Technology Corner: Hackcess to Justice, Venmo, and iTriage Health App

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Hackcess to Justice

The Hackcess to Justice is a hackathon put on by the ABA Journal. For those of you who do not know what a hackathon is, it is an event where computer programmers and others come together to collaborate intensively on projects, usually for several days. This hackathon started because of the actions taken by The Legal Service Corporation.

The Legal Service Corporation got together with more than 75 people of many disciplines for two sessions in 2012 and 2013 to delve into the ways technology can benefit justice. A couple of months after the second session, they released a “Report of the Summit on the Use of Technology to Expand Access to Justice,” which portrayed five main strategies to achieve this goal. The strategies they came up with are the following:

• Creating in each state a unified “legal portal” which directs persons needing legal assistance to the most appropriate form of assistance and guides self-represented litigants through the entire legal process.

• Deploying sophisticated document assembly applications to support the creation of legal documents by service providers and by litigants themselves.

• Taking advantage of mobile technologies to reach more people more effectively.

• Applying business process/analysis to all access-to-justice activities to make them as efficient as practicable.

• Developing “expert systems” to assist lawyers and other services providers to get access to authoritative knowledge through a computer and apply it to particular factual situations.

The Hackcess to Justice had its first hackfest in Boston, Massachusetts on August 7th and 8th of 2014. The top three hacks were awarded a cash prize. First place received $1,500, second received $1,000, and third was awarded $500. The second hackathon took place March 21st and 22nd of 2015 in New Orleans, Louisiana. This was co-directed by the ABA and Louisiana State Bar Association.

The Hackcess to Justice has a twitter account where they tweet interesting articles and upcoming events that relate to the legal industry and technology. I recommend following this account; it could lead you to some very helpful information or tools.

Venmo
Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to send/receive money to/from someone but it was a very complicated process? Personally, I have had this challenge multiple times being I live over an hour away from any of my family members. A company called Venmo believes they have the solution to this.

Venmo is a payment sharing application that allows you to send or request money for free. It is similar to PayPal, which actually owns Venmo, but puts a twist on money transfers by making it into a social media app that is simpler, faster, and feeless. Transactions can be shared publicly, to friends, or just with the two parties involved. Don’t worry, the amount is not shared; only the two people involved and the message attached to the transaction is displayed.

There is a public feed, friend feed, and personal feed on your user face. On these feeds you can like and comment on transactions shown. Venmo, along with many users, see this as a fun way to track your spending and keep record of memories you’ve made with certain people. Others find this somewhat creepy because by looking at someone’s transactions you could get an idea of who they are with and what they are doing. For those of you who think like this remember there is the private transaction system available.

When they say free transactions they mean it for the most part, but there are outliers to be aware of. Credit cards and non-major debit cards are charged a 3% processing fee per transaction, but most debit cards and all bank accounts are totally free. Most transaction processing companies charge around 3% or more for all debit and credit cards, which Venmo is using as a large competitive advantage.

To give you an idea of the process in a real situation, I setup a Venmo with my bank account and had my mom set one up with her debit card. The photo below shows my feed with the transaction on it after I sent it. I sent my lovely mother five dollars for a coffee to pay it forward for all she does for me. As you can see there is the description with the coffee emoji, the two parties, who are my mom and me, the date, and the price. This was a public transfer so anyone can potentially see it, but that five dollars is only shown to my mother and me.
Coffee breaks and restaurants seem to be a very common use for Venmo. Other common uses are taxi rides, rent to landlords, and recently, payments for NCAA March Madness Brackets.

An illegal use that has came up within Venmo and has resulted in an arrest is the use of selling illegal drugs. A Columbia University student was arrested in early April for selling drugs through the app. He had over 270 public transactions on his feed that gave some pretty obvious clues on what he was doing. One student told capitalnewyork.com that he had one rule, and that was that the “description has to be funny.” The list of transactions included, “To puff a butterfly,” “Kale salad,” “Cooking supplies,” “Snoop Dogg’s shizzle,” and an array of many more descriptions. Although they could not prove the drug charges through Venmo, he was charged with four accounts of possession.
Other than this case the app has been doing great things. Helping friends and family members transfer money at a quick rate with no charge is awesome in my opinion. I often tell my friends or family to download Venmo if we go out to eat or if they need to borrow some money. It cuts out the trip to the bank or ATM and saves some of my time. So if you believe an app like this can make your life more efficient you may want to try using Venmo next time a situation comes up where money needs to change hands.

**iTriage Health App**

Health is a very important part of all of our lives. A very convenient and useful tool to track and search many aspects of your health is the iTriage health app. The features of the app are symptoms, doctors, facilities, conditions, medications, procedures, My iTriage, hotlines, and news. I will explain my two favorite features, which are the symptoms section and the My iTriage section.

Within the symptoms area there is an interactive full body diagram that you can click on certain locations to see different symptoms for that part of the body. There is both male and female genders for the diagram. Also, you can rotate to the back of the human diagram to view symptoms like back pain. If you do not want to use the interactive version you can also view a full list of all the symptoms within the app. I think these diagrams are very clever and a cool way to be able to search certain symptoms depending on which part of the body you are concerned with.
The My iTriage area is where you can add any of your medications or conditions and all the other uses of the app for your own personal use. Health is a very in-depth study and for some people it can be challenging to keep track of medications, doctors, and conditions. The iTriage app can simplify all of this by adding it all into one area that you can simply check by pulling out your phone.

I highly recommend this app to people who could use some help managing their health information or who often find themselves doing research on different medications, procedures, or doctors. It really is a great source for general information and even personal information like recommended specialty doctors in your area. You can find the iTriage App on the Apple App Store and on Google Play.