

Proposal for AlphaSchool

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Executive Summary

Today, students rely on Moodle and others to download lecture notes and turn in homework and exams. It is one of the two most popular Learning Management Systems (LMS) available to universities and students.

E-learning is more common in today's society. Better management of class schedules, easier access to textbooks and other course materials, and being able to connect with other students and professors are merits derived from this.

Our target clients are students who wish to be able to access and easily make use of Learning Management Systems like moodle on their mobile phones as well as other mobile devices.

AlphaSchool provides an easy-to-use interface for these systems for students on mobile devices. It also incorporates all the existing features of the system as well as some improved features.

Moodle and Canvas mobile apps are both current competitors to AlphaSchool. Although they serve the purpose of allowing students to access school resources as well as connecting with other students and professors, their mobile apps have a relatively poor user interface which makes them more suited for only desktop access.

The purpose of AlphaSchool is to solve the problem of a user-friendly mobile app that is still as efficient as the current e-learning systems in use. Our application will enable students at certain schools to easily access these Learning Management Systems like moodle and canvas on their mobile devices with a better user interface, anywhere and anytime.

AlphaSchool will be developed using open-source web technologies.

Gap in the Market

The current market has a lot of providers of Learning Management Systems that provide this service to schools and their students. However, the issue lies in the mobile application counterparts of these programs as most possess a poor user interface.

Schools and their students will be eager to make use of AlphaSchool as it solves this issue. It is a reliable and user friendly app that will help provide better user interfaces for the Learning Management Systems of the schools. It will provide all the services systems like moodle and canvas provide and more all in an easy-to-use app.

Meeting the Market's Needs

AlphaSchool will meet the market's need by making an easy-to-use mobile application for schools, in order for their students to easily access and use LMSs like Moodle from their mobile devices, i.e. their mobile phones.

The goal is to make an app so user-friendly that students would opt to make use of our app rather than the app of the LMS their school implements so that they rather use their more available phones than a PC to gain access.

Implementation

Management

AlphaSchool is founded by 4 people and will be managed by those people at the outset.

Development

AlphaSchool will be developed in Java. Visual elements will be displayed using the Swing GUI widget toolkit. The development of version 1.0 will be fueled by the goodwill of the 4 founders. Future development should be limited to bug fixes and security updates, with the exception of infrastructure updates to the websites AlphaSchool links to, such as Canvas and Moodle.

Marketing and Distribution

AlphaSchool will be available through web browsers as well as having a desktop app for Windows and macOS, and mobile apps for Android and iOS. The desktop app will be available from www.alphaschool.com as well as from the Microsoft Store and macOS App Store. The application will be free and open source.

Monetization

AlphaSchool will be free to download and supported by ads. There will be an option to donate to the development of the software, which in return will remove ads from the app. Due to the minimalist nature of the software, as well as it being open source, a large budget is not necessary. Donations and ad sales will fund the ongoing maintenance of AlphaSchool for security updates and bug fixes.

The Problem and Our Solution

The problem with current LMS options on the market is, although they are capable, they don't offer a clear view for students with the parts they care about in focus. For example, the way Moodle looks for educators and students is nearly identical, except for a few permission differences and options. AlphaSchool puts an emphasis on assignments and their due dates, with

the home screen defaulting to a calendar view so students can easily see what their week looks like without much digging around.

Industry Need for Our Technology

AlphaSchool will provide students with a one stop portal for all their LMS needs. If a student is dual enrolled in multiple schools at once, they can view all elements from every class they are enrolled in under one view, similar to the “All Inboxes” feature of an email client that a user is signed into with emails from multiple accounts. There is also a bigger emphasis on community, as is appropriate for an LMS client focused on students. Students can easily set up a group project by selecting classmates and sending invitations to chat. If a student links their email, they can view under that course’s page all announcements the professor has made via email, without having to open their email client. These are just a couple of examples of how AlphaSchool sets itself apart from the competition.

Market Analysis / Primary Market / Secondary Market

Moodle, Canvas, Google Classroom, and Blackboard Learn mobile apps are the main competitors for AlphaSchool. Moodle is well known amongst colleges and canvas is popular in high schools. They all boast well developed systems for e-learning, but poorly made mobile versions of their systems. Our main goal is to provide a better mobile application which grants access to these current systems while also possessing a very good user interface, and all the features of the system and more.

The primary market will focus on universities, i.e large institutes like LSU, UCLA, etc. The secondary market will be smaller institutes like colleges and high schools.

Marketing Strategies

Overview

We intend for AlphaSchool to become a prominent application for accessing Learning Management Systems in the e-learning market. For this to happen, the product has to be efficient, well developed, easy to use and maintain. We prefer a low initial cost system which can be upgraded and maintained when we need to add or remove more features. This system relies

heavily on the satisfaction of the users, so we intend to try our best at constantly improving the features of the app to match the needs of the users.

Primary Customer analysis and entry strategy

Our strategy for entering the market is to make AlphaSchool free and efficient i.e a well developed open source software which students and schools can download and implement. Some services and features will be withheld and will possess affordable pricing plans. Schools can adequately try AlphaSchool by using it to access and manage their Learning Management Systems before deciding to unlock some of the other features if needed.

AlphaSchool getting good reviews will greatly influence the chances of it getting used by other schools, moreover it being free could attract a lot of potential clients.

Core competency

The core competency of AlphaSchool is adequate customer satisfaction. AlphaSchool intends to meet the needs of users through regular maintenance and upgrade of the system's features while maintaining a low cost.

AlphaSchool will be a better application than the mobile apps of competitors. It will be easier to use while boasting a higher performance and efficiency.

Our team intends for AlphaSchool to be a widely accepted application for accessing Learning Management Systems such as Moodle across universities, colleges, and high schools across the nation.

Sales Strategy

Pricing

AlphaSchool will be free to use open source software. Certain extra features will be accessible only through purchases. These add-ons could be specific features schools require from the app. The prices are expected to be very affordable, and less costly compared to the apps of other competitors.

Positioning

AlphaSchool will be developed to be very functional for all who choose to use it, i.e even without the add-ons, the app will adequately meet most of the needs of users and potential clients.

Place

AlphaSchool is a startup and can be successfully run from home or anywhere.

Competition

Canvas

A web-based (also has a phone app) Learning Management System used by learning institutions, educators and students. Approximately 4,000 institutions around the world use Canvas.

Moodle

A free open source Learning Management System used for blended learning, distance education, and other e-learning.

Development Strategy

We plan on developing AlphaSchool in a four part system. Starting with developing a prototype, then field testing, then a second version, and finally launch.

For developing a prototype we have our own vision of how the app will look and function but we also wanted to focus on what our competitors' clients want but dont get from the competition and integrate that into our design.

For field testing we will ask real students and educators (our main audience for this product) to use our product and use our competitor's product and to compare the two and to decide which one they found easier to use and why. This way we directly tackle the problems that our competitors have failed to solve.

After we have completed field testing and have come back with feedback for our product we can begin to fine tune any issues that our product has or to add any missing elements that would make our clients lives easier while using our product.

Lastly we will launch the product and try to get it into the education market by showing why our product is better than the competition and why they should make the switch to using our product.

Barriers

Alpha school will face several barriers trying to enter the education market and essentially replace an established product.

- Marketing and getting our product known to educational institutions
- Gaining the trust of educational institutions
- Convincing clients that our product is better than the competition to replace the their app with ours

Critical Risks

The main risk we take is that it will take time to establish ourselves as a trustworthy tool for students and stand out from the many other tools that students may use. Apps like Moodle and Canvas have been around for years and it won't be easy for us to establish ourselves as a replacement for those apps.

We will need to establish ourselves as an app for students that will give students a great user experience that draws in clients and will eventually replace Moodle/Canvas as students goto app.

Interviews

We interviewed 5 students on their experience with the Moodle app.

How often do you use the Moodle app on your phone?

1-2 times a week

Once a week

I have it downloaded but rarely use it

And the other two students were not aware that Moodle had a phone app

What are the main reasons you use the Moodle app?

Check grades

Check assignment due dates

Do discussion assignments

Look at grades

Check the Moodle Calendar

What are some improvements you would like to see on the Moodle app?

Easier to find assignments and check grades

Ability to link Moodle Calendar with phone calendar

Knowing due dates for each assignment

Ways to connect more with phones notification system

Fast way to check grades and due dates

If there were to be a similar product what would you like its core capabilities to be?

Can quickly and easily check grades and assignment due dates

Can link all assignment due dates to phone calendar

Can easily set reminders for assignments before they are due

Can easily communicate with professors

Easy to see grade in class