Airport Corridor Transportation Association

Executive Summary

Community Partner
Lynn Manion
Amy J. Mathieson
Student Consulting Team
Chelsea Cui
Wanling Ding
Joie Feng

Background

The Airport Corridor Transportation Association (ACTA) is a non-profit organization located in Robinson Township, a suburb west of downtown Pittsburgh. Its main service is the RideACTA shuttle, an on-demand, flex-route shuttle service that transports people between the IKEA Super Stop and nearly 200 local businesses around the Airport Corridor. Operated by three official employees, ACTA serves over 80,000 rides per year. However, the organization struggles with gaining visibility and exposure for its services and would like to reach more locals as well as job seekers elsewhere who would like to commute to work in this area.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

As a non-profit organization with only three employees, ACTA is currently facing the problem of limited visibility and exposure. The public should be aware of the low-cost services provided by ACTA which cater to the transportation needs of current and potential employees of businesses in the Airport Corridor. Majority of the riders are between 18 and 34 years of age, and many work at lower paying jobs with high turnover rates. The marketing methods that ACTA adopts at the moment include placing brochures in local job centers, contacting local employers, and word-of-mouth advertising. Although these means do attract some users, there are definitely more efficient ways of marketing.

Project Vision

The project goal was to use digital means to increase visibility of ACTA. The project was comprised of three parts - digital advertising, rider involvement, and website improvement. Because most riders are young people, social media would be helpful in increasing visibility. The main goal was to design a mobile-friendly website which incorporated a series of events to be hosted on social media. Events included Twitter giveaways, giving free rides for Google Maps reviews, and rider surveys. These events would help ACTA gain exposure and feedback.

Project Outcomes

The main outcome of our project was introducing the rider feedback feature to ACTA's original website. The feature encourages riders to get involved through three sub-pages: leave a review on Google Maps for a free ride, share RideACTA experience on Twitter to enter a giveaway, and help improve RideACTA by filling out a short survey. We incorporated user feedback into every step of our project to ensure that the final product would be user-friendly. We conducted user research at the beginning of the project, the first round of user testing after basic functionality was coded, and the last round of user testing after reaching MVP. We also involved the client in important design decisions, and used their feedback to improve our website pages. To build capacity and ensure sustainability, we created a system design document for ACTA's third-party developer and a user manual for ACTA's executives. We also conducted a hands-on training session with the client in a face-to-face meeting. Through this solution, ACTA will be able to increase exposure for RideACTA, gain knowledge about their riders, and gain valuable feedback for future improvement of their service.

Project Deliverables

The project deliverables include access to our Bluehost account which hosts our Wordpress site, a link to our Github repo of the website files, and access to a Google Drive we created for ACTA which contains our backend Google Script and Google Forms surveys. Other documents included in the deliverables are: an admin user manual made for ACTA's executives, a system design document for ACTA's developers, a compilation of design iterations, and a poster of the QR code link to our solution.

Recommendations

We recommend advertising about the giveaways through Twitter, as this will increase rider participation. We also suggest social media collaboration with other transportation associations around the Pittsburgh area to increase ACTA's presence online. We recommend continuing with Google Forms to create surveys as it is an easy-to-use application with many features. Lastly, we suggest encouraging rider participation through printing and posting QR codes inside shuttles, and/or sending riders emails through the MicroTransit app (if possible).

Student Consulting Team

Chelsea Cui was the quality assurance lead and developer of the project. She took lead on functional testing and the implementation of Google Script API. Chelsea is a junior majoring in Information Systems with a double major in Statistics and Machine Learning.

Wanling Ding was the project manager and designer on the team. She took lead on user interface design and user testing. Wanling is a junior majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Human-Computer Interaction. She is interested in user experience design and research.

Joie Feng was the client relationship manager and developer of the project. She took lead on implementing the design in code and working with the Wordpress admin side. Joie is a junior majoring in Information Systems with a double major in Statistics.