



Case Study: Souktel Digital Solutions

Souktel's MatchMe

Principle(s) Addressed
Design for Scale, Reuse and Improve



Overview

Connecting people in rural or conflict-zone locations to the information and resources that they need most often requires customized and low-cost tools. Souktel Digital Solutions' MatchMe is a digital platform that uses chatbots (i.e., computer programs that simulate conversation) and mobile audio, web and instant-messaging channels (including WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and SMS) to connect information seekers (e.g., patients) to resources (e.g., health care providers). By enabling mobile users to request and provide basic data through these virtual channels, MatchMe generates tailored results based on a user's location, preferences and skill set. Initially launched as a way for job seekers to connect with employers, MatchMe now spans multiple sectors including agriculture, governance, emergency response, gender equality, economic growth and education. More than 500,000 community members in Africa, the Middle East and Asia have used MatchMe to request information and resources on financial services, farming techniques, employment opportunities and medical providers, as well as to access reliable information during periods of crisis.

Background

Souktel Digital Solutions was founded in 2006 when our staff, located primarily in Palestine, began developing an SMS-based product known as JobMatch. Through this digital platform, users create a mini CV, and employers create a mini job advertisement. By texting MatchMe, users and employers receive a list of qualified matches that fit the criteria submitted and phone numbers for future follow-up. By providing this mobile service, we help users access

Objectives

- Increase access to information and opportunities through mobile channels, especially for individuals who are in rural or conflict-zone locations.
- Empower people to use their mobile devices to connect themselves to the services and information they need.
- Design software that is user centered, low cost and easily replicable in multiple locations.
- Expand the reach and scale of MatchMe solutions.



information and opportunities that they may not otherwise have identified due to their rural or conflict-zone locations.

Today, MatchMe software is applied across a variety of sectors and is used around the globe. We guide clients through a user-centered design [<http://digitalprinciples.org/design-with-the-user/>] process to create customized digital tools for implementers working in international development. By partnering with more than 50 development organizations, we reach over 500,000 individuals, connecting customized platforms to national mobile networks, creating strategies for outreach and training staff toward full ownership of their initiatives. Whether it is to give women access to job postings to decrease unemployment rates in Palestine, provide agriculture pricing to farmers in Zimbabwe or aid in dissemination of information and resources during a crisis in Somalia, we are creating digital tools for a widespread and universal challenge – lack of access to information and resources – and doing so in a low-cost, high-impact and far-reaching way.

Project Lifecycle Application

- **Analyze & Plan.** Knowing that we wanted MatchMe to scale, our developers designed it from the beginning so that the number of users, individual transactions or potential geographic locations would not be limited. We also took into consideration the fine balance between creating personalized project-specific solutions and building continuity so that MatchMe would be replicable in various countries, languages and contexts. For example, variations of the employment-service application are used in countries like Rwanda, Palestine and Algeria [<http://digitalprinciples.org/reuse-and-improve/>].
- **Design & Develop.** Scaling to reach the maximum number of people in the most cost-effective way requires smart planning and early preparation. Souktel set out to create a tool that has minimal costs when scaling from 5,000 to 50,000 users. To meet this requirement, we planned for MatchMe to be adaptable, reusable and easily scalable with few design



adjustments needed. By guiding clients through a user-centered design [<http://digitalprinciples.org/design-with-the-user/>] process, we identify and build the application to the client's specific language, layout and feature needs.

- **Deploy & Implement.** Because the technology industry is always changing, mobile tools require constant improvement to stay relevant with users. Our team recognized that they needed to create solutions that could be updated at roughly the same rate as newly developed technologies. Once an SMS-specific platform, MatchMe now uses additional instant-messaging services, including WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and chatbots, to remain relevant and useful. To encourage rapid and sustainable adoption and use, we create customized training guides and documentation with clients so they can use the application to its fullest functionality. Additionally, we ensure that every platform has sufficient staffing (at least one part-time staff member) to manage the platform, internet connectivity within the client's office to support online components, a functioning mobile-network setup and an identified server to host the software (whether our U.S.-based cloud servers or the client's own server) prior to deployment.
- **Cross-cutting: Monitor & Evaluate.** Collecting and synthesizing data throughout the project lifecycle helps us to understand how to improve MatchMe to better support geographic and sector-specific scale and sustainability. Tracking uptake and usage rates for the solutions we develop is one way we assess the potential scale of a project or initiative. Tracking instances of software redeployment also helps us to determine if, where and how specific software is being used and reused. We also examine if software is being reused or improved to carry out a broader range of tasks than what was originally intended (e.g., extended search criteria). We routinely review these data to increase the reach and impact of MatchMe.

RESOURCES

MatchMe, Souktel Digital Solutions. <http://www.souktel.org/our-approach/job-matching>

Mobile Network Operators Partnership Guidelines: Building Effective Partnerships Between MNOs and NGOs in Complex Environments and Crises, GSMA. http://www.souktel.org/sites/default/files/resources-files/GSMA_Partnership_MNOs_NGOs.pdf

Mobile Technologies for Conflict Management: Online Dispute Resolution, Governance, Participation [book], edited by Marta Poblet, Springer International Publishing. <http://www.springer.com/us/book/9789400713833>

Scaling Mobile Employment Services: A Stakeholder Perspective, GSMA Mobile for Employment (MfE). http://www.souktel.org/sites/default/files/resources-files/Rwanda_Report2014_Web.pdf

Towards a Code of Conduct: Guidelines for the Use of SMS in Natural Disasters, GSMA Disaster Response, Souktel and the Qatar Foundation. <http://www.souktel.org/sites/default/files/resources-files/Towards-a-Code-of-Conduct-SMS-Guidelines.pdf>



Step 1: Sign Up

To: Souktel

Register...

Send

Type 'Register' and send by SMS to Souktel's sign-up phone number. Get added to the Souktel job database and start creating your mini-CV.

SoukTel

Welcome to JobMatch.

You are now registered.

Text 'ok' to start uploading your mini-CV.

Job Seeker

Step 2: Create a Mini-CV

From: Souktel

Where can you work?

1-Nabius
2-Jenin
3-Bethlehem
4-Ramallah
5-More

New message

Through a series of question-and-answer messages, create a mini-CV that includes data on your age, location, skills, education level, and career interests.

SoukTel

Mini-CV

- Young man seeks
- Farm job in Jenin.
- Has high school ed.
- Can work full time, all wkdays.
- Skills in milking machine operation.
- Call 0599245789 to hire me.

Job Seeker

Step 3: Get Matched With a Job

To: Souktel

match me...

New message

At any time, text 'Match Me' to Souktel. Get an instant list of jobs that match your mini-CV data, with contact numbers.

SoukTel

Top 3 Jobs matching your mini-CV.

1-0599400400
2-0599300300
3-0599200200

Call 0599400400: Employer seeks staff for farm job in Jenin. Need high school ed: skills in dairy milking machine operation. Work is full time. all wkdays.

Job Seeker

Step 4: Set Up an Interview

0599400400...

Call End

Contact Employer to set up a job interview, by calling the number listed in the match results.

New Caller...

Job Seeker

Employer

Using JobMatch on your mobile phone is a straightforward, four-step process for quick and tailored employment results.

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Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Design software from the beginning to accommodate for a rapid and large adoption by users [<http://digitalprinciples.org/design-for-scale/>]. By employing a user-centered-design [<http://digitalprinciples.org/design-with-the-user/>] process, you will be able to identify the features the client needs from the start.
- Intentionally design and develop tools that transfer easily to multiple locations and contexts. Keeping the functionality and feature options targeted (e.g., focusing on a standardized registration process, data dashboard display, etc.) allows for low-cost and high-impact results due to the reusability of the software itself.
- Design solutions so that they can be updated regularly with leading-edge technologies in order to stay relevant with users. Creating modular solutions that allow for new/updated technology to be integrated at later points in time ensures that these solutions are adaptable and easily accessible by local communities.
- Make documentation and training guides readily available to users, so they can fully take advantage of the application's features. Aiding users in their understanding of the application will increase the uptake and sustainability of the initiative.
- Quantify deployment to better understand if, where and how software is being used and reused. Identifying key indicators (e.g., number of users, registrations, posts or successful matches) and regularly monitoring progress throughout the project lifecycle will help to ensure that an application is used, reused and improved.