

Student Helps Bloggers Overcome Writer's Block

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Georgia Tech student Paul Stamatiou created Skribit, a blog that helps bloggers overcome writer's block. Skribit has more than 4,000 blogs using it and gets more than 4 million hits per month. (Photo: Rob Felt/Ga Tech)

(PhysOrg.com) -- If you write a blog and haven't been to Skribit (skribit.com) perhaps it's just a matter of time. Paul Stamatiou created the service as a tool to help cure blogger's block (writer's block for bloggers) a little over a year ago, and already it boasts more than 4,000 blogs using it and gets about 4 million hits per month.

Stamatiou created Skribit (rhymes with ribbet) out of necessity to help him as he worked on his own blog, PaulStamatiou.com. He had been running his blog since 2005, but was having a bit of trouble coming up with the next thing to write. So he pitched the idea at Startup Weekend

Atlanta, a conference that brings together entrepreneurs, computer programmers and marketing types to create companies and products—they built it that weekend.

“After three days, people start to ask, ‘why haven’t you blogged in a while?’,” said Stamatiou. “With Skribit, readers can vote on topics and post ideas on what to write about and the widget will sort them out by how hot they are. If you suggest something, you will get notified when they use your suggestion.”

Skribit’s user base is vast, according to Stamatiou. Everyone from English-speaking bloggers to Japanese, Spanish and Korean bloggers are using it. He even has a police department in Maryland using it to get feedback from the community.

What makes Skribit successful, said Stamatiou, is that it provides a place for bloggers to get new ideas, rather than simply write about what everyone else is already talking about.

“Someone might use Skribit if they want their site to be up-to-date, but don’t want to go to the echo chamber to mimic everyone else,” said Stamatiou.

Skribit works in two ways. Users can post suggestions on topics to write about on the site either anonymously or with a user account. Bloggers can either read the site or post a widget on their blog. The benefit, said Stamatiou, of having the widget is that readers can post their suggestions directly to the blog they read. Readers can vote on their favorite topics, and the blog displays the suggestions based on factors such as how many votes they’ve received and how recently they were suggested.

Stamatiou created the site while he was a Computational Media student in both the College of Computing and the Ivan Allen College of Liberal

Arts at Georgia Tech. And although it came out of his initial idea, Stamatiou continues to develop the site with co-founder Calvin Yu. When he graduates later this month, he plans to work full time on making Skribit profitable with help from the Georgia Tech Edison Fund.

The Georgia Tech Edison Fund helps provide initial funding for early-stage technology companies that have a close association with Georgia Tech. Chief Commercialization Officer Stephen Fleming said that keeping young talent from having to look outside of Atlanta for initial funding is one of his most important missions.

“At one time, I know that Paul was looking to move out to California to try to get funding for Skribit,” said Fleming. “I’m glad that we were able to provide him with the initial funding to keep young talent like him here in Atlanta.”

So, does Stamatiou ever use Skribit to help out when he gets blogger’s block? Of course he does.

“For me it is a backup plan when I really can’t think of something to write. If I notice something that has received a lot of votes in a very short amount of time, I’ll take that as a note that my readers really want to read about it and I’ll change my plans and blog about it,” he said. “Then there are the times that, for a few weeks, I won’t have any clue about what to write, so I’ll just rely on it.”

Provided by Georgia Institute of Technology

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