

Pinta Finds Victory at Burton Morgan Business Plan Competition

Today, if we want to search electronic information on the web, the first choice often is to use Google©. When we are in need of a subject matter expert for any number of projects, Google© may create more work for us than needed. Imagine being able to search for subject matter experts in any industry or organization, and instead of an endless list of available websites that you then dig through to find experts, a software existed that could provide an accurately ranked list beginning with the most authoritative expert in that specific area. What if this expert information was collected and stored 100% automatically with no human intervention using software alone. This information can then be used to create a profile of each user containing contact information and other relevant data on each expert. Researchers at Purdue University have created just this technology.

Pinta, is a startup company founded on a technology created over many years in the Computer Science Department at Purdue University. The technology is a sophisticated algorithm that can accurately search multiple data sources and automatically create a database of expert profiles which is then searchable by any number of users interested in locating expertise. Initially developed under the leadership of Professors Jeffery Vitter and Aditya Mathur in 2005, this technology has evolved through the years and been further developed by Professor Lou Si, and Computer Science PhD student Yi Fang. The technology began as a project at Purdue, where several researchers across the University had the desire to search for other researchers for collaboration. The system PURE (Purdue University Research Expertise) was born. This system worked well, and the Indiana Economic Development Council (IEDC) funded the department \$104,000 to create a statewide expert search system which became known as INDURE (Indiana Database for University Research Expertise). The link www.indure.org is the interface to search for research expertise at Purdue University, Indiana University, Ball State, and Notre Dame. This system is openly accessible by the public for locating research expertise in the state of Indiana.

After successful development of the INDURE system, PhD student Yi Fang saw potential to form a business using this technology. He approached the school of management and sought out two MBA students to help him write the business plan and enter the 23rd Annual Burton D. Morgan Business Plan Competition at Purdue University's Discovery Park. After obtaining two MBA's, Yi Fang and Professor Aditya Mathur began seeking out a board of advisors for the firm. What came of this hard work was the formation of a business plan containing eight members of Pinta: Yi Fang, a PhD student in the Department of Computer Science at Purdue; Anthony Sharpe, a Finance MBA student at Purdue; Nadim Ahmed, a marketing MBA student at Purdue; Suli Xi, a PhD student in Computer Science at Purdue; John Schneider, Assistant Vice President for Industry Research at Purdue; Jeff Vitter, a Professor of Computer Science and engineering at Texas A&M University in College Station, Luo Si, Assistant Professor of the Department of Computer Science at Purdue; and Aditya Mathur, Professor and head of the Department of Computer Science at Purdue.

This team was the only information technology team to make it to the finals of the prestigious Burton Morgan Business Plan Competition in February of 2010. Competing against biomedical and engineering technologies, Pinta placed 3rd in the competition and has caught the attention of many within the Purdue community and beyond. The team leader Yi Fang stated, "*Pinta* was the first and the fastest of

the three ships used by Christopher Columbus to sight the new world. The name reflects the mission of our company: to discover the valuable target that others cannot". Team member Anthony Sharpe said "This technology has the potential to unite many researchers for collaboration on projects that we can't even imagine today. The possibilities are limitless, and this is an exciting time to be in this industry with this unique technology."

Future plans for the Pinta technology include developing search and recommendation software for other universities across the country and extending into both federal and private entities that have the need to search their expert information within their organization. For additional information on Pinta or the underlying technology, please contact Yi Fang in the Computer Science Department at (765) 413-2550 or fangy@cs.purdue.edu.