**G52GRP**

**Democratic Conferencing Tool**

**Interim Report – November 2009**

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**G52GRP Interim Report**

The purpose of this report is to present gp09-sdb’s progress regarding our project up until this point. To clarify, gp09-sdb’s project is to design and create a Democratic Conferencing Tool. Our primary aim is to introduce a new product to an existing market, with ideas both new and familiar to those who are interested in such products, as we feel it is important to research other successful systems whilst we intend to implement our own original features on top. The name given to the system was DemoConf, though this is subject to change at any point before the final planning stage.

We have carried out research into similar systems, in order to gather a better understanding of features that are considered ‘a must’ for this type of project, and those that could perhaps be improved upon. Two particular projects that caught the attention of our researcher were Google Wave, which unfortunately is currently limited to invitation testing only (could be considered a closed beta), and Effusia Business Messenger, a very popular tool for conferencing in the business sector. More on this can be found in the research notes.

It was decided very early on in the ideas stage that DemoConf would be a web-based application. The primary reason for this decision was accessibility for potential users. The technical discussion regarding which software we shall be using to develop the project has been decided on, this being Django, an effective and simple web framework. Other platforms were discussed such as Facebook applications; however we felt the easily viewable profile pages which Facebook is based on are not suitable for our system as people may not want to share their personal information with the other users accessing the application.

Features of DemoConf:

* Democratic system (Moderated by the users, rather than administrators)
* Simple conference room system, allowing users to kick-start discussions easily.
* Effective feedback idea, providing the speaker an insight into how well their argument is being received.
* Fair speaking limitations, allowing for all users to become a potential speaker within the conference.

Current objectives:

* Discuss and decide on the framework we will be using primarily to develop the system.
* Develop a suitable time-plan highlighting important milestones for the project, ensuring all deadlines are easily recognizable.
* Design a number of fitting interfaces for the system, which we can potentially choose from.
* Begin the initial prototyping stages.

Here is an initial UI design, drawn up before a number of the features were decided upon:



This is of course, not a finished design, however it includes the basic features we wish to include – Users online list, chat window, user status, etc. The list of features has grown substantially since this design was created, and the next versions will reflect that.

We have decided on an ‘upgrading’ approach to the project where we will write documentation for and build various versions of the program each one with more functionality than the previous until we have a final version which meets all requirements.

Still to be added:

More recent UI designs, information about play-testing session, research notes, summary of progress to date.