



An Introduction to Google Wave[®]

Reflections Upon the Ride of a Lifetime

Why Wave?

Past Experience Often Dictates Acceptance

In the fall semester of 2009, students from both Cadres of Pepperdine’s MALT graduate program tested a newly released preview version of Google Wave. Described by Google as “an online communication and collaboration tool that makes real-time interactions more seamless” (www.google.com/wave), students attempted to use its features without benefit of training or clear expectations. Diving in, they discovered problems with attempting to use it as a “chat application” between over twenty users and became disillusioned rather quickly.

This initial experience cast a negative light upon Wave and spurred many within the Cadres to think of Wave as a weak contender to other popular collaborative applications at best, or a failure of magnitude at worst. Even those students who thought of Wave as an interesting tool to be developed echoed comments describing Wave as a novelty and “work in progress”. Wave, from the two-hour experience of these students, was not ready from prime-time.

Second Chances

Team Awesome (“The A Team”) set about to determine what went wrong with the initial experience of Wave by these students and provide a means of reintroducing Wave in an easy, quick and functional light. The goal was not to ensure Wave was seen as a positive and advanced tool for collaboration. Rather, Team Awesome focused upon educating students on how best to use Wave for certain application scenarios and provide the tools by which students can make up their mind as to its effectiveness and placement within their application toolbox.

Vignettes of Learning

A primary goal within this learning activity was to provide a quick and easy to use solution for students to be reintroduced to Wave. Online video tutorials provided an excellent transfer mechanism and were relatively quick and easy to produce. Students are familiar with online video training materials and little assistance is navigate the materials. The tutorials were divided into common scenario sections as well as an overview introduction on how to use Wave in general. Best practices were a primary goal within each of these tutorials alongside having a bit of fun within Wave itself.

Video Learning Vignettes

Introduction	Organizing Events	Meeting Notes	Brainstorming
A fun overview of how Wave works, best practices during navigation and where to turn to for common application requests.	Upbeat activity allowing students to see how to use Wave in getting people to work and play together.	A positive demonstration of how to make the most of taking notes during collaborative efforts amongst students.	A quick and easy way to show students how Wave can be used to Brainstorm by synchronously and asynchronously.

Self-Paced Learning

During the period of one week, Team Awesome directed students to complete a pre-learning survey regarding their preconceived ideas of Google Wave, review the activity directions located at the MindMaps Group 1 (Team Awesome) learning website (mindmaps.wikispaces.com/Group+1), complete the Introduction to Google Wave video activity and choose one of the three remaining video lessons for completion. Students were given several days to complete the coursework at their leisure and asked to return to a post-activity survey at the end of the week.

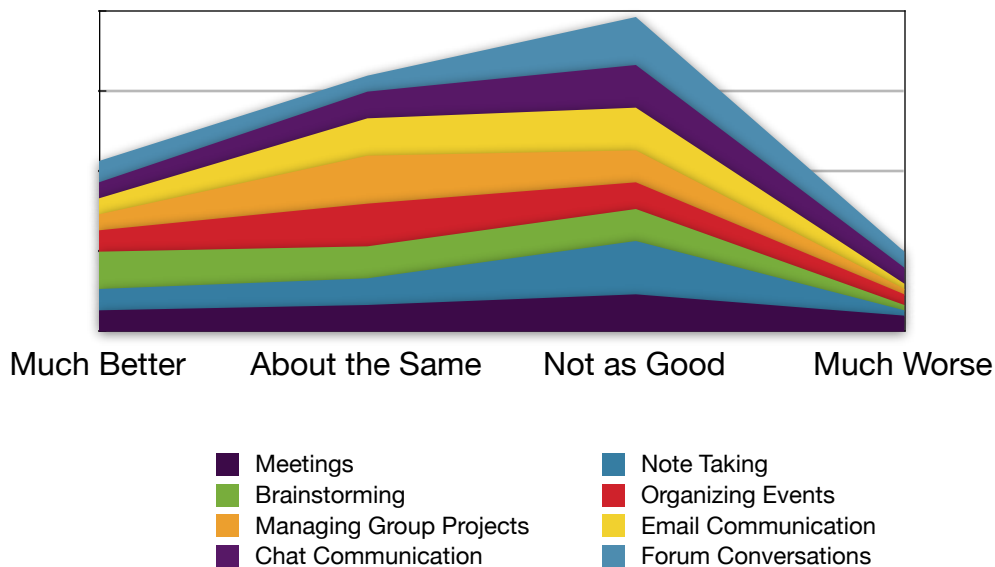
While each student was only required to complete one of the three learning activity options, all were designed in context of the other and provided a reinforcement towards best practices of using Google Wave itself.



Learning Activities Design to Allow Students to Google Wave Best Practices

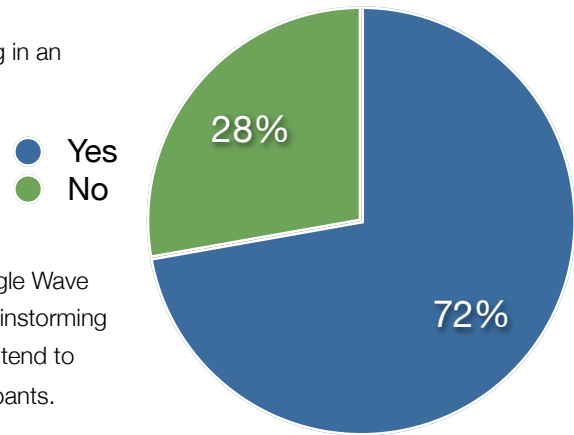
Assessment

At the start of the learning activities, students were asked to complete a short questionnaire in order to discover their perception of Google Wave. Out of this, over 84% of students responded that they either used Wave once a month or never used it. Additionally, a majority of students thought that using Google Wave would work the same or be worse than using other tools for various aspects of online collaboration, such as note taking, email, and organizing events. An interesting observation, however, was that an equal distribution of students were mixed regarding brainstorming collaboration with 35% of respondents believing Wave would benefit them in this area.

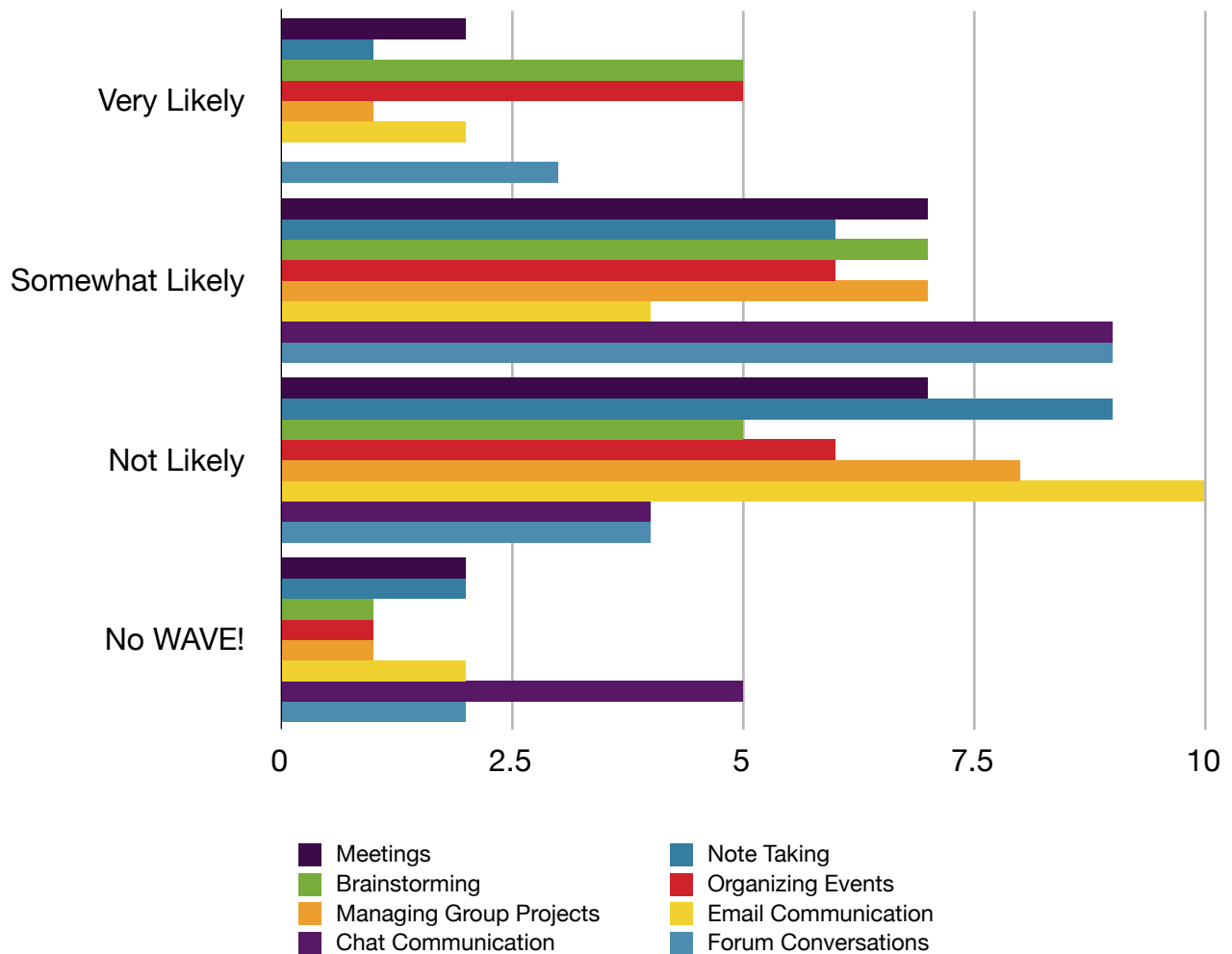


Following the learning activities, the students were again asked to take a follow-up survey in an attempt to see how, if at all, their perception of Google Wave has changed.

Students were asked: "After viewing the tutorials and participating in an activity, has your perception of Google Wave changed?" Over two-thirds of respondents replied that their perception had changed based upon participation in the learning activities.



Additionally, students were asked "How likely are you to use Google Wave for the following activities?" with a slight uptick in the areas of Brainstorming and Organizing Events. Email, Chat and Forum communications tend to remain outside of the realm of Google Wave, according to participants.



Conclusion

Team Awesome set out to reintroduce Google Wave to Pepperdine MALT Cadre students in an effort to demonstrate that Wave might have value they had not experienced in the past. Our goal asserted that "participants will learn how to perform several functions in Google Wave that will help them interact, share information, and complete tasks with their colleagues." Through an introductory and subsequent learning activities, students were given the opportunity to be guided through aspects of Wave and share their experience with other students.

While a majority of students began the activities with negative opinion of Wave and did not use Wave in their toolbox of online collaborative applications, over two-thirds reported that their opinion had changed after participating within this engagement. Additionally, many students reported that they were likely to begin using Wave, especially in the areas of brainstorming and organizing events. Through a simple and easy-to-use set of learning activities, Team Awesome was able to achieve its goal and allow students to reevaluate their impression of Google Wave.