

Excelacom's Social Networking Solution Delivered: Project Varsity Sports Website

Online social networking portals are a growing occurrence in the Internet world. These social sites enable individuals to interact while communicating with groups of people sharing similar interests and a desire to network. The medium enables subscribers to communicate through a variety of discussion group activities. In late August 2007, Project Varsity launched a social networking site dedicated to sports, changing the way sports teams interact with their coaches, other athletes, families, friends and fans. The help develop the site quickly and capture market growth, Project Varsity partnered with Excelacom, a proven business leader in technology solutions, to develop, build and manage the sports portal. Project Varsity achieved success with their rollout, launching just in time for the 2007/2008 sports season.

Company Overview

Project Varsity (www.projectvarsity.com), headquartered in Reston, Virginia is an innovative web site and web application developed specifically for the high school athletic community. The creation of the portal started back in 2006 as the brainchild of Trevor Goss who decided to enter his concept into TiE-DC's venture capital entrepreneur challenge (VCEC) in Winter 2007. The

concept received recognition as a finalist in the event and with the support of the business community, Project Varsity began its search for a development partner to help launch the concept into a robust social networking portal.

Business Challenge

As a new networking site, Project Varsity needed to work with a

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development organization that had past experience with portal and content management systems. They also need to align with a partner that understood Web 2.0 technologies and could build out the "community" site concept with features consistent with social networking activities. The site needed to incorporate typical social web site characteristics, multimedia-networking tools and enable privacy controls during information exchange.

The site development would require a team that had a proven track record in successfully implementing and launching large-scale installations. System performance and user response time needed to be fast so that transaction activity for various messaging and other content capabilities would create a real time social experience. The system architecture needed to be built with open source tools so that third party software integration would be seamless and achievable with little effort.

Project Varsity was also looking for a vendor who would be able to provide production and operational support of the portal once the site was live. The on-going maintenance would require on-site support capable of managing the various processes and procedures associated with changing customer requirements, trouble shooting activities and various release management initiatives.

How Excelacom Helped

Excelacom's expertise in systems integration and software development for the communications industries provided a strong foundation for the successful development and launch of the Project Varsity portal. The project team worked directly with the client through each phase of the build out, providing exceptional business strategy planning that helped navigate through the various portal requirements.

A set of working methods guided the development and selection of hybrid designed software and hardware architecture that would interface with the end user.

The ability to respond quickly to changing customer requirements at any point in the lifecycle, while enabling groupware development, allowed for Excelacom to deliver under stringent timelines. The development approach followed an incremental model, which enabled Excelacom to test the software at each stage of the development process, ensuring system success at launch.

The technical team's ability to offer innovative design concepts created the unique user model associated with the Project Varsity portal, a hierarchical system instead of a peer-to-peer network system. This hierarchical system allowed networking activities to be initiated by coaches, ensuring the validity of the site and reinforcing security features to the user community. Dinesh Dhanasekharan , Director of Development for Excelacom comments "Excelacom realizes that millions of unique visitors are subscribing to social networking sites and we are dedicated to helping our client gain a sizeable portion of that market. By providing our clients system flexibility and scalability coupled with innovative features through architecture design, we are putting together a model for success - and our client's successes are what drives us day to day."

Since response and performance times were largely dependent on the backend architecture, Excelacom ensured that throughput and transaction rates for multimedia messaging and other like activities were improved upon during maintenance and the on-going support phase. By effectively

performing preventative and corrective maintenance, Excelacom was able to offer code enhancements and other suggested improvements during the system management processes. Excelacom also partnered with Project Varsity to provide operational and production support using a proven multi-tiered approach and management of the overall infrastructure for the network solution.

Success Factors

ExcelaCom provided Project Varsity superior web and portal development bundled together with strong management capabilities during the various phases of implementation, new feature development and on-going maintenance and support. "The resources provided by the Excelacom team included talented experts that brought innovative ideas that further enhanced the Project Varsity web and portal offering. Developing and launching a new service to market required a team that could deliver under an aggressive timeline while ensuring the consistency with the overall vision," stated Trevor Goss, CEO of Project Varsity. "Their dedication to the site and constant communication with our team during the development process made the project run smoothly and successfully."

Excelacom achieved success during this engagement by delivering the portal to market in line with the launch communication strategies presented to the business community. The initial site launched with key features earlier than expected as a result of being

engaged and involved with the client through every stage of the project. "What we provided Project Varsity was peace of mind by leveraging our knowledge and insight into the web and web application market and our understanding of the success factors associated with the development of social networking portals." Dinesh Dhanasekharan , Director of Development for Excelacom.

Benefits

Project Varsity was able to launch on time and successfully, meeting the expectations within the technology community and the user community. Excelacom aided in the successful launch and rollout by providing the following:

- Custom project planning and management processes.
- Innovative software solutions and development models.
- Launch activities in line with business expectations.
- Superior on-going release management support.

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