NEWS

# Flypaper Studio challenges PowerPoint

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As a step toward offering professional Web developers an industrial-strength product, Flypaper Studio Inc. on May 13 will release a Beta2 version of its free, downloadable application that lets people without any programming skills build interactive Web content that looks like Adobe Flash presentations.

On the heels of securing $3 million in Series A funding, the company's first beta drew a global audience of more than 5,000 users. Their feedback prompted the company to add 50 new features to improve performance of its first beta version, said CEO Pat Sullivan.

The product competes with Microsoft's PowerPoint, new online presentation applications such as recently announced SlideRocket of San Francisco (now in private beta and based on Adobe's Flex platform), simple Web pages and Flash presentations created by professionals.

"When you offer beta, people are more apt to give you feedback because they have a sense you might actually listen to them," said Sullivan. "Now we make money on things we used to give away."

The company expects to earn money by selling a professional version of Flypaper later this year for the world's estimated 5 million Web programmers. And, in a software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, it will provide secure media hosting services for all types of users -- from individuals to corporations and online communities. Besides hosting, Flypaper offers services for those needing help with customized presentations, interactive training, content development and branded model templates.

As part of its strategy to help companies make their Web sites "sticky," Flypaper Studio is aligning itself with other companies whose online members or employees may benefit from using its application. For example, Starbucks uses the Flypaper beta version in a private portal so employees can develop stories about themselves and other types of presentations.

Flypaper Studio and professional utility start-up MyWorkster.com in New York today announced a partnership that will give MyWorkster members -- mostly recent college graduates -- the ability to build media-rich resumes directly from the MyWorkster Web site.

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The resumes will be hosted on Flypaper Studio and the Flypaper software will be used as a value-added tool for all universities that join MyWorkster. Like other media-rich presentations made with Flypaper, the resumes can be published right from the Flypaper Studio site to social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn and others.

While on a swift growth path, rich media communications software for nonprogrammers is in its infancy. Office suites and digital-content-creation software grew to more than $12 billion in 2006, according to a Gartner Inc. report in May 2007.

Flypaper-built story templates, called models, can easily be edited, shared and reused, according to the company.

New features of Flypaper Beta2, which plays on any browser with a Flash plug-in, include:

- User profiles.
- A search function for YouTube videos and images from Google, Yahoo and Flickr.
- A "share" toolbar button to host content on Flypaper.net and embed the content on blogs, Web sites and social networking pages, or to send via e-mail.
- A new "Flybrary" user interface for templates, images, video and audio.
- New components, including a RSS feed in presentations, zoom for images, a video controller, scrolling text, a scrolling image gallery and 15 others.

Flypaper for nonprofessionals doesn't include Web site analytics, although Sullivan said that feature will be part of its professional version.

Sullivan joined the Phoenix, Ariz.-based company in January. At that point, it was called Interactive Alchemy Inc., formed in 2003 as a courseware and learning-related software services company targeting big companies such as United Air Lines Inc. and MetLife Inc. At that point, the firm rebranded itself as Flypaper Studio. It employs 43 people.

In February, the company closed a deal for $3 million in Series A funding from venture capital firms Sierra Ventures Management Co. in Menlo Park, Calif., and SCF Arizona in Phoenix. Private investors provided $3 million in angel funding as well. When its product was introduced at the DEMO 08 conference in January, Flypaper took home a coveted "DEMOgod" award.