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Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Washington, DC, US

ORGANIZATION:
Philippine Social Security System (SSS)

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
http://www.sss.gov.ph/sss/Section_View

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
Text SSS

CATEGORY:
Economic Opportunity

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Philippine Social Security System (SSS) is a government agency responsible for the administration of the pension fund of private sector workers and self-employed individuals. Currently, the SSS has 28 million members. The SSS receives a daily average of 160,000 transactions in its 162 branch offices scattered and shared across the 7,100 islands of the Philippines. Being an island nation, reaching these offices to inquire about applications for benefit claims and loan applications, among others, is an arduous task. Transportation is not as convenient and internet facilities are few and far between making transactions with the office difficult. When one reaches the SSS office, the big volume of transactions creates long lines at the service counters, leading to a day of lost time and worse, wasting what could have been spent earning ones daily wage. To make it easier for the Filipino to transact with SSS, the Text SSS project was implemented. Launching an SMS Facility is nothing new in the Philippines. As the "Text Capital of the World", it is bombarded with thousands of these SMS services, each providing a list of their keywords and access numbers, asking subscribers to use various services. Examples are "Text ABC DEF to 2000," "Text FGH IJK 123 to 3333 for more details," etc. There are now just too many services and too many keywords that subscribers do not know or cannot remember what to text to access a service. There is so much information available that it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to access it. These problems result in subscribers getting the following message instead of the information they need: "Invalid keyword. Message cannot be understood." The Social Security System (SSS) took the ubiquitous power of SMS and the challenges it brings and launched Text SSS with iSMS. The Text SSS service provides information on SSS members' contributions and loans. Instead of the usual keyword-based text service where a member would need to follow complicated instructions exactly, iSMS only gives this simple instruction: "Text SSS to 2600." iSMS, powered by Sybase's Answers 365 Platform, enables users to interact with systems in natural language - making it possible to make inquiries to the service using phrases, sentences, and shortcuts in English or in Filipino. For example, SSS Members can ask



for an update on their contributions by texting, “SSS kamusta contrib ko? (How’s my contrib?)” or simply “SSS contribution?” to 2600 and get the answer to their question. No need to remember keywords. It’s just like texting another person. This is a revolutionary introduction to the text messaging services world. Now SSS members get the wide availability and adoption of Text with the ease of use and usability that was previously lacking. Now, SSS is truly just a simple text away.

SOCIETAL BENEFITS

In the Philippines, Social Security is of utmost importance to the common Filipino. It is this reliance on SSS that makes access to information by its members vital. They are able to check if their employer has been contributing on their behalf and if they can get their benefits.

PREVIOUS PROJECT UPDATED/EXPANDED?

(this project has not been previously nominated for the Computerworld Honors award) The Text SSS project is done, however, it is a project which will continue to progress. Currently, members can ask about their contributions, loan balances and loan applications. SSS is in the process of adding additional information which the members can retrieve via the service. Overseas member inquiries and Mobile Money Transfers are also in the planned developments.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COMPLETE?

Yes

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security...” - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, General Assembly of the United Nations In a developing nation like the Philippines, Social Security is extremely important to every Filipino. The benefits offered to factory workers, farmers, fishermen and the like is a true protection from social conditions more prevalent in a nation where 80% of the population is unbanked. Pensions, loans, maternity and funeral benefits have glaring significance when typical financial institutions are not an option. Social Security is mandated to all employees. Employers are required to give monthly contributions on their employees’ behalf. Sadly, a significant number of employers deduct SSS contributions from their employees’ wages but do not submit these to the SSS - clearly robbing them of their right and leaving the member without Social Security. They usually realize that their employer has not been giving contributions when they need their Social Security the most. It is this reliance on SSS that makes access to information by its members important. They are able to verify if their employer has been contributing on their behalf and if they are eligible for the benefits that the SSS offers. Reshelle Forbes Ocampo Philippines citizen and Text SSS user explains, “It is easier now to inquire, no need to join the queue.” She had previously gone to the SSS office frequently just to verify her SSS contributions and check the status of her sickness, maternity and retirement claims.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes