

IdeaPitch – A tool for spatial notes

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Abstract. IdeaPitch is an intuitive tool for passing notes between spatial distributed clients. It uses a ball metaphor to illustrate the passing and encapsulation of notes.

Many applications exist that enable you to pass notes to people sitting next to you or at a different location. However the fun and user experience of these applications is limited as they are mainly oriented to provide the functionality of sending a message. Most programs often have a lot of features (e.g. FTP, IM), but are not as intuitive as the real life equivalent.

Like *ConnecTables* (Tendler, 2001) and *Pick and Drop* (Rekimoto, 1997), IdeaPitch connects screens virtually for information handover. With IdeaPitch we build a tool which is unobtrusive and fun to use. Further it is small and intuitive to apply for passing notes and provides a new user experience. It can be used to inform or remind someone, to start a discussion, or to perform more complex collaboration processes like a brainstorming session.

The design of IdeaPitch was intended to apply the metaphor of passing information like throwing a ball. We are using balls from different sports (baseball, basketball, golf, soccer, tennis and volleyball) that lie on your desktop and can contain text in an attached text field.

The balls can be thrown by dragging them with the cursor and dropping them while moving. As long as the ball remains on your screen, it is your ball. Throwing a ball out of the screen means passing it to one of your neighbors. You can specify four neighbors, one for every edge of the screen (left, right, top, bottom). These neighbors can be spatial (people sitting next to you) or logical (people who work with you). In a spatial neighborhood, the relation of neighbors is commutative, e.g. you are the left neighbor of your right neighbor and the same

with the other directions (Figure 1: $A = You$). However in a logical neighborhood, the relation of neighbors is not commutative, e.g. your right neighbor can have a left neighbor who differs from you (Figure 1: $A \neq You$).

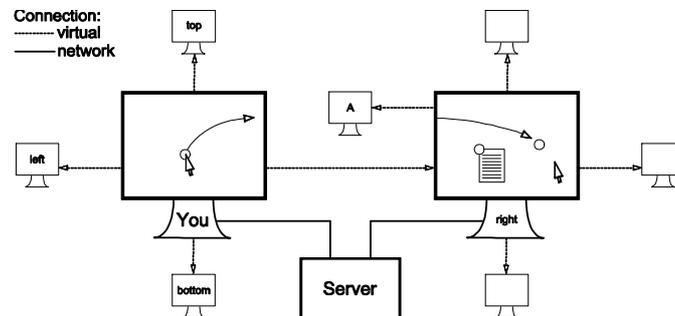


Figure 1. Structure of the IdeaPitch setup.

By experimenting with IdeaPitch in an office environment with colleagues, we found three use cases:

- **Messaging** – With common chat applications there often is a lot of noise and less structure. With IdeaPitch you have one ball per discussion. The one who has the ball can contribute to the conversation and chose the next speaker by passing the ball.
- **Voting** – By choosing different types of balls, everybody can express their opinion. These balls can be thrown to a leader who asked for voting. This scenario is possible in distributed environments as well as in meeting situations.
- **Brainstorming** – In brainstorming sessions it is also helpful to have unique balls to cut between contribution and comments. Further you can throw a ball very fast, so that the ball flies beyond the screen of your neighbor and can land at an unexpected screen.

We would like to demonstrate IdeaPitch at the ECSCW. Therefore we would setup a local server (Apache Server with PHP and MySQL). Every conference member would be able to participate with their notebook (Windows, Mac, Linux) by installing Adobe Air¹ and the IdeaPitch client.

Tandler, P., Prante, T., Müller-Tomfelde, C., Streitz, N., and Steinmetz, R. 2001. Connectables: dynamic coupling of displays for the flexible creation of shared workspaces. In *Proceedings of the 14th Annual ACM Symposium on User interface Software and Technology* (Orlando, Florida, November 11 - 14, 2001). UIST '01. ACM, New York, NY, 11-20.

Rekimoto, J. 1997. Pick-and-drop: a direct manipulation technique for multiple computer environments. In *Proceedings of the 10th Annual ACM Symposium on User interface Software and Technology* (Banff, Alberta, Canada, October 14 - 17, 1997). UIST '97. ACM, New York, NY, 31-39.

¹ <http://get.adobe.com/air/>