

Springwise newsletter | 18 February 2009

This week's newsletter includes a layaway option for festival tickets, more pay-what-you-want dining, a trip planner that suggests tunes for the road, and more. Our next edition is due on 25 February 2009. In the meantime, check out our daily postings on www.springwise.com, send us your [tips](#), and please don't forget to [tell your friends](#) and colleagues about us. Much appreciated!



Author's next thriller will be cowritten by the crowds

It was about a year ago that Pandora—the first community-sourced thriller from book collaboration site [WEbook](#)—was officially released. Pandora features the work of 17 different authors, and now a similar project from Random House and Borders Australia aims to combine the work of 29 authors in what it calls the world's first chain novel.

Best-selling crime author James Patterson will write the first and last chapters of [AirBorne](#), a 30-chapter thriller that will be released one chapter at a time beginning next month. For those in between, Borders and Random House held a contest to find 28 writers who could each create a fast-paced and thrilling chapter in less than 750 words. The contest closed on Sunday, and now judges are in the process of selecting the winners, each of whom will receive a copy of the finished book; one lucky author will also get a one-on-one master class by phone with Patterson himself. Once completed, *AirBorne* will be released one chapter at a time beginning on 20 March. Readers will be able to download each chapter electronically, but the final book will be published in print only for participants in the competition, according to [digitalOZ](#). Meanwhile, one aspiring collaborator's entry [is posted online](#).

Though clearly being held primarily for promotional purposes, the *AirBorne* competition makes smart use of [Generation C](#)'s wild enthusiasm for creating content of every kind. As the saying goes, the pen is mightier than the sword—or, in this case, the mass-market ad campaign! ;-)

Website: www.borders.com.au/chain-thriller/

Contact: www.borders.com.au/customer-enquiry-form.asp

Spotted by: Emma Crameri



A layaway option for buying festival tickets

Back in 2007 we noted the [return of layaway payment plans](#), and in today's economic climate the need for such arrangements is clearly even greater. Completely understandable, then, that several upcoming music festivals are giving attendees a layaway option for purchasing their tickets.

The [Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival](#), for example, will take place from April 17 to 19 in Indio, Calif., featuring a range of indie-rock artists. A three-day pass to the festival costs USD 269 plus fees, but this year, would-be attendees buying online have two alternatives to purchasing their tickets outright. First, they can pay just 50 percent of the cost up front, plus Ticketmaster fees, and then have the remaining 50 percent automatically deducted on April 1. Alternatively, they can pay 10 percent up front, plus Ticketmaster fees, and have the remaining amount automatically deducted in two equal payments on March 1 and April 1. The last day to order via layaway is Feb. 28, but the option is not available for single-day tickets or camping travel packages. The Coachella festival is produced by Goldenvoice, which is offering similar layaway options at its [Stagecoach Country Music Festival](#), also held in April in California.

[Country Thunder USA](#), meanwhile, is offering an EZ-Pay option to purchase USD 119 general admission for its April festival in Arizona in two installments at no extra charge. Tickets must be purchased online by the end of this month.

Finally, for the June [Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival](#) in Tennessee, attendees who buy by the end of February have the option of purchasing their USD 249.50 general admission tickets in five installments of USD 50 plus applicable fees. Bonnaroo offered an installment plan last year as well, according to [USA Today](#).

Economic woes may be hitting consumers far and wide, but that doesn't mean all luxuries have to be dispensed with. Be flexible in your terms of payment, and consumers may just pay you back—with interest! ;-)

Websites: www.coachella.com/layaway — www.bonnaroo.com/tickets/payment-plan.aspx — www.stagecoachfestival.com/layaway — www.countrythunder.com/ct_2003/assets/07web/az/informationaz.html

Spotted by: Judy McRae



London diners pay what they want at Little Bay

Like the [Ibis Singapore hotel](#) we featured last week, London restaurant [Little Bay](#) is taking a leaf out of [Radiohead's book](#), letting diners set their own prices. While many restaurants are battling the credit crunch by offering 2-for-1 deals or other forms of recession pricing, Little Bay's Farringdon branch will accept anything from a penny to GBP 100 for its efforts, which is a bold move, considering their menus lists dishes such as foie gras terrine and steamed butter fish.

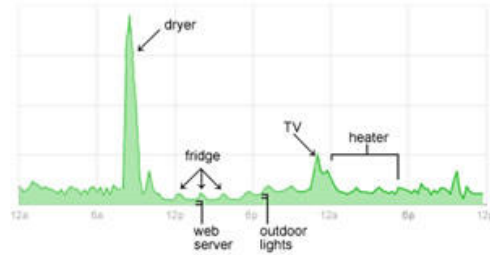
The promo has attracted considerable media interest in London, shown the restaurant to be kind in difficult times, and it may even boost revenue—the owner has seen some customers paying more than 20% of listed prices. It can also serve as a reality check, showing a business how much its customers value its product and service. Not one for the faint-hearted ;-) (Related: [Pay-what-you-want restaurants](#).)

For more on corporate generosity, check out our sister site's February trend briefing: [Generation G](#).

Website: www.little-bay.co.uk

Contact: farringdon@littlebay.co.uk / +44 (0) 207 278 1234

Spotted by: Cagla PakeI



Home energy monitoring, delivered by Google

Reducing energy consumption is clearly a global imperative, but before one can reduce it helps to know how much one is already consuming. Targeting the 40 million "smart meters" now in use worldwide—and the 100 million more soon to be added—Google is testing a new gadget that will take the information such devices collect and make it more easily accessible to the consumer.

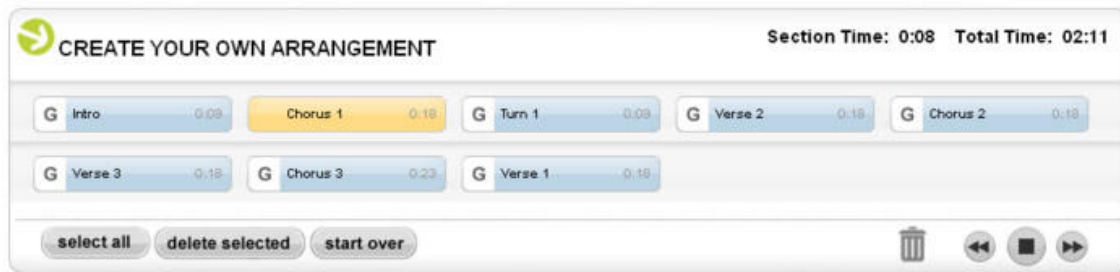
Many smart meters don't display consumption information to the user, but [Google's PowerMeter](#) prototype—now in closed beta—is designed to receive such information and provide access to it via the user's iGoogle homepage. Aiming to help users make better energy decisions, the technology taps Google's scalable, secure IT architecture and the iGoogle gadget platform to show consumers their energy use in near real-time, including an analysis of how much energy is used by different household appliances and activities. Google vows to keep all data under the user's control, and it says it hopes to work with as many utility companies as possible to deliver the technology for free to anyone with a smart meter.

Finding alternative energy sources may be the gold rush of our era, but helping the world wean itself from nonrenewable energy is just as important—and potentially just as rewarding. Google is currently seeking utilities and device manufacturers to partner with; one to get in on early? (Related: [Visualising energy use.](#))

Website: www.google.org/powermeter

Contact: www.google.org/powermeter/contactus.html

Spotted by: Tommi Pelkonen



Music mapping tool lets users rearrange songs

There is no shortage of ways for music lovers to share and even have a hand in selling their favourite music, as we've noted on several occasions before, but it wasn't until just last week that we had seen a tool specifically designed to let them edit and rearrange recordings of individual songs.

[SongMap](#) is a new web application that allows users to create custom arrangements of songs and then download the corresponding audio files and sheet music. The technology was developed by Nashville-based LifeWay Worship to give church leaders new flexibility in arranging their services, and creating it involved what the company says was the largest known recording project in Nashville history, involving more than 150 professional musicians, vocalists and engineers to record as many as eight different versions of each of nearly 1,000 songs. Users of SongMap begin by selecting a song they're interested in from LifeWay's corresponding library. Starting with the traditional, default version, they can then make changes at will, such as rearranging the order of verses, choruses, introductions or transitions and even changing keys. Along the way, they can listen to the result of each change. Once they're satisfied, users can then download the audio files and sheet music for the arrangement they created. The cost to map a song ranges from USD 1.49 to USD 1.99 per part.

Though intended for religious contexts, SongMap obviously has far bigger implications in the mainstream music world, where the creative masses known as [Generation C\(ontent\)](#) will surely jump at the chance to make their own mixes just as eagerly as [Generation C\(ash\)](#) will snap up the ability to sell them. iTunes, Napster, Amazon—are you listening...? ;-). (Related: [An online music store of one's own](#) — [Viral music sales through widgets](#) — [Music promotion with a profit-sharing twist](#).)

Website: www.lifewayworship.com

Contact: worship@lifeway.com

Spotted by: Judy McRae



Translation service taps the native-speaking crowds

Language barriers are one of the online world's most prickly challenges, largely because no single translation solution has yet managed to combine speed, accuracy and low cost. Enter [myGengo](#), a Tokyo-based company that aims to change the way translations are done.

Whereas machine translators are notoriously inaccurate and traditional human agencies are often slow and expensive, myGengo taps a global team of pretested translators working from home for a quicker and cheaper solution. The service currently provides just English-Japanese translation, but more languages are coming very soon, the company says. Users of the site begin by typing or pasting the text they want translated into the myGengo site. There are three service levels to choose from: Standard, which is done by a native speaker for basic, informal communication; Pro, which is conducted by business-qualified translators for more critical translations; and Ultra, which provides extra assurance through the use of two quality-checked translators per job. Once the request is made, qualified myGengo translators are alerted through [a dedicated portal](#), and one immediately begins translating. When the job is complete, the user is sent an email with a link to pick up the translated text. Per-word pricing ranges from USD 0.05 for standard translation to USD 0.15 for ultra services; payment is made via PayPal.

myGengo keeps its pricing low in part by focusing on short lengths of nonspecialized text, it says, as well as by relying on automated administration and economies of scale through the large numbers of jobs it handles. Next on the company's list is Spanish, which will launch in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, myGengo is hiring translators around the world through a team of professional 'Super Workers' who find and qualify translators in each language.

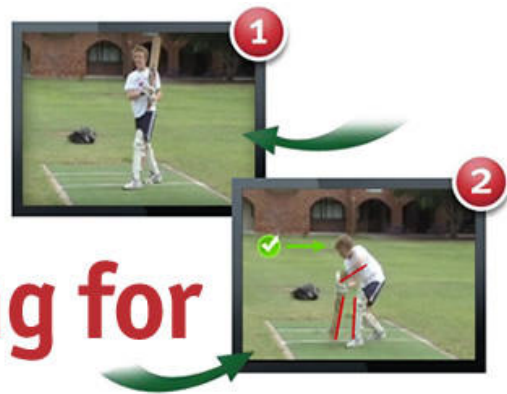
Will myGengo prove to be the solution the translation world has been waiting for? Time will tell. In the meantime, one to watch—and try out! (Related: [Real-time IM translation](#) — [While-you-wait editing service](#).)

Website: www.mygengo.com

Contact: info@mygengo.com

Spotted by: Ozgur Alaz

Online coaching for cricket players



Just a few weeks ago we wrote about [Links Lessons](#), a Florida-based social network that offers personalized golfing instruction online, and since then one of our spotters alerted us to a similar coaching site for cricket players.

Both Links Lessons and [MyCricketCoach](#) invite users to upload a video of themselves playing their sport for professional analysis. But whereas Links Lessons offers a session of such instruction for free as a way to help local instructors recruit new clients, MyCricketCoach sells its coaching in the form of online lessons beginning at AUD 55 per session. Clients of the site, which is led by Australian cricket veteran Gary Cosier, begin by uploading a video of themselves playing in a recent practice session; the site serves everyone from beginners to advanced players. Within 48 hours Cosier then delivers coaching in the form of voice-over and written comments and instruction drawn right onto the video the user originally uploaded. Clients can also access the MyCricketCoach video coaching library, and live coaching is available as well for players equipped with a video camera and computer at their practice session.

Next on MyCricketCoach we'd expect to see the addition of community features that let clients connect. Nevertheless, whether it's guitar lessons or coaching in a favourite sport, online instruction brings professional expertise—and the status skills that result—within reach of anyone with an internet connection. Any bets on which sport or hobby will be next...?

Website: www.mycricketcoach.com

Contact: contact@mycricketcoach.com

Spotted by: Emma Crameri



Google roams India in internet demo bus

Though most of the Western world now breathes online oxygen as freely as the elemental kind, that's not true in other parts of the globe. Recognizing that fact, Google has launched an effort to demonstrate the Internet to citizens of India who may not otherwise have access to it.

Launched just last week, [Google's Internet Bus](#) aims to educate Indian people about what the Internet is and how it can benefit them in multiple ways. To do that, the customized, Internet-enabled vehicle is bringing the online experience to where people live, visiting several towns and cities across India's Tamil Nadu region with demonstrations of the Internet's uses in education, information, communication and entertainment. Content is provided both in English and in Tamil to familiarize people with services including search, email, social networking, online maps and others. Since beginning in Chennai, the bus has already travelled to Vellore, Krishnagiri, Salem, Erode and Pollachi; on Saturday, it will arrive in Coimbatore. Twelve cities will follow before the effort wraps up in mid-March; in the meantime, photos, videos and updates are available on the project's website.

The Internet Bus initiative is part of Google's overall strategy of "organizing the world's information and making it universally accessible and useful," the company says—its efforts have also included localizing and translating multiple Google applications. Prasad Ram, head of R&D for Google India, explains: "We are passionate about empowering users with information, and the Internet democratizes access to information. With this initiative we want to take the power of this medium to people who will really benefit from it. We believe that if we can get people to experience the Internet even briefly they will find the means to go back again."

And that, of course, is the ultimate goal. If people do go back again, it will bring benefits not only for them, but for Google too—and for the legions of advertisers dying to reach new markets. That sound you hear is the global online marketplace getting even bigger! (Related: [Selling to rural India — Helping unskilled workers find employers.](#))

Website: www.google.co.in/intl/en/landing/internetbus

Contact: www.google.co.in/intl/en/contact/

Spotted by: Judy McRae



We've seen several web-based initiatives aimed at engaging the politically alienated, including [theyworkforyou.com's video tagging](#). Now, tapping into Twitter—the communication platform du jour—[Tweetminister](#) has created a 'place where real life and politics tweet'. The website and public service provides real-time updates of life in British politics.

Tweetminister lets users track their favourite MPs, read politicians' and lobbyists' speeches as they're spoken, and find out the hottest topics of political debate from various MPs' blogs. Launched late last year, Tweetminster currently has a roster of 18 MPs from all over Britain, 60% of whom are members of the Labour party. Each politician has a personal page that displays their followers and lists their most recent 140-character missives, as well as a tagcloud of the words they use most often. There's also a section for prospective parliamentary candidates, letting them introduce themselves and their campaigns to the internet community.

[UnLtdWorld](#), an online platform for social entrepreneurs, teamed up with [Thin Martian](#), a creative digital agency, to move the concept from brainwave to launch state in 48 hours. (UnLtdWorld and Thin Martian also collaborated on a [Shoreditch tricycle race](#) we wrote about.) Inspiration came in part after stumbling upon Tweet Congress <http://tweetcongress.org/>, an American site that chronicles the twittering activities of congressmen and congresswomen. Both sites aim to make politicians and political culture more accessible, thereby encouraging greater participation in debate.

Services such as Twitter are making it easier for consumers to establish an immediate, real-time dialogue with previously distant entities. And they provide organisations with yet another opportunity to [turn transparency tyranny into transparency triumph](#).

Website: www.tweetminster.com

Contact: [@albertonardelli](#) — [@killdozer](#) — [@goldenchild128](#) — [@misja](#)

Spotted by: Alice Piliias



Trip planner suggests travelling music

We've written about several sites that help travellers plan their routes, but not until recently had we come across one that incorporates accompanying music. Sure enough, though, a new site from UK-based sound system manufacturer Harman Kardon does just that, giving users an entire playlist of location-inspired music to listen to during their trip.

Users of [Amplified Journeys](#), which is now in beta 1.0 and free to use, begin by entering the starting point and destination for their trip, along with an artist or the musical genre or mood they're interested in. Amplified Journeys then puts together a set of detailed driving directions with an accompanying playlist including tracks inspired by landmarks and artists from points along the way. A trip from Paris to Munich focusing on dance music, for example, returns a playlist of some 110 tracks that can be clicked on for more information, edited, and then exported to iTunes. Harman Kardon recently demonstrated Amplified Journeys through a series of features in TopGear magazine, each covering a different musical journey: [Glasgow to London](#) via Manchester, for example, along with tours of [Los Angeles](#), [Detroit](#) and [Berlin](#). A [video on YouTube](#), meanwhile, demonstrates the site at work.

Music and travelling have always been a natural mix, so what better way to advertise Harman Kardon's products—and create some nice goodwill—than by giving away a little musical [free love](#)? This could become hygiene in the trip-planning world! (Related: [Louis Vuitton's walking tours of Beijing, Hong Kong and Shanghai](#).)

Website: www.amplifiedjourneys.hk

Contact: feedback@amplifiedjourneys.hk

Spotted by: Elizabeth Morrissey