SNAG'EM:
Improving Social Interaction and Networking with Games

Thomas Phifer
Winthrop University

Adviser: Dr. Tiffany Barnes

Grad Mentor: Evie Powell

Introduction

This summer in the Games 2 Learn Lab we designed and implemented SNAG'EM(Social Networking And Game) , a game that promotes Social Networking at Conferences such as STARS.

Background

There is a problem with attendees at conferences having trouble interacting with each other and re-membering who they networked with after the confer-ence is over. With SNAG'EM we aimed to create a game that could mitigate this problem by creating a com-fortable and fun environment that allowed for quick networking with as many people as possible.

Research

PHP
This programming language allows for dynamic website creation.

MySQL
This Query Language allows for standardized maintenece of databases

TextMark
This online texting service allows for redirect-ing of texts to a website of your choice along with the number the text is from.

Asterisk
This free open source Public Broadcast Ex-change Server allows us to create a call in system for playing the game with dial tones.

Figure 1: Screen shot of SNAG'EM website

Basic Game Play

1. Conferene Attendees Register for the game.
2. Players are given a mission.
3. Players find someone that matches the descrip-tion in their mission.
4. Players use the call in system, texting system or internet browser to SNAG a person to complete their mission.
5. If the person they attempted to SNAG meets their mission requirements then they get some points and they are given another mission. Otherwise they lose a point and must try again.
6. The top players with the most points win prizes.

Mission Example

Mission 1

SNAG someone from NC who is interested in dancing

Points to be awarded: 5

Call in   Texting   Web Browser

Asterisk   TextMark
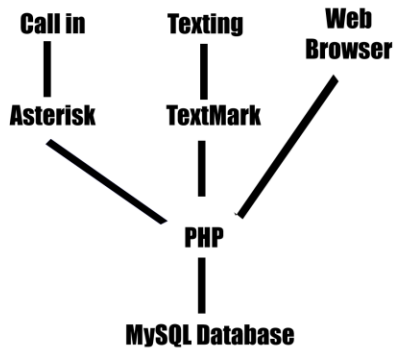
PHP

MySQL Database

Figure 2: System Diagram

Process

To use the call in system the player calls the number 201-477-1277 which is redirected for us to our server with Asterisk installed. Asterisk handles the call prompting the player to punch in the player ID# of the person they wish to SNAG.

To use the texting system the player texts 'stars09', a space, and the the player ID# of the person they wish to SNAG to the number 41411. The text is sent to TextMark where they reroute the phone number and the text to our website which handles the input.

To use the online system the player goes to www.snagemgame.com and logs in. They click the PLAY link and then enter the player ID# of the person they wish to SNAG.

Conclusions

We have play tested the game and recieved some feedback so that we could tweak the system for improve-ments. It appears from preliminary testing that players enjoy the game and believe it's a worthwhile invest-ment of their time.

I have also gained expertise in the following skills:
PHP, HTML, JavaScript, XML, CSS, Linux Systems, PBX Servers,
MySQL Database management,
Player testing, survey creation

Future Work

We plan to implement SNAG'EM at the STARS Conference in Tallahassee, FL on August 9th, 2009. There will be about three-hundred attendees there who could all potentially play the game. We plan to observe players and analyze the play logs to determine if the game is successful. We have a survey for feedback on the website that we will use to improve on future versions of the game.

At the conference we will consider the game a success if 15% of attendees play and if all players have an average of 15 missions completed or higher.