



Fluidtime

Time services and tools to help people's flexible lifestyles

IDEA/PROBLEM/CONTEXT

People are adopting new time habits in their life and work: increased use of mobile phones to quickly schedule or change appointments, for instance. These technologies allow us to live our lives according to Kairos, the Greek god of event-based, opportunistic time, rather than Chronos—measured time. We can do things when we feel like it, rather than when the timetable says we must. Aside from the phone, however, few tools or services support this new way of life, especially when people interact with public or private services. They currently have limited access to timely information about public services or even private appointments and are left wondering when their bus will arrive or whether their doctor is on time.

WHAT IS IT?

Fluidtime is a set of services and interfaces to support a flexible lifestyle. It connects people to personalised, time-based information about the service sought, for instance the bus arrival times, or the appointment time of a medical check-up. It challenges the paradigm of the rigid clock and calendar by introducing the aspect of flow to the coordination of everyday service interactions.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Fluidtime uses a technical infrastructure, which provides accurate time updates directly from the real-time databases of service organisations. People can connect to this system through their mobile phones or specially designed products and view changes in the schedules in a constant and ambient way.

Two service systems and interface prototypes were produced to show how using Fluidtime can be simple, effective and enjoyable. The first is for public-transport users in Turin. Travellers can find dynamic information on mobile phones while on the move or on mechanical display units at home or the office. They can set the interfaces to track any bus-stop in Turin and watch the buses as they approach the stop.

The other service is a personalised, flexible scheduling system to support the coordination of shared resources. Its implementation allows Interaction-Ivrea students to organise their laundry facilities. They use a web-browser or the SMS functionality of their mobile phones to reserve, cancel or negotiate times to do their laundry. As clothes are being washed, mobile and stationary tools give users constant updates about the progress of their laundry cycle; an intelligent reminder function warns them when they forget to pick up their finished laundry.

POTENTIAL/RELEVANCE

Ever since Benjamin Franklin made his "Time is Money" statement, time has become an important and valuable business factor. In some cases, time has been the only product that was sold. For example in the 19th century in the USA, Samuel Langley broadcasted the observatory's time signal and other cities paid him in order to receive and use this standard time in order to coordinate train schedules.

Also today, people are willing to pay for time since it is a highly valued commodity that is bought, sold and traded over digital networks. A survey that was done after the implementation of the new traffic information system in Turin, indicates that people would be willing to give money for real-time arrival information.

Fluidtime developed tools and services that can equip companies and governmental organisations with the right means to improve the time based customer relationship as well as create new revenue opportunities. It brings new flexibility to the management of shared resources, may it be the washing machine or a company car.

AN INTERACTION-IVREA INNOVATION PROJECT

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