

HobbySwap

Connecting Hobbyists to Trade Knowledge/Lessons

Vision/Overview

HobbySwap is a web site/app that allows users to trade knowledge and lessons. The idea is that a user has some skill in one or more hobbies and is willing to trade help and/or lessons with someone who has skill in a hobby they wish to learn. E.g. Bob is an accomplished metalworker and wants to learn woodcarving. Susan has some skill with woodcarving and is interesting in learning metalworking. Bob and Susan separately make a profile on HobbySwap listing their skills and interests, and get matched with each other. So Bob can teach Susan metalworking and Susan can teach Bob woodcarving.

This is basically a social networking site but focused on hobbies. So the business model - if the goal is to make money off this - would be targeted advertising, which could work well, since users are providing detailed information about their interests/hobbies.

Proposed Technology

- HTML/CSS/JS frontend - pretty standard for a web app
- Python/Django web app/site backend - simple, easy to build and deploy, fairly extensible.
- MySQL or PostgreSQL data store - haven't decided on this point. It depends partly on how we will deploy this. We could even go with sqlite to get started.
- Facebook for authentication? - none of us have used the facebook api, so this would depend on getting team members who have some experience in this area.
- Deploy using heroku? - just one option. This would give us a free, scalable easily deployed production environment, including a Posgres db. This would require at least one or two of the team members learning heroku tools, but the learning curve is likely no more difficult than any other "real" environment, e.g. aws.

Minimum Viable Product

- Users should be able to register a profile with their hobbies.
- Users should be able search search for other people by desired hobby.
- Service should find matching users by hobbies.
- Users should be able to communicate with each other. This could be as simple as an exchange of email addresses, or it could be messaging functionality built into the app.

Additional features that really should be implemented

- Rating system for users - need some way to reward good users and catch spammers/scammers/creepers, etc.
- Matching algorithm takes into account location. This requires that we know the users location, at least their city/town of residence.

Concerns

- Security is a big one. It's important that users data isn't shared with people they don't want to be in contact with, and even communication between users should preserve both users privacy as much as possible.
- The minimum viable product may actually require quite a lot more work to be genuinely useful.
- We're not actually certain what kind of demand there is for this service. In theory it sounds good, but in practice, it could be quite complicated to work out the details of

sharing hobby lessons. What about hobbies that require expensive gear like scuba diving or snorkeling? Is the site responsible for ranking the “value” of lessons, or do we just leave that up to users to negotiate? Lots of potential complications.