

Interview Transcript – Student Events Insider (SEI)

- Interview Participant: “SEI”
 - Date: 5/11/15
 - Synopsis: For this interview, a fellow group member and I interviewed an (anonymous) employee at Student Events Insider to get more of an understanding of the website. This interview was beneficial because it helped us pin down the main goals of the website and figure out which features were superfluous, negative to the user experience, or otherwise unnecessary.
 - Note: The full interview was more than an hour and a half, and would fill far more pages than this. In the interest of saving space, I cut the content unnecessary for giving a concise overview of the results.
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- CK: [summarizes project] “So, from what we’ve told you so far, with your experience working with Student Events Insider, how could this be implemented or improved?”
 - SEI: “Um...I think from my experience with the website the issue with UCSD is that there are so many things that are happening that having it all in one place – Student Events Insider is supposed to be the one place where all these events are supposed to be posted. But still there are so many other events that are happening that no one’s taking the initiative to post to the website. So, how do we get people to do that? That’s like my biggest problem right now is that at the colleges, for one, they are very autonomous...they like to do their own thing and post all their own events. And also student orgs. Student orgs have events and sometimes they don’t have the time to market

them and to then share it with the rest of campus. A lot of the time they put it on Facebook, but then that's all they want to do."

- MN: "So then maybe we find a way to specify what people want to see?"
- CK: "That actually factors into another idea we had, which was a personal preferences type thing, where you log in for the first time and get a big page of different tags for different interests you might have. And then based on what you pick it will filter what events you see. So if someone wants to have no involvement in, say, Greek life, then none of those events will show up."
- MN: "Have you ever used the website called StumbleUpon?"
- SEI: "No. I've heard about it, but I haven't used it."
- MN: "So the general idea is that they give you this small survey which has the tags you're interested in. And then it starts to shuffle what you get based on user reviews overlapping with the keyword or tag."
- SEI: "So, with this idea that you have, how do you anticipate collecting all the events that are happening on campus?"
- CK: "Well, there would be some issue with convincing all the smaller groups to make their events known. Because like you said, most groups use Facebook. Outside of flyering and contacting them directly, would you have any suggestions?"
- SEI: "I think the best way is through grassroots – people hear about something, then tell their friend about it – like that's pretty much how it starts. With all the flyering and tabling, people get desensitized."
- CK: "We thought about incorporating things like forums and – this ties in with the achievement system – but the messages and posts could be anonymous to everyone but

the moderators, to avoid flame wars and things like that. And I feel that if we did implement it correctly and got popularity, then groups would start to recognize the website.”

- MN: “But you’re saying that the biggest issue is getting them to communicate – so the focus should be on before the event and not after. The forums could possibly help with that because it could lead to more informal posting.”
- MN: “What is the current system you guys are utilizing to try and communicate with every group?”
- SEI: “It’s pretty much just trying to share with higher level – so deans, provosts, so they can let their staff know who tell their student groups that they advise. And when student orgs go through the registration process they give us their email addresses and we contact them through that – and of course there’s flyering, and then Facebook.”
- MN: “And how consistently do the groups communicate with you guys? Or is it sporadic?”
- SEI: “It’s sporadic. And some groups, like Student Health and the Zone have people who are posting consistently for the whole quarter. And there are student orgs who put on large events and have the money from AS or fundraising. But we’re missing the smaller ones, and that’s where the issues are – I don’t know how to contact them other than email, and I don’t have the time to do that.”
- CK: “Who exactly posts to Student Events Insider?”
- SEI: “People who submit are anyone from UCSD – so anyone with a UCSD email, and then on my end I’m the one who approves everything. The main criteria is it has to be on campus – um and that it doesn’t involve any liability issues.”

- MN: “Are you guys allowed to advertise events that offer alcohol? We’re trying to figure out whether that draws in more students.”
- SEI: “We’ve posted events from the Loft and Porter’s Pub, so it’s okay to advertise those.”
- MN: “Are you required to show whether alcohol would be served or not?”
- CK: “Is there any kind of filtering? Like wristbands? Or is it just on the honor system?”
- SEI: “There’s no liability issue, it just falls on Porter’s whether to card them or not.”
- CK: “Have you collaborated with them before, to advertise each other? Because you post a lot of advertisement for them, so is it purely promotion?”
- SEI: “This department has five different areas, so is there a specific event we could have collaborated on?”
- CK: “In general, just music shows or other events.”
- SEI: “That’s more AS, for concerts and events. They help put together things like Sun God and other concerts. Our office is more like student orgs, Welcome Week, the vendor faire.”
- MN: “What channels of communication do you have between offices?”
- SEI: “Email.”
- MN: “And it just falls on each person to take it upon themselves? Does that fail at times?”
- SEI: “Yeah, we get so many emails that yeah. What offices are you talking about?”
- MN: “Any offices that make events. When you have a fragmented system like this there has to be a way to streamline it. It should move to a more electronic system.”
- SEI: “I absolutely agree.”

- MN: “Do you guys have a budget you use to manage resources?”
- SEI: “No, not that I know of.”
- MN: “So if you needed to implement a new system, would you have to hire someone to create it? Would you need a proposal?”
- SEI: “Yes, we would have to request money for the next fiscal year.”
- MN: “So you’d include what you’re proposing, the estimated cost, and the impact of the project?”
- CK: “Impact in terms of student life?”
- SEI: “Yeah. So if you have another person come in, they come in with purpose but...what’s the endgame? What changes are you gonna see by having this person here?”
- CK: “So, adding tags to events and filtering them like that, would that then become a part of your job? You could decide which ones go on an event?”
- SEI: “Well on the website now you can only pick one topic for an event. So I like your idea of having multiple, and so it would be on the user end to pick the tags. Then I would have the final step in approving these tags, or adding others if necessary.”
- MN: “So there would always be a pool of tags they could rely on, so that not just for them but for students.”
- SEI: “Well, have you thought about what tags would be available for events?”
- MN: “In general, sorority, fraternity, music.”
- SEI: “Food?”
- CK/MN: “Definitely food.” *Laugh*
- CK: “Would you have any particular ideas for that?”

- SEI: “We have recreation which is really big, because we have outdoor events and sports.”
- MN: “Do you feel that people are more inclined to participate in events that are more competitive, rather than just a passive experience?”
- SEI: “I feel like it depends on the person, but I think no. I think because if they don’t think they’re good enough to compete, then they won’t want to be a part of it. Is there something you had in mind?”
- MN: “This is in particular in motivating the organizations to create events that have actual involvement. So, activities for them to do, rather than just go. Like scavenger hunts, or a video game competition.”
- SEI: “I’m thinking about people on this campus who have a couple of friends. It’s hard to go to a competition thinking that you’ll compete if you have friends with you. But like the gaming competition; I know they had one last quarter and anyone could go and sign up.”
- MN: “But honestly, I didn’t go because I didn’t have anyone to go with. Because it is intimidating. Something I mentioned was a way to communicate with people prior to an event. Initially we thought of adding a chat feature to the site, and it would integrate with your Facebook and such.”
- CK: “And that could lead to more students talking to each other online. It could give them a mini-Facebook of sorts, but within UCSD where they could chat and share experiences.”

- MN: “But it would be a chat room that you wouldn’t need to already have people on a list; it would be just inclusive to students, so that’s why you would have to have your student account info. But do you feel like there are any issues with that?”
- SEI: “Well, I see the value in Facebook and Facebook events where you can tag someone so that you can share that. Then you could see – like you were talking about with someone who can come join you – it would help if people want to go with their friends.”
- MN: “My mind is immediately jumping to cost – sadly we only have one CSE student in our group, so we can’t rely on insourcing.”
- SEI: “Well going back to your original thought – so you’re trying to find a place that has all these events that would be integrated with the UCSD login system to then a more – is it more about the competition piece? Or, like what’s the purpose?”
- MN: “We’re trying to create some commotion around events – it’s hard to say whether or not it would pick up or just fizzle. Creating popularity around the site would have to involve the badges people earn, which they may or may not care about. But if you tie in rewards to certain badges or achievements, then you get something from it. That also ties into cost, so would you have to carry that burden?”
- SEI: “Yeah.”
- CK: “And that may not be something that UCSD is interested in funding. But I think kind of public recognition on those forums might be cool, like ‘this person has earned this many achievements.’”
- MN: “Yeah, like Yelp, where you earn a crown for participation.”
- CK: “I’m interested in your ideas about maybe tying in an app with this. It would be as simple as possible, pretty much just for checking into events, and maybe a schedule of

your marked events – the ones you’ve RSVP’d for. So you can have a weekend planner of the events you’re attending.”

- MN: “Well we were thinking it would be very cut-and-dry. Just a simple name and picture for each event.”
- CK: “And a simplified version of the feed from your home page.”
- SEI: “Umm, do you all use Google Calendar a lot? How do you manage your own schedules?”
- CK: “I usually use my phone.”
- MN: “I use a paper calendar.”
- SEI: “People use so many different ways, I was thinking of a way to export it to a Google Calendar.”
- MN: “I know the Zone does that already. Just curious, did you have anything to do with the development of Student Events Insider?”
- SEI: “I came here when they just got finished with the redesign, so no.”
- MN: “Okay, so no offense, but I think the Zone’s site is much better. It’s pictures and layout; it seems to have put much more work into how the experience is, whereas the Student Events Insider page was – from what we’ve found out now – is a lot of organizations coming together to try and trying to put together this site. And then you’re the final funnel that comes in and tries to make it look similar. There’s a big problem with that – it’s almost like you guys need a staff to manage it.”
- SEI: “Mhm, I definitely agree.”
- MN: “Do you guys have a lot of pushback on that?”

- SEI: “Well, there’s just no money for another staff member. My position was supposed to be just marketing and communications and focusing on that piece, but it’s more like ten to twenty percent that, and the rest is all the managing I do.”
- MN: “Do they just feel like it’s not necessary right now?”
- SEI: “I don’t know, I just think there wasn’t enough money in the budget for it.”
- CK: “With your experience here, do you have any ideas for how it could be improved?”
- SEI: “Um, because I’m so far removed as a student, I’ve been interested in making a focus group for that. So I’d love to hear more of your ideas on how we could improve it; so come summer we could possibly change it. I think the tags piece would be really good, but visually I think it needs to be...”
- MN: “A bit more unified, I guess?”
- SEI: “How so?”
- MN: “I mean with so many organizations there should be subgroups to those organizations that people can filter.”
- SEI: “So you want to add a filter feature?”
- CK: “We were hoping to add a search and a filter feature.”
- SEI: “Yes, there’s no search!”
- CK: “Another thing I noticed – and this is where we drew the idea of a more filtered feed – when it starts up, it’s just this list of random events. And I just think ‘what am I looking at here?’ It’s just all random and there could be different categories for art or sports or other things. Within the office, have you talked about expanding it at all, adding new features?”

- SEI: “No we haven’t, because we just went through that redesign, umm, this past summer. So yeah, it’s a very recent redesign. Do you remember what it looked like?”
- CK: “I can’t recall.”
- SEI: “I can show it to you, because the last one was so bad.”
- CK: “What did you add?”
- SEI: “Larger pictures, the rotating banner – it’s all new since the redesign. There wasn’t a calendar feature on the left side; more events, because it could only go a week or so ahead at a time.”
- *SEI shows old website on computer.*
- CK: “Do you have any challenges or frustrations working on the Student Events Insider page? Any in particular?”
- SEI: “Umm, I want more visitors to it, and so – I have all of the emails for every single student that’s grad and undergrad, transfers and all that; and I email them every Thursday, but people either try to unsubscribe or they just don’t look at it. So right now I get about 20,000 unique users going through the site every week, which is good, but we have 30,000 students here. I don’t know how the other 10 learn about events if they don’t visit the site and don’t read the emails. So that’s my issue.”
- CK: “Sounds like apathy is a big problem.”
- SEI: “Yes!”
- CK: “So, maybe make it more fun for those who visit? More rewarding for the students that use it to find out about events?”
- CK: “And do you guys have a Facebook page?”

- SEI: “Yes, but just for the office for the Center of Student Involvement. So we just post from there about Student Events Insider.”
- CK: “And would you be willing to create a Facebook page for Insider itself?”
- SEI: “Yes.”