

## **CIS 425 e-Commerce Website Project Report**

### ***Southwest Forensics Tutoring***

#### **Explanation of Business/Background**

Speech and Debate, also known as forensics, is a competitive activity at the High School, Middle School, and collegiate levels. Competitors deliver memorized speeches or debate a topic with another competitor in front of a judge, who then ranks the competitor. Forensics encompasses thousands of students across the United States, who compete almost every weekend at tournaments. Colleges and universities see forensics as a useful extracurricular, and college teams frequently offer scholarships to compete. Many successful individuals have competed in speech and debate, like Hillary Clinton, media personality Oprah Winfrey, and talk show host Stephen Colbert.

Southwest Forensics Tutoring is a startup focused on offering educational services and one-on-one coaching at an hourly rate. This coaching can take place in person, in the Phoenix metro area, or online over services like Skype.

#### **Offered Services**

The website will allow students to create their own accounts and enter payment information to schedule coaching sessions. Coaches can also have accounts created by someone with administrative privileges, then list hours they are available. Students first search for a coach, select the coach after reading their resume and competitive success, then schedule an appointment from the available hours. After scheduling, the student is asked to provide payment.

The website also offers additional products and services. Handbooks and instructional materials can be purchased for a flat fee. Additionally, coaching sessions can involve written feedback for the student's actual coach or parent for an extra fee.

#### **Target Audience**

The target audience for Southwest Forensics Tutoring is twofold. First, SFT as a website will be focused on marketing to individuals in the Phoenix Metropolitan Area for physical coaching sessions. Not every individual in the Phoenix Metro Area will find coaching useful, however, so SFT will market to the competitive circuit. The community is similar to the competitive track and field circuit in High School: individuals compete in different events, and occasionally see one another at competitive tournaments. The second audience is speech and debate competitors from around the country. This can include high school and middle school competitors, with the occasional collegiate competitors. Many individuals from across the country want one-on-one tutoring to get a competitive edge.

#### **Identified Competitors**

The market for online forensics coaching is growing rapidly and has several barriers to entry. With the advent of the internet in speech and debate, more and more individuals are offering private coaching without the use of a third party service. Additionally, companies have begun offering coaching through a third party service, with the third party company taking a small commission every time a session occurs to deal with overhead and marketing.

<b>Competitor 1: 3P Speech - (<a href="http://www.3pspeech.com/">http://www.3pspeech.com/</a>)</b>	
Web Presence: 3P Speech has a prolific web presence, and they market to all corners of the speech and debate competitive community. 3P uses social media sites like twitter and Facebook to guide users to their webpage. Alexa was unable to generate a complete report on 3P, but the similar web service SEMRush found that 3P has grown approximately 670% since its beginning in 2010.	
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3P Speech has a modern looking website, with effective styling. There is no cramming of elements and there is lots of unused space, which makes the site pleasing to the eye.</li> <li>2. The site is easy to navigate, and users that have never been to the site can easily navigate, create an account, and figure out what services are offered.</li> <li>3. The site has many different components that are complex to code, like auto-updating forms and an auto-updating countdown clock.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 3P Speech's website is not responsive, which means that the site would be incredibly difficult to use on your phone or zoomed in on a regular PC.</li> <li>2. The initial landing page is clunky and does not give the user many options, forcing them to "enter" the site before signing up or looking at services.</li> <li>3. The styling looks modern, but is occasionally inconsistent, which makes the page as a whole look unprofessional in certain areas.</li> </ol>

<b>Competitor 2: Summit Debate Online - (<a href="http://summitdebateonline.com/">http://summitdebateonline.com/</a>)</b>	
Web Presence: Summit Debate Online has a strong web presence, with a site that is marketed at summer camps that they hold in Des Moines and Boston. They also market through social media sites like Facebook. The small size of this niche market means that web analysis through services like Alexa is near impossible.	
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summit Debate Online's site is effective. It has a clear header enabling the user to flip through different sites, and has a search bar as well.</li> <li>2. The site has a good login system, enabling users to create an account and then login. The site also keeps track of the session.</li> <li>3. The styling on Summit Debate Online's website is attractive and professional, with a wood grain background and professional logo.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summit Debate Online's website is clean and professional, but several html elements, like images, did not fully load, showing that they do not have adequate maintenance.</li> <li>2. The site is relatively static and not very dynamic. There are no moving parts, and the site is basic and uninteresting as a result.</li> <li>3. The styling is clean and professional, but it could be better. The background image does not extend to the bottom of the actual page, and fonts are inconsistent.</li> </ol>

<b>Competitor 3: Ace Peak Coaching - (<a href="http://travisherche.com/coaching/">http://travisherche.com/coaching/</a>)</b>	
Web Presence: Ace Peak Coaching is run by Travis Herche, a debate coach from California. He hires other coaches to help out his company, and primarily markets through word of mouth. There was not enough web traffic to use web presence tools like Alexa for analysis.	
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ace Peak Coaching has a very simplistic layout and list of frequently asked questions, so customers unfamiliar with the internet can easily access all resources.</li> <li>2. The site has a good shop with files and objects available for purchase. There is a cart system and the shop enables customers to sort by price or popularity.</li> <li>3. The styling on Ace Peak Coaching's website is simple and easy to follow. It is clean and modern, which makes it pleasant to look at.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The website displays the current position in the site, which seems old fashioned from a 21<sup>st</sup> century web design perspective.</li> <li>2. The site is not very responsive, which means that narrowing the page to half its width only leaves a large Skype logo, which seems unprofessional.</li> <li>3. The website's description is written in first person, which makes the website sound less like a professional service and more like a personal blog.</li> </ol>

### **Yearly demand**

There is a massive number of students who compete in speech and debate at the high school level. The National Speech and Debate Association estimates that 120,000 students compete each year at a tournament (<http://www.joyofdebate.org/en/About/AboutNFL.aspx>). Meanwhile, other competitive organizations like the Urban Debate League count about 37,000 members (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080411183813/http://www.urbandebate.org/quickfacts.shtml>). These numbers suggest that there is a large, untapped market of students looking for a competitive edge, which companies like SWFT can capitalize upon.

### **Functionality**

In order to be fully functional, SWFT will need to have the ability to create user accounts and coach accounts. This will allow for customers and coaches to design their own schedules. Additionally, the website must have a working database to pull customer information from.

### **Shopping Experience**

Shopping at SWFT will be relatively straightforward. Customers will select a coach to see that coach's schedule. Then, if a time slot works for the customer, they will sign up for that period and determine how long they want the session to last. Customers will have the option of adding comments to let the coach know what to look for in the speech, and selecting additional options. Next, the customer can choose to make it a recurring appointment or add on extra items. After payment is made, the time period on the coach's schedule will be marked unavailable and contact information will be sent to both the coach and the customer.