# PERSPECTIVES .....



A monthly look at what's happening in the ever-changing digital world and beyond.



#### From the Editor

Welcome to the June edition of Perspectives!

Normally, we bring you a collection of one-page articles on digital trends and their implications. This month we bent the rules a bit and wrote about our individual experience interacting with specific digital offerings. Each of the authors used a piece of technology for a month and summarized their experience here. From smartphone apps that help you track your sleep habits to discount websites for



the elite shopaholic, we hope that the experiences written about on these pages will entertain and enlighten you.

As always, we encourage your feedback. Contribute to the conversation online, where versions of *Perspectives* are available for comment on our website's Sparkblog and on SlideShare, or send me an email letting me know what you think. If you are interested in a custom briefing on any topic in this edition, RTCRM is here for you—just contact your Project Manager or Account Manager. If you aren't a current RTCRM client and would like a custom briefing, contact me and we'll talk. If you are looking for the latest in digital trends with a healthy dose of attitude, visit *Treffpunkt*—the RTCRM Digital Integration and Innovations team blog—at http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com/.

Thanks and enjoy.

#### **Nicole Franklin**

Manager, Business Development

202.339.6273 | nfranklin@rtcrm.com | Sparkblog: rtcrm.com/blog | Twitter: @rtcrm | SlideShare.net/rtc123

Photos courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons: P.1: Punctuation Marks Made of Puzzle Pieces by Horia Varlan, 2008



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# Sharing Information: It's as Easy as Saying "Pound It"

**Summary:** As more people adopt smartphones, the ability to digitally share and organize contact information, resumes and business cards has become increasingly useful. Manually entering various numbers and addresses into contact lists can be cumbersome. An innovative solution to this problem is the application Bump, which allows for fast-paced, on-the-go connecting. With Bump's customized profiles, users can instantaneously transfer and share information by touching fists.

**David BenBassett,** *Coordinator*Digital Integration and Innovation

Marketing apprentice. Tennis player. Gadget nerd. Searching the digital world for people and ideas. Fear the Turtle.

#### **Key Information**

Not too long ago at a family function, I was exchanging contact information with my cousin when she asked me to "Bump" it to her. While I knew what she meant, I'd never had much reason to download Bump and use it, but with the opportunity at hand, I downloaded the app. Since then I've incorporated Bump into my networking repertoire and after playing around with it, I must say I really enjoy Bump's simplicity and novelty.

To start, Bump has users create individual profiles by combining elements of their professional and personal content. Bump then allows users to exchange these virtual business cards by tapping two mobile devices together, sparing users the hassle of having to type in extensive contact information. Bump also allows users to share content from a variety of popular



platforms, such as: Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter profiles; as well as apps, music, and photos. In the latest version, users can interact with other Bump users from a distance, enabling them to send content and messages similar to a normal SMS.

Surprisingly enough, my favorite thing about Bump is the cheesy fun that comes with "Bumping" someone new; the novelty still hasn't worn off. Other companies like PayPal, which allows users to bump money to one another, and Pulse News Reader, where readers can bump articles, have also seen the appeal of this novel technology and have incorporated it into their own apps.

#### **Implications and Action Items**

Bump is a great app for fast-paced networking. Whether at a conference, bar, in class, or on public transportation, Bump means securing that new contact is never more than a tap away. But, as with any digital tool, there are specific keys to success:

#### For Users:

- **Tailor Your Info.** Create multiple profiles so that only the information you want to send is sent. Follow basic digital etiquette rules<sup>2</sup> (e.g., your new boss doesn't need an immediate invitation to your personal Facebook profile).
- **Follow Up.** After you've bumped someone new, follow up with a message via email, Facebook, or LinkedIn, depending on what is appropriate. Don't let that contact go to waste, and keep in touch to maximize your opportunities.

#### For Developers:

- **Simplify.** When designing your app, try to build one that focuses on a common task (e.g. business card sharing) and makes it easier. Bonus points if, like Bump, you do it in a way that doesn't require much learning or behavior change.
- **Differentiate.** Someone else may already have a solution to the identified problem. Make yours stand out with some unique features, like Bump's "fist-tap to send," that will really make it shine.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> USA Today, "Bump App Becomes Surprise Hit," April 19, 2011: http://tiny.cc/t3tvp

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> RTCRM Perspectives, "Workplace Digital Etiquette 101," May 2011: http://tiny.cc/29mcf

# The Neer Experience

**Summary:** Neer is a location-sharing mobile app that has been described by some as "the app that will save your marriage." Neer lets users set location-based reminders and tasks for themselves and share them with a small group of select people. After a month of using Neer with my roommate and sister, I discovered a lot of personal benefits from using the app and several takeaways that developers can learn from.

Michelle Fares, Associate
Digital Integration and Innovation

Floridian Hoya. Enhancing communication btwn companies and people thru social media, online communities, and cupcakes. Lots of cupcakes. @michellefares

#### **Key Information**

Neer creates a "to-do" list with tasks tied to specific locations (e.g., "buy toothpaste at the drugstore on 123 Main Street"). When a user passes the location, Neer automatically sends a reminder to the user to perform the task.

A feature unique to Neer is the "Inner Circle," where users can share their location and to-do lists with a select group of people (such as family members or roommates) and set reminders or location updates for individuals within their Inner Circle. For example, parents can log in to Neer to see when their children returned home from school, spouses can see when their husband or wife is leaving the office, or a roommate could leave a reminder, such as "pick up milk," that pops up when another roommate is passing the grocery store.

I recently used Neer for several weeks and had the following observations:

- Usability. The app's interface is easily navigable; users won't have trouble selecting locations and setting up reminders.
- Attention to Detail. The app has several quirky touches that make it fun to use. For example, when a page is loading, the app displays cute messages like "Loading please wait while our hamsters check the antennas."
- Notification. The notification noise is loud and extremely distinctive; the first time it went off I had no clue what it was, but for subsequent notifications, I definitely did not miss it!
- Reminders. One app drawback is that there isn't a way to set a recurring reminder
  or task. So if you're passing by a task location, but can't complete the task at that
  time, you can't snooze the reminder to appear the next time you pass by the same
  location.

#### **Implications and Action Items**

Although many location-sharing apps exist, Neer's uniqueness and success offer numerous learning opportunities for app developers.

- Prioritize Privacy. In contrast to other apps with complicated privacy filters and regulations, Neer's default setting is private. Users must manually add "Inner Circle" members in order for them to see their actions and locations. By giving users more control from the outset, Neer eases user concerns about their privacy.
- Automated Check-ins. Neer doesn't require users to check in in order to receive
  their notifications. Instead, the program uses Wi-Fi signals and the phone's GPS to
  automatically detect a user's location and send notifications, making the app easier
  and more intuitive to use.
- Power Efficiency. The developer, Qualcomm, has designed the app with battery life in mind; the goal is to allow users to always have Neer running and maintain a full day of battery life. It's important that Neer not drain the user's battery, because the app needs to constantly track the user's location to send notifications, and if the phone is dead or the user must turn off Neer to save battery life, that would be counter-productive to the app's intent.



**Amy Smith** 

Location is ON

"On our way, we'll pick up dinner"

Left Work "Chipotle for dinner?"

Jack Smith

lack Smith

Jack Smith Left Work

Arrived at Kid's School

alerts

### Counting Sheep on Your Mobile Phone

**Summary:** Sleep is good. When we sleep our brains go to work, consolidating the day's events into memories and reenergizing our bodies to feel our best following the day. All told, we'll spend a total of 220,000 hours—the equivalent of one-third of our lifetimes—in bed. Recently, I checked out five different sleep tracking apps to see how they worked, if they solved user needs and what features/tools they offered beyond simply recording sleep data.

**Rebecca Johnson,** *Strategist*Digital Integration and Innovation

Tradigital marketer. Social media junkie. DC Localvore. Native NYCer. Soccer enthusiast. Aspiring urban homesteader. NPR fiend. @digibec

#### **Key Information**

I consider myself a solid sleeper. Of course, I have my ups and downs, in terms of length and quality of sleep, but I am definitely not part of the 78% of American adults who report getting less than seven hours of sleep a night<sup>1</sup> (adults require 7-9 hours of sleep a night<sup>2</sup>) and the more than 60% that report experiencing a sleep problem (i.e., waking in the night, waking up too early, or feeling un-refreshed in the morning) every night or almost every night. I love me my nine hours and I make getting them a priority.



Given the high incidence of sleep deprivation in the U.S. and the proliferation of smartphones, hundreds of applications exist to help sufferers track, mitigate, and potentially diagnose and cure, their sleeping problems. Many of these apps help users set up a tranquil, dark, and comfortable sleep environment, create

a relaxing routine an hour before bedtime, and establish consistent sleep and wake schedules (even on weekends).

While I wasn't having any sleeping issues, I decided to try out popular sleep apps (Sleep Bot Tracker Log, Sleep-As-An-Droid, Sleep Graph, Sweet Dreams and ElectricSleep) to get a firsthand look into their features and functionality, and to see what insights and value they could offer me, a non–sleep deprived individual.

#### **Implications and Action Items**

After a month, these sleep-focused apps provided extremely useful, data-based sleeping habit insights and observations that could be extremely useful to those suffering from sleep deprivation and those simply curious about their sleeping patterns.

- You Don't Know What You Don't Know. Even if you think you're a healthy, sound sleeper, by using these trackers, (especially the ones that record sound and vibration levels) you may uncover some surprising nighttime disturbances—exterior noises, aggressive tossing and turning, cat meows, snoring, etc.—that are interfering with you getting that optimal night of sleep. Once you uncover these disturbances, you can implement solutions and get those 40 winks.
- **Go Beyond Simple Tracking.** While knowing how many hours (on average) you're sleeping is a good start, these apps are much, much more than a logbook. Not only do they record time spent sleeping, they take in other data points (time of day sleep occurs, user's quality rating of sleep, sleep cycles, etc.) and use this data to recommend bedtimes, wake-up times, length of sleep, and other recommendations to help the user improve upon their sleeping habits.
- You Won't Use Everything. These apps come with so many bells and whistles (various statistical analysis, journals, auto modes, logs, graphs, alarms, soothing sounds, etc.) that you're unlikely to use everything. But don't be daunted, utility apps are designed to meet the needs of a variety of users and you only need to use the features that are of value to you.
- **Keep the Peace While You Sleep.** Cellphones are such a vital part of American lives that many people do not part from their devices, even while they sleep. A major problem of sleeping with your cell phone is the disturbance of unwelcome late-night calls, texts, and email notifications. Many of the apps I tried included a much-needed feature that turns off all sounds, except your alarm clock, while you sleep, allowing me to go to sleep without worrying about my phone going off at 2 a.m.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Annual Sleep in America Poll Exploring Connections with Communications Technology Use and Sleep, National Sleep Foundation, May 2011: http://tiny.cc/o557l

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> How Much Sleep Do We Really Need? National Sleep Foundation: http://tiny.cc/0sj3d

http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Cell-Phones-and-American-Adults/Overview.aspx: http://tiny.cc/r8h0x

# Strategic Luxury for the Shopaholic

**Summary:** A new online shopping model that provides exclusive sales to members-only groups has sparked a number of websites. To best take advantage of these sites, members need a disciplined strategy and approach. This strategy includes time management, selective scanning, and a willingness to buy on a whim. These sites aren't for everyone, but for those who love to shop daily and relish the challenges and thrills of time-sensitive shopping, the sites are well worth the daily obsession.

**Sara Weiner,** Associate Director Digital Integration and Innovation

Yrs of planning, prodding & implementing digital stuff. Philadelphia born 'n' raised. Geeky, athletic and green. Go Big Red!

#### **Key Information**

In the past year or two, luxury online boutique stores such as Gilt.com, Jetsetter.com, Rue-La-La.com and Hautelook.com have grown in popularity. These sites offer steals and deals to members-only shoppers; the promoted items range from pieces of jewelry worth \$10,000 to hotel suites in the south of France. A month ago, I tried out these sites and quickly became obsessed with checking them daily. My compulsive behavior was caused by two facts: One, these sites switch their inventory every day, so you have to be ready to purchase immediately. And two, other shoppers (with what appear to be bottomless wallets) act so quickly that it ignites an



unspoken competition among the members. In the beginning, these sites stole the worst of me: my money, my sanity, and my compulsiveness. But after a couple of weeks, I had it down and am now shopping with the elite. In total, I've saved over \$300 and have acquired some new fancy clothes, shoes, and jewelry.

#### **Implications and Action Items**

Since many of these sites turn over their inventory at 12 p.m. EST each day, the savviest shoppers plan their day around this time, allotting at least 15 minutes to log in to the sites. Some even log in ahead of time, and set an alarm to hit refresh right as the clock chimes. As the sites flip inventory all at once, shoppers must consider the site order in which they browse; veterans have this down to a science—some browse all the sites first to scan for the designers they like, flipping quickly, while others look through entire sites, one at a time, starting with their favorite. Once on a site, experienced shoppers act quickly (in minutes, \$5,000 jewelry will be sold out), so becoming one of these shoppers takes patience, practice, and swiftness. A few things will help you get started:

- **Get Invited.** Site deals are for members only, but membership invites can come from a friend or simply through a request form on the store's site.
- **Get Acquainted.** Each site operates differently, with different layouts and navigation. Spend time digging around, figuring out the navigation and learning what sales are coming up.
- **Plan Accordingly.** Schedule reminders on your calendar five minutes before the daily switch, so you can log in and get after it. Also, take note of upcoming sales and designer features and mark your calendar.
- **Know What You Want.** Decide ahead of time what your priority needs are—jewelry, shoes, a dress—whatever it is, start with those items and only move on to non-priorities after you have exhausted your first round of needs.
- **Know the Risks.** Not everything is returnable, and those that are have short return windows, so spend time reading the return policies on each site.



#### **NextBus**

**Summary:** If you're a bus rider, you know the frustration of both waiting endlessly for a bus to arrive and of running after a bus that has just pulled away. The lack of access to accurate bus arrival times creates inefficiency by forcing riders to be at bus stops earlier than needed, making bus trips longer than necessary. To help bus riders gain control over their schedules and cut down on travel times, there is the NextBus app, which provides real-time bus arrival times for a variety of metropolitan bus systems. For the past year, I've been a loyal NextBus user, and it has changed my bus-riding life.

**Kara Reinsel,** *Senior Strategist*Digital Integration & Innovation

Digital marketer and online business strategist. DMV local. Art, food and fashion enthusiast.

#### **Key Information**

My first experience with NextBus was with its phone-based system. Each MetroBus stop within the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) system was assigned an ID – you simply dialed a hotline, entered the ID, and a recorded message told you how long until the next bus arrived. This system was clunky and accuracy was an ongoing problem.

When I bought an iPhone, the NextBus app was one of my first purchases. I no longer worried about remembering bus stop IDs, or being limited to the arrival times for one bus at a multi-bus route stop. If I was in an unfamiliar neighborhood, the NextBus app would search for stops near my location and automatically provide arrival information. The NextBus app made bus travel easy, and now I always check the NextBus app to decide when I want to head out of my apartment or the office.

Most importantly, the NextBus app puts me in charge of my transportation destiny. When you rely on public transportation, you give up a certain degree of control over your schedule in exchange for saving money (a bus ride costs far less than either taking a cab or driving and paying to park). But with the NextBus app, the balance tilts back in favor of the rider because now you know when the bus will arrive and you can plan accordingly. By giving me a transparent view into the bus system, NextBus has improved my quality of life, giving me back time in my day to do the things that are important to me.



#### **Implications and Action Items**

The NextBus app is an example of an online tool that delivers on its promise ("We deliver real-time transit information when and where riders need it") and offers actionable lessons on how a digital service can realize its full potential for users.

- **Fill a Need.** Too often, marketers create services and products that solve a need they believe a user *should* have rather than solving a real need the user actually has. As a result, the solution provided doesn't meet the user's needs, and the success of the product is compromised. Market research, usability testing, user interviews, and plain old observation are just a few of the tools that can be used to uncover true functional and emotional user needs, and reveal areas where those needs are not being met.
- **Be Easy to Use.** If an online tool is difficult or cumbersome to use, customers will find another product or solution. Interfaces and navigation need to be intuitive; users should not be required to complete a long registration process or complicated tutorial.
- **Demonstrate Results Immediately.** From the first use, the NextBus app makes life easier for users because it provides accurate bus arrival times (aka "information") that was previously unavailable or inaccurate. By quickly providing the user with tangible, usable information, NextBus creates an immediate positive impact. If an online tool requires sizable data collection and/or doesn't provide results and benefits, it runs the risk of losing users who are left waiting.



## DailyFeats.com – Doing Good Isn't Its Only Reward

**Summary:** DailyFeats.com (Feats) is a relatively new social network that rewards users for doing good deeds in the real world. The platform creates a free community built around these deeds, while at the same time openly admitting to relying on corporate support to keep the site running. Although my initial experience with Feats was great, my interest in the site waned due to a few site glitches and a personal moral crisis.

**Nicole Franklin,** *Manager* Business Development

Biz Dev with roots in non-profit development. Rock climber, hiker, camper, foodie, wanderer. Will recite Shakespeare for good beer.

#### **Key Information**

The online social community DailyFeats.com (Feats) had its coming-out party in March 2011 at the SXSW conference in Austin, Texas. The site is one of a growing number of social media hubs that both celebrate and reward real-world good deeds. Getting started on Feats is easy: Simply log on using your Facebook credentials, create a profile and then launch your crusade to better yourself. Whether your acts are as simple as reading to your children before bed or as epic as climbing a mountain, Feats will reward you with points based on the scope of the accomplishment; earn enough points in a given category and badges will appear on your profile. Warning – these badges will disappear unless you accomplish "maintenance feats." You are also able to cash in your points for real-world rewards, such as e-gift cards for national chains and coupons for local stores.



Feats creates a sense of community through its Twitter-like format, which allows you to post your accomplished feats for other "Featers" to see and comment on. You can also set up your profile to publish your accomplishments to your Twitter and Facebook accounts, and to check in using mobile apps and Foursquare. Additionally, community members can participate in "Challenges," opt-in contests where participants complete a certain number of related feats within a time limit.

I had the pleasure of hosting Veer Gidwaney, CEO and Co-Founder; and Morley Ivers, COO, at the RTCRM offices this spring. During a Q&A session, Gidwaney and Ivers revealed that a long-term mission of the site is to make an impact on the most pressing social issues in the United States. Obesity and personal debt are just two examples of issues that Feats addresses by reinforcing positive behavior with rewards. The site provides badges for eating vegetables and exercising, or lets users earn badges for auto-paying bills and saving. However, Feats balances its altruism with practical wisdom (aka sponsorships) and keeps the lights on by offering corporate-sponsored badges and exclusive portals to companies that want to be associated with self-improvement, like Monster.com, 1-800-Flowers, and Home Depot.

#### **Implications and Action Items**

- **Keep Your Resources Up-to-Date.** It's no fun getting a discount coupon for a local restaurant that went out of business a month ago.
- Aesthetics. The badges and feat icons are, in my humble opinion, gorgeous. C'mon, who doesn't want the roly-poly ninja badge for learning a new skill?
- Sea of Sameness. Although Feats makes updating your status easier (via Facebook, Twitter, and mobile apps) and has a more compelling purpose than just social interaction, it is, essentially, another social networking site I needed to find time to update.

On a personal note: While participating on Feats was thrilling at first, I admit I eventually lost interest. It could be my Midwestern background; a culture steeped in humility that leads me to think that there is something immoral about publicly announcing accomplishments and receiving praise for them. A good deed should be its own reward and endeavoring to better one's self is understood, like breathing. But then that's just me. Now, get off my lawn!



#### **About RTCRM**

RTC Relationship Marketing (RTCRM) is a full-service direct marketing and relationship marketing agency based in Washington, D.C., in the heart of Georgetown, with an additional office in New York. RTCRM boasts more than 40 years' worth of innovative, targeted solutions that grow its clients' brands and help them forge lasting, valuable relationships with their customers. What distinguishes RTCRM is its unique ability to analyze data and research on both a rational and emotional level. RTCRM's clients include major brands in the telecom, technology, pharmaceutical, and other business sectors such as AARP, BlackRock, Eli Lilly, and Novo Nordisk.

To learn more about RTCRM, please visit www.rtcrm.com or follow the Twitter feed @rtcrm.

## About the Digital Integration and Innovation Team

Dii is the Digital Integration and Innovation team at RTCRM, a full-service WPP Group creative agency in Washington, D.C., focused on building relationships between brands and consumers. Dii is tasked with keeping track and making sense of the ever-changing digital world. It's our job to discover and understand the nuances of how and why different types of people use technology and what that tells us about them. More importantly, it's our job to help our clients apply this knowledge to better engage with their customers.

It's not about what's cool. It's about what's smart.

Treffpunkt, Digital Integration and Innovation Team Blog: http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com

