

Online collaboration tools enabling efficient conference marketing and smooth teamworking

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AIM: The poster reports innovative practices of using a wiki and web based video conferences in organizing and planning marketing efforts for EAHIL 2008 Helsinki Conference.

METHODS: Marketing of EAHIL 2008 Helsinki Conference was organized by the marketing team (i.e. four persons within EAHIL 2008 Helsinki Local Organizing Committee). The marketing team's tasks consisted of planning, organizing and implementing the marketing efforts for the conference, for example writing articles, sending e-mail alerts, writing conference blog, designing and subcontracting printing products and directing the publication of the conference homepages with our professional conference organizer.

At the beginning of the process the marketing team met face-to-face in context of Local Organizing Committee meetings, but it was soon obvious that the group needed more frequent working pace. Members of the team worked in different parts of Finland and abroad, and did not have the time or the money to travel to face-to-face meetings, so the web 2.0 collaborative tools were necessary.

The group started using two programs offered by Helsinki University: wiki software Confluence and web based video conferencing program Adobe ConnectPro. Both programs could be used across the organizational borders.

Since that only a connection to the internet, headphones, a microphone (and a web camera) was needed to have a meeting. In each meeting one of the team members acted as a chair and one of the team members simultaneously documented the decisions made to the wiki. In addition to making precise decisions, the webmeetings included brainstorming and free discussion.

After each meeting the team members had a rather long period for working in the wiki, with the tasks decided at the meeting. Different features of Confluence wiki were frequently used: naturally the wiki was used for collaborative writing. The attachment-feature was used to share photos, logos and drafts of printing products. The comment-feature was reserved for free discussion. Completed documents were stored up in the wiki, and were always easily found in one place.

RESULTS: One of the main advantages of using wiki and web based conferencing was that both tools could be used everywhere with internet access. The group

members worked all in different organization and often at home after working hours, so this was a great advantage.

Working with wiki made it easier to organize work. The deadlines were kept, as everyone could work flexibly according to their own timetables. Because different wiki versions are automatically saved it was also easier to document the work.

Though the use of web 2.0 tools was mostly easy and uncomplicated, there were also some technical challenges with the web based video conferences when one of the team members participated from Hong Kong. The team also found it appropriate and necessary at some points to utilize also traditional media, such as e-mails, phone calls and face-to-face conversations.

In addition to the efficient web 2.0 tools good team spirit, motivation and devotion to the project as well as clear and common goal made working with this project so fun and inspirational.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION: The collaborative tools such as wiki and web based video conferencing are good instruments for task oriented project working, as they enable working across organizational and geographical borders. In addition to these tools a motivated team and clear objectives are crucial.

Literature:

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