BackPackIt

BackPackIt.com
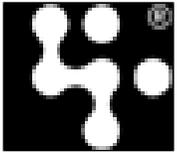

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I. History

i. How the Application was Developed

BackPackIt was developed by a company called 37signals in 2005. 37 signals was started by Jason Fried, Carlos Segura, and Ernest Kim in 1999 as a web design company producing applications geared toward organization for small businesses. Along with Backpack, 37signals has released other Web 2.0 applications geared toward small businesses including Basecamp, Highrise, and Campfire. In 2006, 37signals published the book "Getting Real" about the business in web design and programming.[2]

ii. How the Application Works

BackPackIt is an easy to use web application that allows small businesses, or smaller groups within large businesses to communicate easily and effectively while working on projects or carrying out day to day business duties. While taking on an almost facebook-like façade, backpack incorporates various communicative, organizational, and office tools to create an accessible, online workplace for groups.[1]

**This is the introductory video by 37 Signals.**[10]

iii. Feautures of the Site

Newsroom : The newsroom is comparable to the "homepage" on Facebook. In the "Newsroom" one can post messages that the entire group can see. This allows the group to discuss a topic in a centralized location, cutting down on paper and confusion with email. The newsroom also allows one to see the activity of other members in the group, and see upcoming events from the calendar and posted reminders.
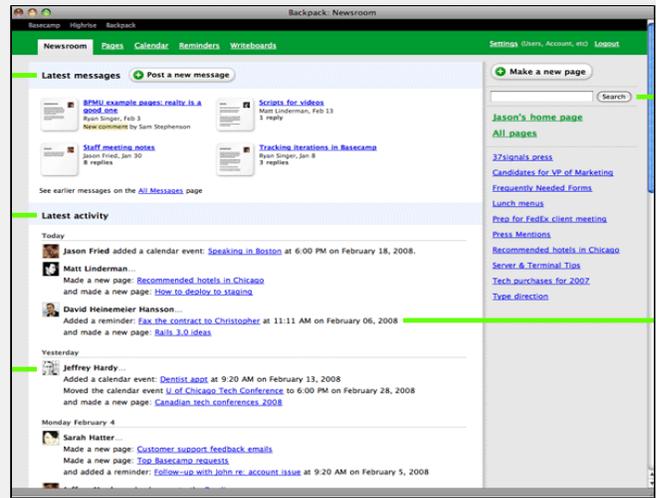

Pages : The pages tab has many tools to create a "page" for anything ranging from taking a business trip to planning an office get together. By using the list, note, file, picture, writeboard, divider, and tags tools, one can create an entire organizational page.
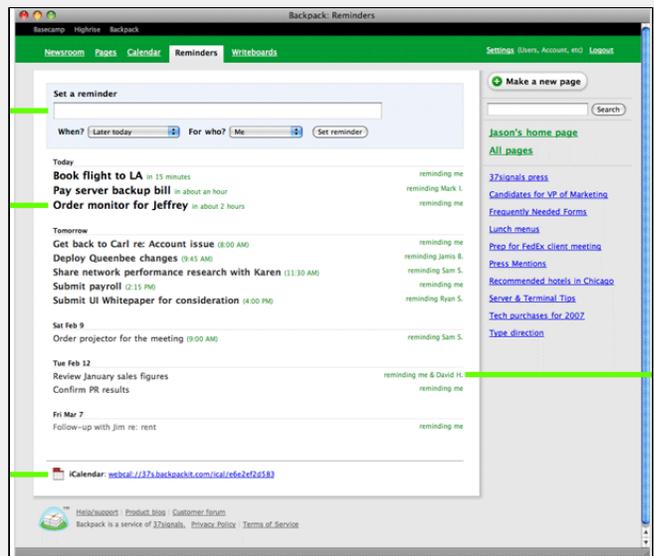
- Lists: allows one to create a "to-do" list and mark tasks off as they are finished
- Notes:allows one to add a small note to the page with a heading.
- Files: allows one to upload a file to the page from another source.
- Picture: allows one to upload a picture to the page.
- Writeboard: allows groups to collaborate on a writing project, and is similar to the types of tools used to build a wiki.
- Dividers: allows one to divide information on the page.
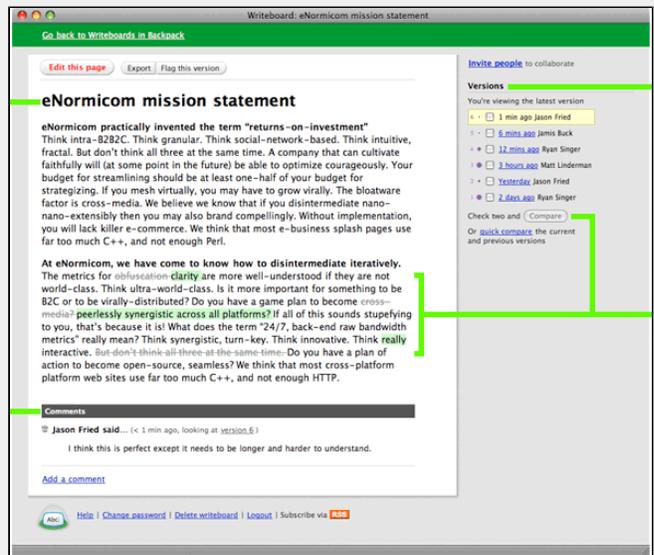- Tags: allows one to "tag" different parts within the page.
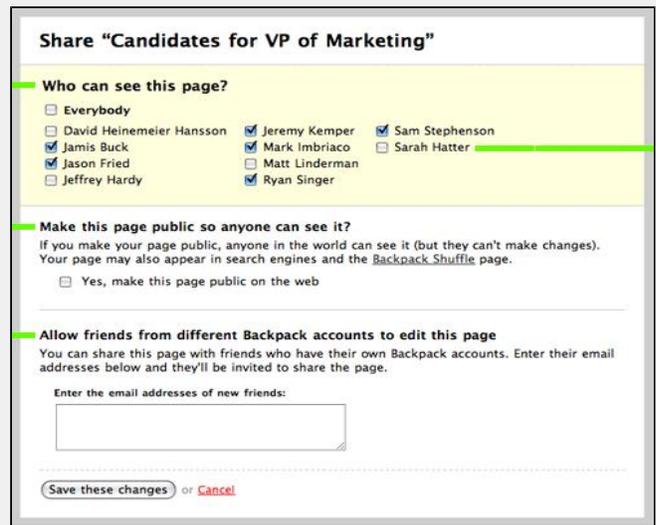
Calendar - The calendar is a dynamic tool to which one can easily add notes and reminders to appropriate dates and plan well into the future. One can also access other group members calendars which allows for accessible coordination among members.
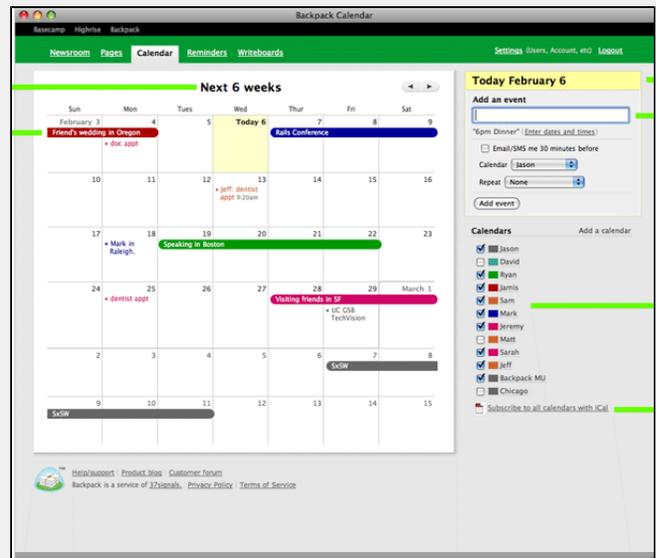
Reminders - The reminders tool allows one to set a reminder for oneself or other group members. BackPackIt reminds group members through the BackPackIt homepage, email, and/or cell phone.	
Writeboards - As discussed previously, writeboards are dynamic and allow group members to collaborate on a text document. These documents can be changed, edited, and saved for future reference.	
Journal - The journal tool allows one to keep track of what one accomplished during the day. On this same page, one can update a status, informing the rest of the group what one is currently doing.	

all pictures and information cited from http://backpackit.com/tour for above table.[3]
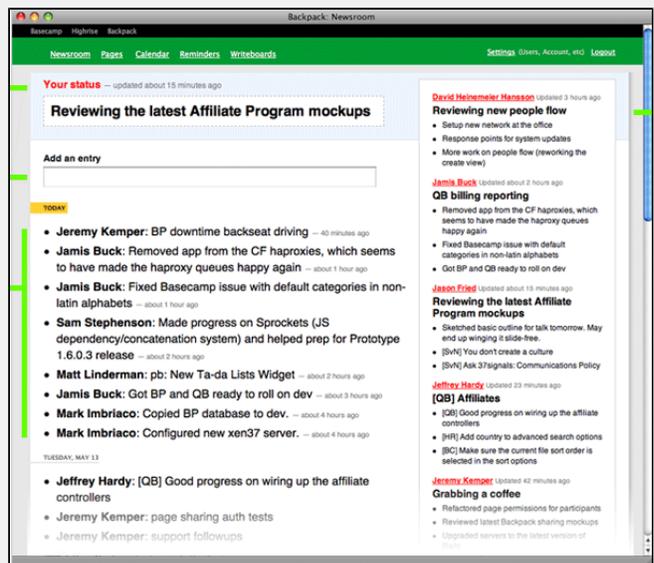
iv. Ways to Use this Application Alongside Others

BackPackIt can be used alongside 37signals other web-based apps geared toward group collaboration in small businesses:

-Basecamp: While the idea of Basecamp is similar to that of BackPackIt, Basecamp is more revolved around helping to get a project done on a timeline, while BackPackIt is geared toward working on and developing an actual collaborative project by sharing information with a group.[2]	
*	**-Highrise:** Highrise allows one to keep track of and organize contacts and business relations. It allows one to see and access different contacts, review previous contact interactions, and keep track of who needs to be talked to and what future meetings need to take place. [5]
-Campfire: Campfire is very similar to a chatroom or an instant messenger tool. One can create different chatrooms for different topics. This is a useful tool to quickly communicate with other group members, and even allows one to upload files and review previous chat history.[4]	

v. Costs and Plans

BackPackIt offers five different plans for users to choose from, with cost depending on the maximum number of users, the total amount of website storage, and the total number of pages allowed. All priced plans include a 30 day free trial, group calender, message boards, and enhanced security. The following table outlines the details of the plans.[6]

Plans	Cost	Storage	# of Users	Pages	
Basic	$24/month	4 GB	6	1000	• Useful for small groups
Plus	$49/month	10 GB	15	2500	• Perfect for most groups and organizations
Premium	$99/month	20 GB	40	5000	• For much larger groups
Max	$149/month	50 GB	500	7500	• Top of the line
*Free	Free	None	2	5	• Useful for individuals or new members

*Free plan does not include message boards, calender, or collaboration.

vi. Examples of BackPackIt Uses

Gather and Review Research

Press Mentions

Frequently Needed Forms

II. How BackPackIt Relates to other applications

i. Supporting Websites of BackPackIt

37signals.com

basecamphq.com

campfirenow.com

highrisehq.com

ii. BackPackIt's Competitors and How They Differ

BackPackIt is a very useful tool for businesses to use in order for employees to keep themselves and their work organized. From our research of BackPackIt's related sites, we believe 37signals meant for BackPackIt to be used in conjunction with their own Campfire and Basecamp programs. This would make BackPackIt much more comparable to its competitors because it would offer many more features. Applications like Remember the Milk, activaCollab, and other related sites that I did not mention appear to be better products because everything is in one place instead of four. The only thing I think holds BackPackIt behind related applications is it's pricing. A business would have to have plenty of money to use this product and be extremely pleased with it since there are other applications offering more for a cheaper price.

| activeCollab Website: www.activecollab.com | activeCollab is a project management & collaboration tool that one can set up on ones' own server or local network. Work with one's team, clients and contractors in an easy to use environment, while keeping full control over your data. Very similar to that of BackPackIt activeCollab offers two options to their application: Corporate and Small Biz. Corporate is meant for large business and includes features like themes, discussions, checklists, calendar, invoicing, time tracking, and status updates. The Small Biz option includes many of the standard features, but all the features included in the Corporate option. The Corporate option is $499 dollars per year ($199 a year for upgrades) and the Small Biz option is $249 dollars per year ($99 a year for upgrades). This is a much cheaper option than BackPackIt, and the Corporate options offer some features that BackPackIt does not.[7] |

Remember the Milk		Remember the Milk is an online application that is used for organizing tasks, setting reminders for tasks, and creating lists. The biggest services Remember the Milk offers are its compatibility to work with other technological sources. One can access Remember the Milk via ipod, iphone, blackberry, Android, Windows mobile, Twitter, and Google applications. The greatest part is that it offers all of this free of charge.[8]
Website:		
www.rememberthemilk.com		

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III. Real World Applications

i. Uses for BackPackIt

The main use of BackPackIt is to store, share, discuss and archive things that are essential for a small business in a safe and secure intranet. This application can take important documents, information, and schedules and keep them in one place where every member of the team can see them. It is very easy to create pages that everyone in your group can see. These pages allow you to share them with the people you want to, and they can change and add content on the page. These pages can be used to gather and review research, make to-do lists, gather notes, track potential new hires, and much more.[3]

BackPackIt can be used to centralize and organize communications by posting messages that your entire group can see and leave comments on. BackPackIt also has a calendar that can be shared with members in a group, and it can be color coded so each member knows when others are free or not. It can also send e-mail and text reminders so you will never forget important deadlines and events. BackPackIt also has a newsroom where recent activity is reported and recorded. Since BackPackIt is web-based it can be accessed from any computer.[9]

ii. Lesson Plans

Elementary Lessons

DecompositionofaBanana.doc, DecompositionofaBanana.pdf
Decompostion of a Banana
Overview
Students are to observe how a banana rots and decomposes over a duration of 2 weeks. For two weeks on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, students will observe for 5 minutes and take down their notes. They will use BackPackIt as a device to communicate and collaborate their observations.
Objectives
Using BackPackIt effectively and taking good observations is the main objective.

edci270- amazon lesson plan.docx, edci270- amazon lesson plan.pdf
Insects of the Amazon Rainforest
Overview
Following this activity, students should be able to:
• Identify one insect and its characteristics from the Amazon Rainforest
• Use the internet to research an insect and put that information on a page in BackPackIt
Objectives
After researching their insect, the students will post their information to a page in BackPackIt with 90% accuracy

edci270-_how_to_lesson_plan.docx, edci270- how to lesson plan.pdf
How to…
Overview
Following this activity, students should be able to:
• Write step-by-step instructions that others can follow
• Use the internet to create a to-do list in BackPackIt
Objectives
After creating their step-by-step instructions, the students will post their instructions to a to-do list in BackPackIt with 90% accuracy

Mammal Lesson Plan (Doc) (PDF)

Overview

Students will be planning an imaginary camping trip to research mammals in nature using the web application BackPackIt.

Objectives

After collaborating with group members and planning their trip students will be able to use BackPackIt effectively and describe their trip and what mammals they will experience on their trip in a one page paper.

Secondary Lessons

HistoryTimeLineGroupProject.docx, HistoryTimeLineGroupProject.pdf
History Time Line Group Project
Overview
This lesson will be used to introduce students to the final project they will
be doing in class. The final project is a collaborative group project that
requires students to create a presentation of a specific time period in U.S.
History of their choice.
(including Revolutionary, Jeffersonian, Jacksonian, Civil War, WWI, 1920's,
WWII, Cold War, other choice (approved by me))
It will also introduce their requirement to use the internet application
BackPackIt, and show them how to use the application.
Objective
Following this lesson, students will be able to:
•   Begin work on the final project including: choosing group members,
choosing topic, and researching topic.
•   Operate basic actions of the BackPackIt application and collaborate with
group members about their project.

breadmoldexperiment.doc, breadmoldexperiment.pdf
Bread Mold Experiment
Overview
This lesson is for 8th grade science students in a laboratory setting
with computer access to use BackpackIt to organize data from an experiment testing
the effect of temperature on bread mold growth.
Objective
After drawing conclusions about the effect of temperature on bread mold growth,
students will be able to knowingly complete an experiment evaluation on BackpackIt
answering the questions:
•   What were the independent variables of this experiment?
•   What were the dependent variables of this experiment?
•   What effect did temperature have on mold growth?
•   Was your hypothesis for this experiment accurate?
•   What do you think would happen if you increased or decreased the amount
of water added to the bread?

researchpaper.docx, researchpaper.pdf
Research Paper
Overview
This lesson will be used to introduce students to the final project they will
be doing in class. The final project is a research paper that will be
completed by an individual student. In class we will discuss the requirements
for the research paper and the students will have time to brainstorm what topic
they will choose to write their paper about (topics must be approved by me by
next class at the latest).
It will also introduce their requirement to use the internet application
BackPackIt, and show them how to use the application.
Objective
Following this lesson, students will be able to:
•   Begin work on the final project including: brainstorming a topic, begin
research for that topic, making a rough outline of their research paper.
•   Operate basic actions of the BackPackIt application and collaborate with
other students and myself if they have any questions about the research paper.

Salvador Dali (Doc) (PDF)

Overview

Students will research and examine the work of Salvador Dali. We shall discuss the iconography used in his paintings and how they relate to the era of Surrealism. Students will then have the opportunity to create their own surrealist painting.

Objectives

Students will learn how to identify iconography in an artist's work and develop their own interpretations of the images. They will also have the opportunity to explore the techniques and styles of the surrealist era through Salvador Dali's collection of work.

Friction Lab (Doc) (PDF)

Overview

After this lab, students will be able to do the following:

- Determine the coefficient of friction between two objects in two different conditions (once while at rest and once in motion)

- Analyze why the two values are different/determine what affects the friction coefficient

- Be able to use BackPackIt

Objectives

After conducting the experiment on friction, students will write a one page lab report explaining their results on what affects the friction coefficient due the next class.

Post-Secondary Lessons

Marketing Strategy Outlines.docx, Marketing Strategy Outlines.pdf
Marketing Strategy Outlines
Overview
Students will:
• Review what they have previously learned about marketing
• Collaborate with partners to develop an outline for an effective
marketing strategy using their knowledge and tools supplied by BackPackIt
Objectives
After completing this activity students will be able to:
• Recognize various types of marketing strategies
• Come up with ideas and examples of marketing strategies
• Evaluate existing marketing strategies and explain how they could be improved

agecon.doc, agecon.pdf
Animal Science 102
Overview
• Students in Animal Science 102 will use BackPackIt to indentify the breeds of
swine for their first lesson of the year.
• Students must learn the breeds of swine that are common to the United States
• After learning the breeds and the characteristics of each breed they will have
an online quiz that they will have to take.

anisci.doc, anisci.pdf
Agriculture Economics 217
Overview
• Students will be able to determine the difference in fiscal and monetarypolicy
• Students must read the information on BackPackIt to see the difference in monetary and fiscal policy
• After learning the differences they must write a short essay over the differences of them and how the work

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IV. Demonstration of Educational Value

BackPackIt can potentially be used by students, teachers and parents.

For students:

Technology already possesses a wide range of usage in students' daily life. Apart from chatting and playing games, students can use technology to organize or manipulate their education life thanks to many different web tools. BackPackIt is among one of these useful tools. If the contribution and usage of BackPackIt is taken into consideration, some of these uses are:

- While using this web 2.0 tool, social interaction which has an essential role in education can be established with not only peers but also adults such as teachers and parents
- Students can have a chance to be active in planning and organizing their educational activities especially with the calendar, reminder and journal tools of the BackPackIt.
- They can arrange their lecture notes or information from classes and schoolwork and post it online to share with other classmates if they wish.
- Students could use BackPackIt as an opportunity to follow and keep track of their grades in current classes and make self-assessments by taking into account their own progress. (If educators implement BackPackIt to announce their grades.)
- They can open discussion topics and use these discussions to enhance their critical thinking skills.
- They can also put information and announcements related with any social activities related to school on a calendar.
- Students can also use BackPackIt as storage for their files.
  (Mualla Dirican)

For teachers:

Today's rapidly growing technology has a great influence on education as well as all parts of an individual's life. Utilizing these influences in terms of education and increasing students' awareness about technology usage in a positive way are among educators' responsibilities. For this reason, educators can benefits from some web tools like BackPackIt by not overlooking its' usefulness for students mentioned above and by setting an example for effective usage of technology. Educators can benefit from BackPackIt in the following ways:

- Grading and attendance of students can be announced on BackPackIt to inform both students and parents
- Documenting students' work and projects can be documented and an online portfolio can be composed for each of them
- Open discussion, announcing social activities, sharing information and lecture notes are among facilities provided by BackPackIt for educators and as for students.
- Educators can cut back on wasted time by using this web 2.0 tool. For example, instead of discussing various topics or issues during office hours, teachers and students can communicate online, and other students who have similar problems can benefit from these discussions by viewing them on BackPackIt.
- Educators, students, and parents do not physically need to be at a school setting in order to interact and communicate with each other.
- BackPackIt can be used as a kind of motivation tool to encourage students' willingness to participate in lectures, courses, and school.
- A separate area for parents can be arranged in BackPackIt. In this area, an educator can inform parents about different topics such as child development, problems faced with adolescence, suggestions for child nurturing and effective parental participation in education (Mine Yetkin)
- Allows for private messaging between parents and students with out face to face meetings, which in turn saves time for teachers, is less of a hassle for parents, and causes less possible embarrassment for students if there is a discipline issue.

For Parents

Parents are a vital part of a child's education. Parents need to be involved in this process in order to make education more effective for students. Alternative ways can be offered in order to encourage parental involvement through BackPackIt. Possible benefits of BackPackIt usage for parents could be:

- Parents often have ideas about their child's development and educational process, thus, they can shape their expectancy from their child with this information by communicating with teachers through BackPackIt
- Parents can assess their children without comparing their children with other children. In fact, they can easily follow their child's progress by taking into account a composed online portfolio on BackPackIt.
- Backpack also can eliminate some problems caused by lack of enough time. In other words, if parents could not allocate sufficient time to communicate with educators of their children because of some difficulties during the day, they could come together online with the educator on BackPackIt.
- Parents can feel comfortable establishing communication with an educator due to being able to easily and accessibly communicate with the educator whenever they wish and having a chance to discuss their ideas about any topic related to their children.
  (Tugba Gurbuz)

V. International Uses of BackPackIt

BackPackIt can be accessed via internet around the world. It can provide opportunities for international students to come together online and conduct various projects by sharing knowledge and studies related to the subject. This kind of sharing can contribute to children's social, emotional and cognitive development. To illustrate, during these works they have an opportunity for using foreign language, and can improve self confidence. Students are able to find solutions to problems, and are able to take responsibility during group work and feel as if they belong to part of a group and so on. Students can become informed about educational development all over the world as a natural result of having international partnership.

BackPackIt can also be used internationally for business purposes. International business partners could work, communicate, and collaborate using BackPackIt's various tools.

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VI. References

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