Software Comparison

The app myHomework for the Apple iPhone is a productivity tracking and calendar application like Sundial that allows users to input due dates for homework for their classes in a simple and easy to use interface that functions like a real-life grocery or to-do list. Furthermore, it maps the events made by the user onto a calendar and alerts the user of upcoming due dates for homework. The goal of the application is all about “making it simple and easy for students & their schools to adopt digital planning skills,” so user interface design is minimalistic with little clutter leaving no possible confusion about the intent of the application. The app tries not to intrude or make the task of a digital to-do list any more complicated than what it would take to on pen and paper, and this is where I think the design of the myHomework app succeeds. While the application may look plain, the tools it can provide can be powerful once the user sets up an account. The task scheduling for each homework and event allows for very specific due dates and times, repeating assignments, association between courses, and type of homework. Upon completing a task, reward points are given which can be redeemed for rewards through another company called Kiip. Kiip provides advertising opportunities and coupons for movies which means actual rewards are given for completing homework tasks. The last and most impressive feature worth mentioning is the integration of another app (made by the same developers of myHomework, Instin) called Teachers.io. With this app, students who join through myHomework can view the syllabus, see class details, and automatically have their homework scheduled for them.  This a feature that Sundial wants to include in its implementation as well, but without the need for another app that teachers must spend time submitting schedules and assignments when they already do that for Blackboard. Instead our application will use the REST API provided by Blackboard to take the outcoming assignment and calendar information of the student and transform it to our calendar feature. In that aspect, the communication between Teachers.io and myHomework  is similar, but in our case the target audience of instructors will not have to even bother with Sundial for students to use it if they use Blackboard. Sundial will have similar user interface and homework scheduling capabilities as myHomework which will focus on a simple, but effective design that has detailed options for customization. One feature that Sundial will include that is absent from myHomework is functionality to suggest events other homework assignments to the user. Using an HTML parser on the Comet Calendar website, Sundial will suggest events to go that do not conflict with time scheduled for homework or exams. Although this is a trade- off for the broad general use case of myHomework, adding a specific feature that caters to UTD students will make Sundial have an edge against competing calendar applications.

Bibliography

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