

PREMIUM NEWS

# Recall: Year-12 graduate develops clever memory app

By Myles Peterson  
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While most of us were enjoying our summer holidays, recent Year 12 graduate Gavin Douch was starting his first business and building his first piece of commercial education software.

The result is a cleverly designed memory tool that Mr Douch said could dramatically improve the retention of information in a wide range of disciplines.

The idea for the iOS app came to Mr Douch when he used a technique known as “spaced repetition” to study Italian at Wanganui Park Secondary College.

The process involves using physical memory cards to train the brain to better remember information, favouring cards the user finds more difficult to remember and deprioritising those that are easier.

“The strategy behind it is there’s this principle of psychology that states the closer you are to forgetting something, if you recall it at that moment, you retain it more easily,” Mr Douch said.

“I’m using the implementation of space repetition known as the Leitner System. The idea is that you have flash cards and you put them into a box. And each box has a frequency, for instance there’ll be a box for everyday cards, and if you get them right you shift them to a box you use less regularly. It means you can focus on the ones you find the hardest.”

Using the IT skills he developed at Wanganui when he did a Year 12 software development course in Year 10, Mr Douch spent the summer building an app that replicated the technique onto a phone or tablet.

Since publishing the app to the iTunes store in January, Mr Douch said he had had hundreds of downloads.

Dubbed “Recall”, the app can be programmed to help retain information in any number of disciplines and users can share sets of “cards” they have built themselves.

“You could put in people’s birthdays, languages, subjects such as history, biology, lots of kinds of sciences, formulas for chemistry, any subject that’s memory-based,” Mr Douch said.

Mr Douch said teachers could write sets of cards for their students to use.

The app is free and Mr Douch plans to monetise it by offering premium non-essential features, but said the free version was all someone needed to make use of the system.

If the popularity of the app grows, Mr Douch expects a library of user-generated cards to develop for anyone else to use.

Wanganui assistant principal Xavier Tanner said he was not surprised to hear the former student had hit the ground running, going straight from school to commercial IT development.

Mr Tanner said the Douch family all excelled at the school, where Mr Douch’s parents taught and his three brothers preceded him.

Mr Douch is the final family member to complete his studies at Wanganui and the family has reportedly moved on to Melbourne, where Mr Douch will study computer science at Monash University after completing a gap year.

“They will all be greatly missed,” Mr Tanner said.

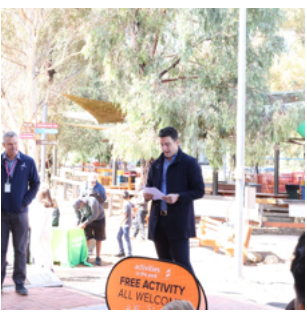
The Recall memory app is available on the iTunes store for hand-held iOS devices and be accessed directly at bit.ly/RecallApp

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