Stanford eCorner

As Frictionless as Possible

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Stanford Computer Science Professor Monica Lam describes her focus on eliminating friction in social computing interactions. Lam also discusses why collaboration in the social setting is even harder to get right than in the enterprise space.

Transcript

You have heard of collaborative software before, all right. But usually it's a pain in the neck, all right. I mean just talk about WebEx. That's tiny little experience to share some slides and it's a pain in the neck to set up. And when we talk about collaboration in a social setting, it is much tougher. It has to be totally frictionless. So I coined this term, it's AFAP, As Frictionless As Possible. And computer science people we always have metrics and the metric that we use here is the number of human synchronizations. For me to play a game with you, what do I have to do? Could you please download that game? We are not going to tell you that, I can't call you to tell you that, it's not appropriate, it's just a game. So I have to wait for the time when it is appropriate for me to see you.

I don't have anything else to say. I say oh, why don't you download that game and then you say okay I will do it later. And then some time later you download that game and then you say okay what is the name that you use in that game, you say how do I play with you? It goes on because the number of times I have to interact with you add up. So we have to count the number of interactions. So let's talk about friction. Have you done this before? A group of friends go out or you have a reunion, people you don't see too often. Someone says could you please take a picture and then you hand over to the waiter five picture - five cameras and they take exactly, exactly the same picture. It was like, why? You have a phone, I have a phone, I'm going to take a picture of you guys, and you guys. I should be able to just say I just took a picture and you should get that picture right there. And by the way don't call - people always say to me it's like of course you have to give up your data because it is free.

I don't know about you, I pay about $100 a month for this data plan, okay. Don't tell me that we have to give up our data for free. The company, I mean the phone should allow us to be able to say I just took a picture; you should be able to get this picture.