



Weekly Newsletter #5 - February 17, 2012

Quarter Walk-around Presentations

This week's focus was largely on Wednesday's quarter-semester walk-around presentations in which the team presented its design ideas to the ETC faculty and held brief discussions to obtain a wide variety of helpful feedback. The goal in mind is to be able to commit to a direction after taking in and analyzing this feedback.

Faculty were generally quite positive in their reactions to the project. Many recognized the great design challenge of meshing game mechanics with the ideals of altruism and were pleased with the team's design approach thus far. The anonymous posting, ninja theme, inherent rewards model, and community elements were received very favorably. Concerns were minimal, but included the presentation of the experience as a game when it is not quite a game as many would define it, the fact that a tree-nurturing theme has been done before, and the possibility of undermining the ideal of altruism through rewards.

Several useful feature suggestions also were given, some of which underscored previous ideas generated in the team's design process. Among features the team is considering incorporating into the design are a request feature where players can seek help directly, a reputation feature like those seen on sites such as ebay, an RPG-style leveling mechanic, customization options, and the use of a platform like Facebook as a vehicle for generating awareness of the project.

Next Steps

The team has distilled the design of the experience into its most general components and is currently most focused on committing to a theme that will most effectively attract people to the product. In addition to the ninjas and trees theme, the team has discussed the idea of a gear/machine theme that may stand out more than the heavily-used tree motif. By the beginning of next week, mock-ups illustrating this theme will be produced.

From there, the team will be able to begin testing the human interaction component of the experience. The Boom Boom Cards will be analyzed with the goal of understanding what reactions each deed provokes. Additionally, concept cards will be generated and posted around the ETC and around the city of Pittsburgh - the team will be able to track QR hits or email responses for cards utilizing different approaches. This will inform how much and what type of information to include on cards, as well as what type of theme may be appealing and for which demographics.