

**Innovative Research
Solutions with Industry**

ICT

CLIENT:
Vidatum Technologies

AREA:
Interface Design and Usability

iadt
DUN LAOGHAIRE

**More effective product development via
interface design and usability expertise**

ICTI
Institutes of Technology Ireland

Vidatum Technologies provides IT solutions and technology management to educational institutions. The company helps universities and colleges continuously improve their student services and foster superior educational environments through enhanced IT solutions. The company is based in Dún Laoghaire and has offices in Jordan.

The company's flagship product, Vidatum Academic™, helps institutes to publish online profiles of their researchers, showcase research achievements and measure research outputs. Originally developed in conjunction with UCD, Vidatum Academic™ has enjoyed significant penetration in the Irish market and is currently used by five universities in Ireland. The company is keen to promote Vidatum Academic™ in the UK market. Vidatum's internal teams have enhanced the system's functionality to suit the export market, but CEO Simon Cullen was acutely aware of the importance of user interface design as a potential area of competitive advantage (or weakness!) for the company.

Simon met Dominic Mullan, IADT's Innovation, Commercialisation and Development Manager, to explore if the Institute could help. IADT's key focus is on the convergence of creativity, technology and enterprise. Many IADT programmes and research strengths lie in areas where a combination of technology and design come into play. John Montayne of the Department of Technology and Psychology teaches on multimedia and visual communication programmes and has been involved in interface design and usability for many



Interface design and usability analysis for Vidatum

years. He has assisted a number of businesses to improve the overall usability of products/software while also improving the user experience of a system. With this background, John, and Research Assistant, Mohammed Cherbatji, were ideally placed to work with Vidatum on the project.

The starting point for the project was an in-depth analysis and mapping of the functionality of Vidatum Academic™, coupled with examination of the profiles and experiences of typical users. Based on this exploratory phase, the IADT team entirely reconfigured the layout and flow of the →

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VIDATUM
Technologies

→ tasks a typical user would undertake, and radically redesigned the user interface. The team provided Vidatum's developers with all the visuals and guidance required to implement the new designs. In this respect, the project was highly collaborative, involving frequent communication and meetings between Vidatum and the IADT team. In a second phase of collaboration, IADT facilitated user groups with representatives of several Irish universities, allowing any particular usability issues to be identified and addressed.

To support the costs of the project, Simon Cullen and Dominic Mullan prepared an application for an Enterprise Ireland Fast Track Innovation Voucher. The Fast Track scheme involves the company match-funding Enterprise Ireland's contribution, so in this case both the company and Enterprise Ireland contributed €5k. Following a very successful collaboration, Vidatum subsequently applied for a Standard Innovation Voucher, securing a further €5k of funding from Enterprise Ireland.

In essence, Vidatum's collaboration with IADT yielded a product which is significantly more attractive to its target audience than was previously the case. The Innovation Voucher support provided a good degree of scope for a very significant collaboration which has brought extensive benefits to the company. Both Vidatum and IADT hope to continue collaborating, be it with further support from Enterprise Ireland or on a consultancy basis.

The company immediately enjoyed success in securing new clients within Ireland. Moreover, the company can now proactively target the UK market, confident in the knowledge that the user interface of Vidatum Academic™ can be marketed as a key product strength over other options in the market. IADT has also been able to provide some informal guidance to Vidatum as regards the forthcoming Research Assessment Exercise in the UK which examines the research activities and support structures of universities. This provides Vidatum Technologies with a great opportunity to convince potential clients that their product can greatly enhance profiling, publication claiming and collaboration in the academic research environment. ■

TESTIMONIAL

Simon Cullen

Vidatum Technologies

"The project was a very effective engagement from our company's point of view. There was a significant improvement in our product, which we could not have achieved without IADT support. The project delivered on two fronts: a vastly improved system which reflects the needs of the target market (the 3rd level education sector) and a highly cost effective project. In terms of value, we do not feel that we would have achieved anything better with any other partner – academic or commercial".



John Montayne

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