

Dear friends and colleagues,

Allow me firstly to extend my gratitude to Amil. His insightful and carefully thought-out contribution from this week has opened my eyes about the exploding field of new technologies in health promotion (and other sectors of development work).

Allow me to summarize some of the key points made:

* Recent advancements in technology have allowed game developers to reach a wider audience than ever before. These include:

- Computing (increasingly low cost)
- Mobile Phone (known for their low cost, accessibility and functionality)

Mobile phones allow Short Message Service (SMS) and inexpensive way of send up to 160 characters of a text message. Amil has provides a few very interesting examples where SMS has been used for political campaigning. In designing a social mobilization campaign using SMS, consider asking the following questions:

- 1) Does your campaign have a direct call to action?
- 2) Can you reduce your message?
- 3) Can you provide valuable content?

In campaigning, mobile phones also provide us with the following tools:

- Ringtones, which may offer unique ringtones associated with a campaign
- Short codes that could sign up your members to a SMS or email list
- Fundraising to raise money directly from a phone bill
- Forward to a Friend in order to encourage supports to forward text messages to increase awareness

* Due to the increasing availability of computers, video games have been increasingly used in health promotion and health care settings. However, gaming should be thought of like any other educational tool; it can be used effectively to increase education, or poorly which will not.

Analysis of video games should be classified by their intended objective. In relation to HIV/AIDS there are several fields to consider, including:

- Educational
- Behavior Changing
- Distracting patients during painful medical procedures
- Treatment and Recovery Process

* Although the Internet accessibility is spreading around the world, the entire Internet penetration in developing countries is still hovering around 10% due to cost of computers and the Internet connections. Still, the Internet can be used in many ways to communicate information and link people. For example, online social networking involves connecting and sharing information with other like-minded people via the Web.

FOAF sites are social networking sites designed to connect individuals and groups with others who share their common interests. Before developing such a site, ask yourself:

- How do I decide if Social Networking is right for my organization?
- Does my audience live in the social networking world?
- Do you have the resources?
- Can you take negative comments on your page?

If you wanted to start using social network, here are some suggestions on how to start:

- 1) Know where your audience is
- 2) Do not merely duplicate your organization's webpage
- 3) Promote it to your own network first
- 4) Content is king for the Internet – make it “human” and personal
- 5) If you're honest and include your growing community in the process of achieving your non-profit's goals, you'll quickly build an active user base of committed members who will consistently help your organization

Finally, Amil introduced us to the concept of Community Technology Centers and Health Education (generally nonprofit, locally-based organizations that provide IT to people who could not access the technology in any other way). They are good sources of free, fast information, they provide an outlet for information gaining and information sharing, and can affect the health of their users and community only to the extent that they are able to coordinate with partners with local health care delivery entities.

I invite you to go back and visit links offered in Amil's discussion, as they are rich with additional information.

Finally, I would love to invite you to get ready for next and final week of our discussions. Next week, we will review all topics we covered thus far and speak about ways to utilize the wealth of information covered in our own practice.

As always, I look forward to your feedback, comments and questions.

Sincerely,

Srdjan