MIS 111 Freshman Honors Showcase
Podio.com: Making collaboration more effective and professional
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Executive Summary

Podio is a technology that enables students to effectively produce group presentations and group work. Using advanced systems and easy to use interface, Podio creates professional projects that will advance students both in the classroom as well as in a real work environment.

Podio offers their Premium version of the website to Universities for free, making it financially accessible to all students. It offers mobile compatibility for both Android and IPhone, making group communication easy on the go for students no matter where they are. Many businesses already use Podio to produce high quality results in the real world and now students can do the same. The technology teaches students to have responsibility for their work because each task is individually assigned to them. This allows teachers to view each individual student’s contributions to the group. Students can easily chat on the website through the chat rooms on the website as well as through GoToMeeting. Podio is also compatible with many applications that students already use including Drop Box and Google Drive. Podio simply puts all the applications that you would already use to make a group presentation into one place, allowing for greater organization and results. Podio also offers an easy to use support system making any problems that someone would face with a document easy to solve, something that competitors like Google Drive doesn’t offer.

All classes from chemistry to linguistics can use Podio for group collaboration as group work is a main part of university curriculum. Teachers can also grade easily and fairly as they can view the progress of the individual students. They can also answer questions directly through the website to increase productivity within the group. The overall accessibility for both the teachers and students allows them to communicate with each other in a much easier and more professional way through Podio.

Overall, Podio is an easy to use website that makes group collaboration effective and professional for students and teachers. Viewing progress, sharing documents, communication, and responsibility can all be achieved through Podio. Students will gain real world experience from using this website since many successful businesses already use it to manage all of their group production and collaboration. Something that many employers look for in future employees is their ability to work well with others. By using Podio in classrooms and lectures throughout the University of Arizona, students will be more than prepared for this expectation. The University of Arizona will also separate itself from other universities as it is innovative in their ability to use other applications to better prepare its students for the future and to create high quality university work and collaboration.
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Introduction

Our product, Podio, is essential to achieving professional presentations and group work in any business or classroom. When you first create a Podio account it walks you through how to begin setting up groups and how to put together projects. Using advanced systems, Podio enables students and employees to engage together in an organized setting that produces high quality results. Students, teachers and business owners can use Podio to revolutionize the way they collaborate within their group, classroom or business. Podio allows their users to view each of their member’s progress, review final projects, communicate with each other, and create better presentations. If adopted at the University of Arizona, Podio would produce higher quality group presentations, create fair grading within the university, and take away the mindset that group work is difficult to achieve within a university curriculum.

Product Assessment

For students who need to complete group projects, Podio is an efficient tool that organizes and simplifies the process of completing work and communicating with group members. Unlike sites such as Google Docs, Podio has a better interface for organized communication and collaboration and is compatible with more applications.

Podio caters to businesses, students, organizations and corporations that use collaboration and group work as a key component of their business and success. When asked about their target market and about who their technology is specifically designed for, Podio stated, “We design and build Podio for organizations that choose an environment of collaboration and empowerment over command and control.” Podio was created for customers who want to achieve effective collaboration that is sufficient to
their company’s goals of production and success. Although many businesses and larger organizations use Podio, it is also expanding its brand name and target market to students by offering a free service of the Premium version of Podio to appeal to students that are often subject to large group projects, presentations, and collaboration. They are expanding their current, existing customer demographic to appeal to a larger market through education. The major appeal of Podio that they market towards students and schools is that it holds each student responsible for each aspect of their assignment within the group project. Because of this appeal, students can be responsible for equal work and teachers can grade each student fairly instead of just the group as a whole. The key markets of Podio are businesses, students, and schools that focus on effective group projects that are organized and lead to professional and successful collaborations.

Podio has a tiered pricing structure. There is a free version that offers all features of the basic plan except user management and groups are limited to five people. Podio also offers a free version to universities. The “Basic” subscription is $9.00 per month per user. This tier offers the Task Manager, Workspaces and Apps, the ability to limit access by having private workspaces, user management, the ability to report calculations, online support, and limited work flows. The “Plus” subscription is $14.00 per month per user. This tier offers the Task Manager, Workspaces and Apps, the ability to limit access by having private workspaces, user management, light user role, read only access, the ability to report calculations, online support, and full workflows. The “Premium” subscription is $24.00 per month per user. This tier offers the Task Manager, Workspaces and Apps, the ability to limit access by having private
workspaces, user management, light user role, read only access, the ability to report calculations and use report visualization, priority online support, and full workflows.

Company Assessment

Podio’s business strategy involves having a good product with few employees. The website makes revenue by customers buying subscriptions to the website. Their goal is that companies will find their product useful for their different business projects so that they will continue to pay the monthly fee in order to keep their accounts on the site. Like most online companies, part of the business strategy is to have a small number of employees. By having a small number of employees, Podio is able to cut operating costs since they do not have an abundance of employees to pay.

The headquarters for Podio is in Copenhagen Denmark. Founders Jon Froda, Anders Pollas, and Andreas Haugstrup Pederson started work on Podio in early 2009, they then launched in March 2011. By April 2012, Podio had received attention and was acquired by Citrix. While Podio remains a private company, Citrix is a public company.

Product Characteristics

There are many important product features that Podio offers to their customers. The product gives customers a useful application to organize and assign tasks when collaborating with others. One important feature is that you can see each member’s progress on an assignment and once each individual is done, everyone can view the project before submitting it to its final source. This allows for less accidental mistakes or deleting of important information, problems that you could run into with apps such as Google Docs. Podio is also compatible with many different applications including GoToMeeting and DropBox. It takes every application that a group could use and brings
them into one place to effectively create professional presentations. Our product also is available on the go as it has mobile compatibility for both iPhone and Android. One feature that Podio flaunts is their attention to customer satisfaction by delivering a support service to its users. Overall, Podio uses many features that are more efficient for group collaboration than its competitors.

Part of the appeal of Podio is that it is useful on a myriad of platforms. Podio is simply a website, therefore, there is no software that needs to be downloaded in order to use the program. This means that Podio is accessible through both PC and Mac computers. Podio is also useful for employees that are always on the go because of the Podio app that is available for both Android and iPhone. Being accessible on all types of different platforms makes it easier for companies to join and use the site.

Proposed Instructional Activity

Podio suits the market of classes that require group projects and collaboration – the market is not based upon certain academic material or instructional level. Podio offers a simple and versatile service that is catered to a wide range of users. For example, anyone from business to chemistry professors can offer Podio as a tool to help students efficiently work on group projects. Since both lower and upper division classes have group projects, Podio suits the requirements for all divisions of classes. For the student market, Podio exclusively functions to align with group projects, although a highly innovative teacher could use the site for online learning. The level of involvement from the instructor can vary from completely hands-off to very hands-on – an instructor could easily monitor individual participation and involvement for the project to help aid the grading process.
An instructional activity that would showcase Podio’s main features would be a group collaboration project. For example, if an instructor gave an assignment to write about a personal experience while growing up, then once each member wrote their personal story, they would write how they all connect and show coming of age. Through Podio, the entire group can see the progress of each paper and then come together easily to write a reflection over all of the writings. The instructor can be a “viewer” of the project and view how each student performed and can ease the grading process fairly. The features offered by Podio.com will allow for greater group performance in classes that center their curriculum around group collaboration.

In order to assess the students’ use of this product, the professor could have the students complete a peer-review at the end of this assignment. This would be effective because the product allows for students to easily track progress of their group members so they in turn could report it.

A large long term group project would also be ideal for incorporating Podio. This is because if the amount of work is too large to manage with conventional methods, Podio would help the students better manage all of the tasks. If a teacher were to add Podio as a part of their curriculum, students would be able to perform more group work in order to enhance their learning experience. Students are able to tackle more complex problems in groups as well as develop the skills that go towards working with other people. Group work is also important because many fields are based off of collaboration and working on projects as a team. With the use of Podio, teachers would be able to more easily track not only the progress of the group as a whole but also how each
member of each group contributes. Students are better prepared for a real workplace environment by using a tool like Podio.

Podio boasts an impressive help centre with helpful tutorials and personal assistance. The site itself is easy to navigate and learn through experience, so the learning curve is relatively low for a website. If people do need help getting used to and acquainted with Podio, they can check out the Frequently Asked Questions or Using Podio page.

The proposed class activity above is an improvement from existing activities where groups would have been likely to only use Google Docs, and find difficulties when attempting to collaborate. The approach of using Google Docs is not as professional or organized as a whole in comparison to Podio. By modifying the way students assign and complete group work by using Podio, classrooms will produce greater end results and presentations. Instructors will also offer a new innovative tool that separates their class and school from other institutions. Again, Podio allows for each student and instructor to view their personal progress and their assigned task easily. By implementing Podio in a class, the overall results of the student’s group collaboration will be more professional, organized, and will improve the education experience within the classroom.

Feasibility Assessment

In order to receive first hand feedback as to how Podio would fit in a college classroom environment, we interviewed Professor Marshall and we were discussing his course at the University of Arizona, MIS 150B, Interpersonal Relationships In a Changing World. Professor Marshall’s feedback was generally positive. As far as he
was concerned, he saw no reason why he would not provide Podio to his class. One different perspective that Professor Marshall brought was that with Podio we should be more concerned with selling the product to the students, because after he would offer it to his students as a way to complete a group project he would have very little need to interact with it. He said that if Podio allowed his students to work more efficiently and in turn hand him a better completed project he saw no reason to not introduce it to his class.

Podio is simply a website, therefore, all that is needed is internet and a device that can connect to a stable network. Students will find our product easily accessible because most students already have computers, smart phones, and internet access due to the recent educational trends to incorporate technology into class curriculum. Even students that may not have internet access or a computer will still be able to use Podio on campus because computers and a stable internet network are available at the school library. Because all students will have some way to access Podio, there are few technological concerns when considering the use of our product in a classroom setting. The learning curve of Podio seems simple enough that an in-class tutorial would be all that is needed to get students started with the software. When first engaging with Podio, it is full of pop up tutorials that work to guide you through using all of the features it offers. Outside of learning the basics of Podio in an in-class tutorial, if students run into larger problems, Podio prides itself with its customer service.

Originally, Podio offers many different plans that vary in price based on the programs offered. However, institutions can dodge all of those costs by applying for a sponsorship through Podio.com. Podio is very proud of their sponsorships of large
universities in order to expand their key market to education. Through the sponsorship, faculty can extend the Premium version of Podio to their students. The Premium version of Podio enables students to use the full application to their advantage during group collaboration. Podio Premium offers unlimited invites of people to a particular project, training sessions in order to train both the faculty and students on the new technology offered, and priority support with Podio’s support team. The economic assessment of the new technology to institutions is one of Podio’s strengths that separates them from their fellow competitors. If for some reason the University of Arizona was denied this sponsorship however, Podio could still be used in smaller classes or by smaller groups by taking advantage of the free version offered.

Podio outlines that if your data is lost and you are a paying customer, Citrix, the company that owns Podio, will attempt to restore the data, although there is no guarantee that data will be recoverable. Conversely, if Citrix goes out of business it would be unlikely to affect Podio and its users. Podio also prides itself on customer service and system maintenance so losses of data and/or connection are unlikely. Also, Podio takes advantage of apps such as Google Drive, so if the user is using these apps which automatically back up data, losses of data will be extremely unlikely. If Podio does completely go down the user’s data would be in whatever 3rd party app they were using, the main loss would be the communication features unique to Podio.

An educational record is “any information or data recorded in any medium…which is directly related to a student.” While Podio does collect certain biographical information from users, it does not sell any information to third parties. Podio would be able to meet the legal and regulatory requirements of FERPA (Federal
Education Rights and Privacy Act). Podio does not release any personal information or data, so the privacy of a student’s educational record would be kept intact. For the type of assignments that would be done on Podio, the only educational record information used would be course work; a student’s financial and financial aid records would never face the possibility of being released. Legally, Podio would meet the FERPA requirements since it does not sell user information.

The only possible barrier in Podio would be text for someone that has a visual disability. Since our product is a website, being able to read certain elements of text and being able to recognize certain icons are vital to being able to use Podio. That being said, Podio is easy to use. The layout of Podio is much like that of Facebook which would make it familiar to a variety of users. We feel that if someone with a disability is able to use a site like Facebook, then they will have no problem using our website. This is because Podio incorporates the use of easy to understand icons with short amounts of text to make the user experience easy and painless for any user. In regards to intellectual property, Citrix does not own any data that the user creates within Podio. However, any suggestions you make towards the improvement of Podio become Podio’s property.

Next Steps

Based on our interview with our faculty member, the next steps could include Podio information sessions and grassroots student adoption. Information sessions could be used to let student and faculty become more aware that this software is available to them. Encouraging student adoption would be vital to Podio’s success at the university because the students would be the ones interacting with it the most. As
our faculty member said, he sees no reason why he wouldn’t make Podio available to his students, but after that it is up to the students to use it over traditional methods like group chats and Google Docs. One way that Podio could become an app that the majority of the student body knows of and uses could be an awareness campaign. This could be done at the beginning of a semester, Podio would be made available to students, and the creation of accounts could be incentivized by having your email entered into a raffle, a strategy that the University often uses to encourage student engagement in new things.

Conclusion

Podio is an application that makes group collaboration easier and more professional. Many businesses already use the program to enhance their production as the site holds each employee to a responsibility and is easy to group together to submit a final and more professional result. By implementing this innovative technology to students and faculty it would greatly improve the performance of students in classrooms that center their curriculum around group collaboration projects. It is important in creating an organized software and environment for students to use to effectively communicate with other group members and their teachers. It will improve instructional activity within the classroom as teachers can directly communicate with groups in order to answer questions faster in order to create the clearest and most effective results. Students will also be held accountable for their assigned task, which eases the grading process for teachers and takes the frustration out of groups where one person does most of the work. The University of Arizona would highly benefit if it adopted Podio in classrooms as an important tool in creating university worthy presentations that
separate its students from other institutions. A major attribute that many employers look for is how well a future employee works with other people. By using Podio, Wildcats will graduate with more than enough experience to meet those expectations of future employers.
Bibliography


We only used Podio.com to find our information. We chose to make our conclusions based directly from the source.