to fruition, educators can implement these tools in the classroom, and prepare our students to be responsible citizens in the digital and real world and engage in the global community.

Self Evaluation

I really enjoyed this assignment of applying my start-up skills to create what I believe to be a pitch for a company that could come to fruition someday. This venture pitch has both strengths and weaknesses that I have recognized. The pitch itself does a fairly good job of explaining the tool and how teachers can utilize the social tool in the classroom. The market information section I believe provides substantial information that demonstrates a need for such a tool in schools today. Technology and social media usage is on the rise amongst our students. If parents aren't educating their children of how to conduct themselves within social media, the classroom should be the next logical place for such skills to be learned. Educators want to use Twitter in the classroom, but come up against roadblocks for security and FOIP issues, or are just simply told "No."

However, there are also weaknesses that I recognize with the venture pitch, which could be costly to the idea if it were actually pitched to investors. KidTweet is offered as a free service for educators, and even when writing the pitch my mind was asking, "Well how am I going to make money off this investment?" This is the proposal's Achilles heal! Without loading the website or mobile application with advertising or charging a users fee, a return is going to be difficult. Even with offering premium services to districts, I find it difficult to see a return in revenue in the original investment put forward.

A second weakness that is present in the pitch is the need for more relevant research. There are a few numbers put forward that indicate social media and technology usage amongst the 8-18 year old demographic, but they are not specific to school use. There is a plethora of research available in regards to social media and classroom usage, but for the purpose and the target demographic of this pitch it wouldn't be relevant to this proposal.

A third weakness that is present in the pitch is the costs to create the mobile application. I had no idea how broad the price range was to create an application. From what I researched, the price could range from $0-$250 000+. App developers are certainly in a lucrative business and if you are a developer like Craig Hockenberry and have a successful application such as Twitterific, you can pretty much set your own price. If I were the investor reading the KidTweet pitch, I would be listening, but also be pushing to have the lower price point of the development costs.

With all this being said, I am quite happy with the pitch that I presented. It presents an opportunity that hasn't yet been targeted in education, and a tool that I would use in my classroom if it were available.

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