



THE TECH SPOT

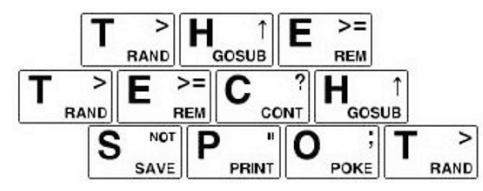
Milestone I

Project Proposal, Web site Analysis, Requirements and Thumbnail Design

Web site Title: The Tech Spot

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PROJECT SUMMARY

ResNet, Kent State's Residential Network, provides students' living on campus access to Kent State's computing resources as well as technical support and basic computer troubleshooting. Due to the high demand of its services, it is currently being restructured and expanded to be able to serve the whole Kent State community. Its new division, The Tech Spot, will provide students living off campus, faculty and staff, technical support for their personal computers. The purpose of this project is to design The Tech Spot's new web site which will be able to provide all users with information about the new services available. Once the new site is running, it will be maintained by The Tech Spot's staff. Because The Tech Spot aims to become Kent State's new campus-wide HelpDesk, the visitors of the web site will be current students, faculty and staff. In order to attract visitors, we expect to design an easy to use and easy to find interactive web site that will allow users to effectively contact the services of The Tech Spot.



In order to guarantee an effective design, our team met with the client to discuss what services, uses, functions and feeling the new web site should have. Although not all the content of the web site has been defined yet, we have initially been required to include pricing information, location, available services, hours, contact information and general mission. We will provide the necessary functionality to make the content of the web site easy to update as The Tech Spot project evolves. Since this web site needs to be incorporated with other Kent State web sites, we are considering following the University Communications and Marketing Department suggested color schemes and Kent State's official graphics and logo. We will take special attention on the website's findability, which is an extremely important feature of our project.

In terms of the technical aspects of the web site, we have decided to implement our design in XHTML code, using CSS to modify the format in which the content is presented. We have also discussed incorporating a WordPress or Wiki software for easy updating and contribution of troubleshooting information. The site might also include an appointment scheduler application similar to others used in academic advising; however, the details of how this will be achieved are not yet defined. For our project, we will be using Dreamweaver to implement the initial templates and possibly Adobe Contribute to maintain the web site in the long term.

SITE ARCHITECTURE

Goals and Audiences

After speaking with our client, we have defined both short term and long term goals for The Tech Spot web site. For the short term, the site will focus on the branding and awareness of this new support center. It will describe how it relates to other technical resources on campus (such as ResNet and the Help Desk) and also clearly specify prices and services. In the long term, the site will become a great resource for services, but also a relevant and up-to-date technical resource.

Our defined audiences include on campus students, off campus students, faculty and staff and other campus departments. Other University services could be described as “competition.” The most important consideration of competition in this respect is to describe how the other departments relate to one another. Failure to do so could result in confusion for our target audiences. The following is a brief discussion of audiences:

On Campus Students: On campus students will use the site to discover what services are available for free from ResNet, such as networking and operating system troubleshooting. They will also be informed of “premium services” including hardware repair and other technical support. On campus students are the main audience for The Tech Spot because of its location (in the Tri Towers residence halls) and familiarity with the students who know it as ResNet. The web site should direct this audience to the Tech Spot services, support and location.

Off Campus Students: Off campus students were previously not able to be served by tech support services on campus. They were limited to phone support from the HelpDesk. ResNet could not support these students because of its funding through Residence Services and consequently had to turn many of these students away. The Tech Spot was created to allow for premium technical support for all students who require hardware repair, virus scans and wireless troubleshooting. The students will be charged for any hardware repair or virus removal. The web site must be a differentiation made between charges for on and off campus students.

Faculty and Staff: Faculty and staff will bring their personal computers to The Tech Spot for support. Their enterprise computer systems will be managed and supported by their respective IT departments on campus. Faculty and staff will be charged for most services. The web site must have a section dedicated to faculty and staff, explaining this.

Other Campus Departments: Other departments on campus may visit the site for technical direction and also to relay information to students across the entire campus.

Content and Site Organization

The Tech Spot web site will focus on both marketing and support. The marketing aspect will concentrate on organizational goals, pricing, location information and news. The support section will focus on technical support, including links to various support articles already available from the HelpDesk and ResNet. A Wiki will also be proposed to facilitate the most current support information. Contribution from all users will be encouraged throughout the site. Due to these two main focuses, the team has been split into two groups, each focusing on either marketing or support.

The following major content sections have been proposed and will guide the web site development:

HOME: Including top news, mission statement and links to the most frequent technical issues. The home page will also offer students the option to schedule an appointment with The Tech Spot. Importantly, we would like to include links to the “top 10” technical issues or questions that our various audiences may be trying to discover.

NEWS: The news section will keep the audiences up-to-date with the newest service offerings and technical support alerts. The Tech Spot staff will be encouraged to contribute posts to this section. We would like to feed the content in this section from a WordPress blog using an RSS feed.

PRICING AND SERVICES: This will include a specific list of services provided and pricing according to audience status. This section will also provide advice on buying new computers and include links to the Campus Bookstore and the Apple Store.

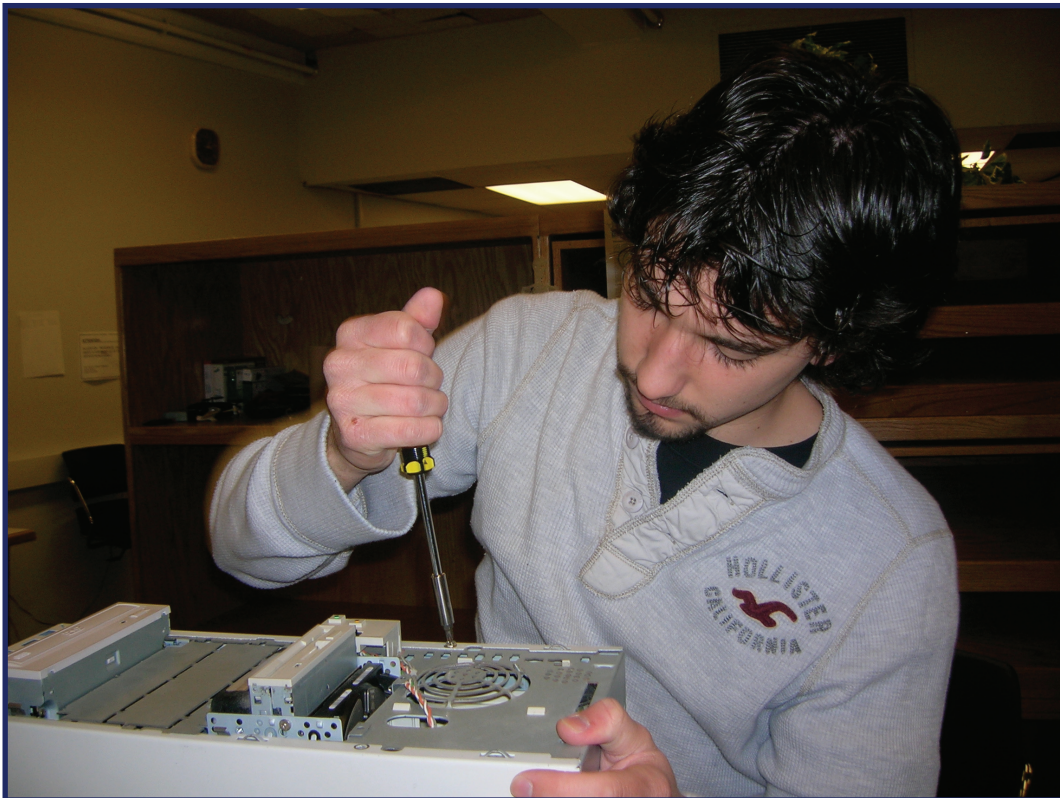
SUPPORT + WIKI: The support section will be a campus-wide knowledge base. It will provide support articles and links based on the audience goals. In order to promote a unified content strategy, the site will link to support from the HelpDesk and other campus departments instead of just copying the same information. We hope the Wiki section will be a repository for the most up-to-date information and support for very specific problems. We are currently looking into WikiSpaces to be integrated into this section. WikiSpaces is currently used at Kent State’s School of Library and Information Science in the IAKM program with much success.

Other sections will be included such as links to ResNet and the HelpDesk. Directions and contact information (with the possibility of a staff directory) will also be provided. When designing the site, we will concentrate on findability and a clean architecture to support users of any technical aptitude.

Design and Aesthetics

Our team is working very closely with the University Communications and Marketing department in order to match the visual standards set by the University. The site will include the Kent State blue and gold colors, Excellence in Action logo and Kent State Centennial Celebration logo. It is the wish of both the Information Science and Marketing departments that the site be easily managed after it is designed. While we would like to use Adobe Contribute for this, we will be preparing the site so it can eventually be moved to CommonSpot, the University's Content Management System. The site will be built to match this architecture as much as possible while also establishing its own visual design.

Overall, the site's visual design should be welcoming with a modern look. It will be targeted toward students (the main audience) and organized so they can discover their needs easily. We will take care to use no overwhelming technical jargon in the site's architecture. The site will be built to take advantage of open feedback and contribution. We would like the design to be appealing to those who may be uncomfortable with technical operations and support. This message will be branded across The Tech Spot as a whole as well.



SITE ANALYSIS

It should be noted that The Tech Spot web site will run alongside the ResNet (www.res.kent.edu/resnet) and Information Services/HelpDesk web sites (www.kent.edu/is); two closely affiliated organizations on campus. The client originally wanted to combine the ResNet web site with The Tech Spot but was met with resistance from the director of Residence Services. Therefore, an analysis of the current ResNet web site may not be relevant. Initial tests on the ResNet web site returned countless HTML coding errors. The site is built in the DotNetNuke Content Management System.

Although we are not redesigning the current web site for Resnet it is important to analyze the current ResNet web site so we can have a good idea of what we would like to keep in the feel of the new Tech Spot web site and what we would like to change or improve upon. After running several tests we found that the site is color blind safe and that there are countless HTML standard coding errors on the site. But since we are coding a new site to exist side by side with the current one and not editing the original at all there is really not much use for this information other than trying to avoid making those same mistakes on the new web site.



The different content pages of the current ResNet web site are not consistently-themed throughout the site. Some pages have black text with bold headers on a white background, some pages have orange headers and black text, and some have blue hyperlinks while others have orange hyperlinks. Overall the color scheme is not at all consistent throughout the web site and there are self links to every content page. Although the color schemes and links could use a little work the content that is provided is very precise and informative. The sets of instructions to help users connect to the Internet even have nice screen shots that make them easy for the user to follow. There should be a slightly different feel to different areas of the site. The same template

could be used for pages that are in the security section of the site, but with a different banner than pages that are in the support section.

Since the web site will be staying online, it should be used as a support resource for the Tech Spot web site. There is a lot of relevant information that should be linked to from the Tech Spot. This includes network troubleshooting, wireless troubleshooting, installing Windows Updates, and Virus/Spyware advice. The site also includes many downloadable support utilities. The ResNet web site is in definite need of an update. Sadly, attempting to fix this is not an option as we are not receiving administrative rights to the original web site and are only using it for reference.

The content on the University HelpDesk web site also has reuse options and should be considered for the support section. Both the ResNet and HelpDesk web sites should be examined in order to inform students and staff how these services differ from those of The Tech Spot.

REQUIREMENTS:

The new Tech Spot web site will aim to provide the following for the client:

1. Market technical support services across the entire Kent campus
2. Facilitate support for on campus students, off campus students, faculty and staff through online help
3. Streamline site updates and management for the client and staff members
4. Develop separate brand awareness from ResNet, the HelpDesk and other support centers on campus
5. Make office visits a smooth process through web-scheduled appointments
6. Keep students and staff up-to-date on various technical changes on campus
7. Keep students and staff aware of the new pricing arrangements and services offered by The Tech Spot
8. Include links to popular services and support articles that are most frequently accessed
9. Eventually become a portal to accessing different technical services available across campus
10. Participate in the unified content strategy endorsed by University Marketing and Communications and the Information Services department

TEAM ORGANIZATION AND TASK DIVISION

As mentioned previously the team will be organized into two groups, marketing and support. The following is a more detailed description of the team organization.

MARKETING TEAM:

Christopher Hallahan: Team leader and in charge of marketing content and site architecture.

Denisse Andrade: In charge of marketing content implementation and main programming.

SUPPORT TEAM:

Tristan Cuevas: Team leader and in charge of content implementation and main programming.

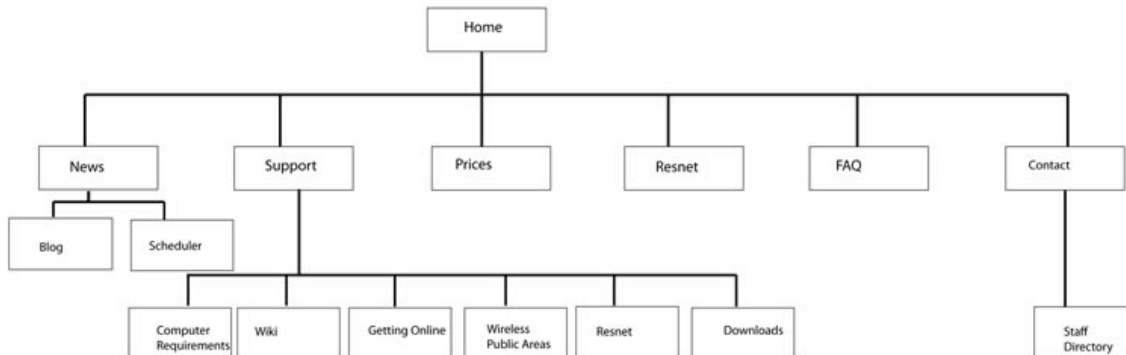
Aaron Schlegal: In charge of support content and site architecture.

DESIGN AND GRAPHICS:

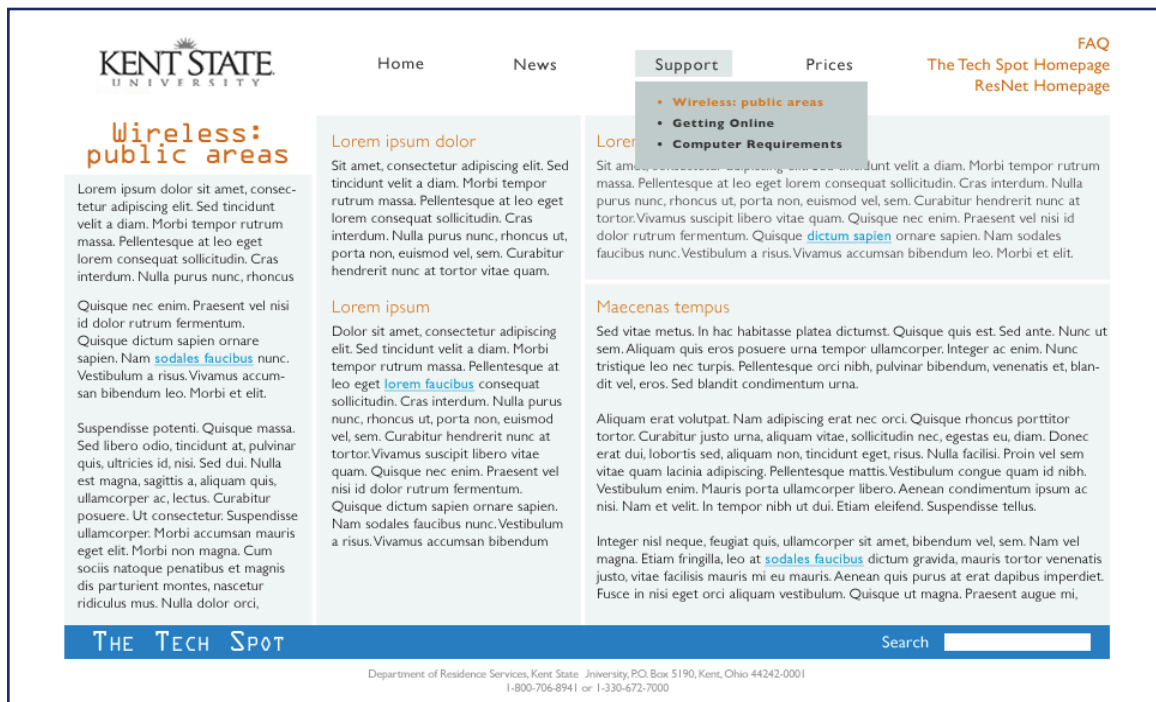
Lauren Covell: In charge of overall graphical interface and design. Will work with both teams to implement an integrated design across the site.

VISUAL DESIGN AND HIERARCHY:

The following is one proposed hierarchy and several visual “mock-ups” that have been developed by our designer. These designs are subject to change, but establish an overall direction for our design.



VISUAL DESIGN AND HIERARCHY (Continued):



VISUAL DESIGN AND HIERARCHY (Continued):

