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CS408

Delivering Software: From Concept to Client Journal

Week of September 8th:

For our first client meeting Connor, Hailey and I were invited down to Cityzen's workplace in HQ, a start up incubator in Raleigh, NC. Our clients, Jay, Graham and Mike were very nice and showed us around the incredible space that is HQ. Many interesting start-ups had office space there but Cityzen, still without significant funding or support, used the open areas (and free coffee). Once we had seen a bit of HQ and had a coffee we all met in a conference room over pizza (offered by them).

We started by giving them some thoughts on what technologies to use for the development of the mobile application: specifically we were deciding between using PhoneGap or developing on Android. Our claim was that we would likely deliver a better product on Android but that we could develop a single app for all platforms using PhoneGap. The prospect of having both an iOS app and an Android app was what the clients decided was most important, even if it meant we delivered an inferior app.

Once the technologies were decided we went more into detail about the requirements for the applications and what the UI would look like. We quickly learned that the clients did not have a clear idea about what they wanted and so we were very much involved in the creative process. One feature that they made clear was that they wanted the ability to send location-based notifications, so that people can see when a new development project is in progress in their area.

One difficulty I had with this meeting was that it was apparent that Mike wanted us to make as simple an app as possible. His opinion was that the mobile app should simply interface with the website, such that the only new feature it provided was notifications. The logic behind this was that he would only have to maintain one code base. At this moment I am not sure if this is possible or desirable but it will be a big topic of discussion at our next meeting.

The clients were good at explaining to us how their current web based implementation worked on a business level, so I feel like I have a much better understanding of the business requirements now. They mentioned that since they cater to City Councils

that they like to allow the Councils to choose the theme for their Cityzen app site (this is something that sets them apart from their competitors). All in all learning more about the business behind the app made us more aware of what was needed and allowed us to make good suggestions for the requirements, although we have not yet reached a final consensus.