Taking a Website Live

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About Me

- Previously a CSE 143/190L TA
- Product Manager at Redfin
- Created www.cellarspot.com
  - Social network for wine connoisseurs
What is Cellarspot?

- Social network for wine connoisseurs
  - Taste notes, collections, friends, etc
- Rewrote the whole site 3 times in a year
  - In PHP at first, then two rewrites in JSP (Java)
- Was my first money-making website
- Was in your shoes when I started
- Got the idea from my Dad; I don’t like wine
Enough about Me

Let’s talk about you …
What’s after 190m?

- Webster is shutting down at end of quarter
- Where will you continue to tinker?
  - Use your UW student space
    - [http://www.washington.edu/computing/web/publishing/students.html](http://www.washington.edu/computing/web/publishing/students.html)
  - Install MySQL on Dante
  - Visit [http://students.washington.edu/youruwnetid](http://students.washington.edu/youruwnetid)
  - Or setup PHP, Apache, MySQL on your PC
What if you want more?

- What if you want your own .com name?
- What if you want to make some money?
- What if you want to take web development to the next level?
The Truth

- The gap between a legitimate website and a personal project is small - **this is the beauty of the web**
- All of you are capable of making something that people will use
- Examples:
  - Cellarspot.com
  - Facebook.com
  - Rememberthemilk.com
  - Craigslist.org
  - Mobaganda.com
- All websites that started off simple
The Next Level is Hosting

- Buy a domain name
  - Example: martystepp.com
- Buy web space from a hosting company
  - They provide you with PHP, MySQL, etc
- You can buy a domain name and web space from the same company
- Good companies:
  - Dreamhost.com (Marty’s recommendation)
  - Godaddy.com
  - Westhost.com
  - Wingsix.com
Hosting Gotchas

- Make sure that your host provides the services you need
  - Some hosts only provide PHP + MySQL
  - Some only provide Ruby on Rails, etc
- One-stop shops are convenient
  - Buy the domain and web space from the same company
  - Dreamhost is awesome
OK, you’re live

Refine your website
First step to refinement is research
- Research will tell you more about the problem you’re solving
- Understand your users
- Understand use cases

Research by interviewing, surveying, etc

In my opinion, Cellarspot was solving a fake problem
- I didn’t research enough
- I didn’t know enough about wine connoisseurs

Research increases the likeliness of your website being used

It’s more fun when your website is used :)
Cellarspot Focuses

- Original focus was on functionality
  - “Let’s make a website with awesome functionality; the look is less important.”

- Original focus was bad
  - We should have focused on a core feature set with an attractive and grabbing look
  - Wine connoisseurs need attractive websites
  - Had I done research upfront I would have known this earlier
Privacy

- Be upfront with your user
  - Specify your privacy policy in a “Terms” page
  - Facebook’s “Terms” page is ~8 pages
  - Twitter had a big problem with this recently
- Bonus screenshot from Facebook:
You got a good idea

Track and evaluate your website
Have you looked at the 190m source?

- What’s this?

```javascript
<script type="text/javascript">
document.write(unescape("\x3Cscript src='" + gaJsHost + "google-analytics.com/ga.js' type='text/javascript'\x3E\x3C/script\x3E"));
</script>

<script type="text/javascript">
var pageTracker = _gat._getTracker("UA-2729135-5");
pageTracker._initData();
pageTracker._trackPageview();
</script>

- Turns out Marty knows more about you than you think … he’s got Google Analytics
Google Analytics (GA)

- Sign up here: http://www.google.com/analytics
- Then just install the JavaScript they give you
- GA gives you insane statistics about your site
Revenue Models

Make some money
Advertisements on Your Site

- Google AdSense
  - Automatically displays relevant ads
  - Paid per click (usually ~$.10-3.00)
  - Customizable look and feel
  - Any fool with a website can install these!
  - Just sign up and install the JavaScript
  - www.google.com/adsense
I've given in

Alex Lodd

Apr 11, 2007 9:37 AM

I've decided to give wine more of a shot, so I'm going to buy a bottle once every two weeks.

I might quit 2 weeks in, but for now I'm going to go for it.

2 comments:

Carolee

Apr 11, 2007 8:08 PM

Hi Alex,
I'll be interested to hear how your journey into wine tasting evolves.

loogel

Apr 12, 2007 11:10 PM

I know! Blog about it!

Post a comment:
Referrals

- Website owner gets commission from referred sale
  - Many e-commerce sites offer this
  - Amazon.com, Bestbuy.com, etc
  - Commission ranges between 5-10%
  - Look for “Join Associates” on Amazon.com
Cellarspot Referral Example

2004 Kistler Chardonnay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottle info</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Producer:</td>
<td>Kistler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vintage:</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grape:</td>
<td>Chardonnay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region:</td>
<td>Durell Vineyard, Napa Valley</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Wine Review Online
Ratings, Reviews, Expert Buying Advice from America’s Top Critics

Write a Taste Note for this Bottle
Add this Bottle to your Collection

Buy this bottle
E-Marketing

Market your site and get users onboard
Google AdWords

- You can produce ads that show up as Google AdSense ads on relevant websites
- Keywords can be purchased that make you the “sponsored link” on the Google search page
- Cost per Click (CPC ~$.10-3.00)
- [http://adwords.google.com](http://adwords.google.com)
Remember those stupid `<meta>` tags?

- No one really uses those, right?
- Let’s learn about SEO …
But first

- If you were Google, how would you determine if one website was better than another?

- Do you determine the most popular person by what they say about themselves?
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

- The way your site performs in search engines
- Learn more here:
- Include the appropriate <meta> tags
  - Description, keywords, etc
- Use a descriptive <title>
  - Look at Amazon’s title -- it’s huge
SEO (cont.)

- See each search engine’s recommendations
  - Yes, they specify them
  - [http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/](http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/)

- Most important:
  - Get people to link to you
  - Get bloggers to blog about you
    - Google likes bloggers
Google PageRank

- Bubbles are websites, arrows are links
SEO (cont.)

- Typically your website will be keyworded based on the anchor text of incoming links
  - Also keyworded by <title>, <meta> and content

Footer of Trulia.com:
Google Bombs

- Before Google got smart, they keyworded mostly by anchor text
- Bloggers linked to whitehouse.gov/president with anchor text “miserable failure”
- Googling “miserable failure” showed whitehouse.gov/president as the first link
- Google has since fixed this
A Useful SEO tool

- **Google Webmaster Tools**
  - [http://www.google.com/webmasters](http://www.google.com/webmasters)
  - Useful information about your site in Google’s search engine
Conclusion

- Making your own site is an indefinite success
- Cellarspot …
  - Didn’t make much money
  - Was used in every single one of my interviews at Google, Redfin, etc
  - Is prominently on my resume
  - Was a great experience
  - Was insanely exciting!
Questions?

- Cellarspot?
- General web development?
- Jobs?
- Etc?
Overflow
Cellarspot in Academics

- Pursued in 4 different classes (15 credits)
  - CSE 403 - Software Engineering (4 credits)
    - CSE majors only
    - Opportunity to work on a large project
    - Absolutely recommended (esp. with Marty)
  - ENTRE 475/476 - Planning a Business
    - 4 credits each
    - Contact John Castle (castlej@u) if interested
    - Absolutely recommended
  - CSE 490H - Distributed Systems (3 credits)
    - CSE majors only
Legal Info

Don’t get shutdown or sued
Intellectual Property

- Copyright ©
  - Establishes ownership of content
  - Images, reviews, etc

- Trademark ™
  - Establishes exclusive usage of a logo, name, or phrase

- Patent
  - Establishes ownership and exclusive usage of a product, algorithm, etc
  - Very complicated
Copyright

- Don’t violate it
- Don’t use someone else’s
  - Images
  - Code snippets
    - Unless the license agreement says you can
  - Any other data on any website
- Copyrights don’t need to be specified
  - They are implicit
Protect Yourself

- As an individual running a website, your private assets are not protected
- Protect your private assets by either
  - Registering a Limited Liability Company
  - Becoming incorporated
- Dependent on the state you operate in
  - http://www.secstate.wa.gov/corps/
- This probably isn’t necessary unless you’re doing something that might be borderline illegal
Software Development

- Make good code decisions
  - Will make improving / fixing your code MUCH easier
  - Try to build a team of developers, because multiple heads are better than one
- Take CSE 403