AWAAZ.DE

Area of Focus: Agricultural information (in addition to other non-agricultural applications)

How it works: Awaaz.De is a participatory, voice-based, and open-source platform that functions as a voice message board and information service. Organizations using its platform set up voice portals for a number of purposes, including sharing pre-recorded information, providing responses to caller questions, and serving as interactive discussion forums or classifieds. It also includes both push and pull services, which allows organizational subscribers to reach out directly to wider audiences and users to call in on demand.

Organizational subscribers are assigned dedicated phone numbers and applications customized to their needs. Messages on Awaaz.De are digitally recorded to an online database that is moderated by the organizational subscriber. The subscriber can listen to received messages online, tag them (based on location, topic, crop type), and assign them to a specific responder (i.e., relevant expert) designated by the subscriber organization. The system then calls the responder at a pre-determined time and plays the voice message. Once the responder has recorded the answer, it gets immediately sent to the original caller. Besides the call and response feature, the system can also be configured so that it has either a public or moderated voice message board where any user can respond to messages and share information. In addition, organizational subscribers can record informational messages or develop voice surveys that can be broadcast to multiple users at a scheduled time.

Technology used: Telephones, online content management database, integrated voice response (IVR)

Implementer/Funder: Awaaz.De operates without any external donor support.

Fees: Standard calling rates apply for users, although organizations can pay an additional fee to the telephone operator to establish a toll-free line for callers.

Primary Markets: Currently being used by eight organizations across ten states in India that are using it for a number of agricultural purposes, including tracking harvest yields, answering topical questions, pushing agricultural and market price information, and connecting buyers to farmers via a voice classifieds service.

Users: Varies, but primarily targets rural populations without access to internet.

Business Model: Awaaz.De has been established as a social enterprise. It generates revenue by charging organizations that use its service a one-time engagement fee, along with a recurring monthly charge.

Impact: As it was only launched in September 2010, it is too soon to measure the impact. To date, though, it has served over 10,000 unique callers and responded to over 100,000 calls. Awaaz.De has also partnered with researchers at Harvard University, the Development Support Center, and the Institute for Microfinance Research in India to conduct a randomized control trial of the service, which began in August 2011.

For more information visit: http://awaaz.de

Sources: Interview with Neil Patel, founder of Awaaz.De, on October 14, 2011 (updated via email on June 13, 2012).

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