Chapter 15
e-OpenDay: Open Virtual Environment for Biomedical Related Research, Business and Public Resources

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the feasibility study of a virtual platform for medical related technology transfer, continuing medical education and e-conference. The concept extends the idea of live events (e.g. conferences, open day events) in one physical location. It exploits the creation of a virtual platform where the research world in the area of biomedicine, can showcase their success, interact and co-operate with the business community and collaborate on potentially valuable outcomes and learn without time or place restrictions. The main objective of the project was to offer a pilot service that can showcase the e-OpenDay market potential and technical feasibility. By developing a prototype and through user feedback and evaluation processes, a set of services was identified, developed and validated. The e-OpenDay project made clear that health information services are facing rapid development and expansion to wider markets and user groups. Based on the project results, a business plan was developed that showcased potential in commercial exploitation.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the feasibility study of a virtual platform for medical related technology transfer, continuing medical education and e-conference, as a result of the work carried out in the framework of the e-OpenDay project. The e-OpenDay project was co-funded by European Commission, Directorate-General Information Society, under the eTEN scheme. The main objectives were to evaluate the technical feasibility and validate the market potential of the proposed virtual platform and similar services.

e-OpenDay originated from real research open day events organised by the National Heart and Lung Institute (Imperial College, School of Medicine) and the Royal Brompton & Harefield NHS Trust (RBHT) in the UK which aimed at bringing closer together the fast moving worlds of medical research and of business. The rate of growth of these events both in terms of numbers of presentations and numbers of attendees was very significant and consequently the idea to transfer, re-design and expand the whole concept across the Internet gained many supporters.

The e-OpenDay concept extends on the idea of hosting live events (e.g. conferences, open day events) in a single physical location. It exploits the creation of a virtual platform, where the research community in the area of healthcare, can showcase their success, interact and co-operate with the business community and collaborate on potentially valuable outcomes without time or place restrictions. The proposed service is envisaged as a combination of knowledge management, e-commerce and e-education aiming to establish an alternative, virtual meeting place for the busy medical research, business and healthcare professional communities, where they can exchange ideas and develop collaborative relationships. It is also envisaged as a mean to offer Continuing Medical Education (CME) accreditation courses without having to physically attend the organised events.

Three major objectives were set prior to the project's commencement:

- to conduct a trans-European market survey
- to provide pilot service and validate the product under real operating conditions
- to set out a detailed business plan

E-OPENDAY SERVICES OFFERED

One of the main objectives of the project was to offer a pilot service that can showcase the "proof of concept" potential. The e-OpenDay service (Figure 1) that was developed provided two main sets of applications as a virtual platform to the research and business communities in the area of healthcare, to facilitate interaction and co-operation.

E-OpenDay InfoExchange Application

This application consisted essentially of a set of interfaces, through which the members of the e-OpenDay service could interact with the system. This is the web-space, where the medical researchers could log-on to submit their own work, while at the same time, several business partners had the opportunity to browse/search for interesting articles to read.

LiveWeb Application

This e-OpenDay service covered Open Days, Conferences and CME courses, allowing users to follow these events virtually. The e-OpenDay platform was able to web cast live events and record them and to make them available for playback, at a later time, for the registered users (Figure 2).

The information content of the virtual platform consisted of:

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