

Mobile Counter for disabled and elderly people

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Organisation: Social Security National Institute (INPS)

Country: Italy

Level of government: Central government

Sector: Social protection

Type: Methods, Public Service

Launched in: 2009

Overall development time:

5 years

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The Social Security National Institute (INPS) Mobile Counters offer services that are provided at the INPS agency to elderly and disabled persons at home over the phone. The Mobile Counter working team is almost completely composed of disabled staff from INPS agencies, who are aware of the difficulties that elderly and disabled people face. Via a personal security code, the customers can be identified and services that usually would require physical presence can be performed remotely over the phone.

Why the innovation was developed

The Mobile Counter was created to provide support to disabled and elderly users in order to deliver INPS services at home by using telephone assistance and information technology devices (such as the security code).

Objectives

Improve access, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction

- Reduce the backlog of unprocessed files and procedures which involve disabled users.
 - Improve and disseminate a social culture more focussed on supporting elderly and suffering people.
 - Facilitate the access and use of INPS services.
 - Reduce the queues at INPS front offices as well as the waiting time for a procedure.
 - Reduce paperwork by processing procedures online.
 - Increase user satisfaction by providing prompt services by sensitive staff.
 - Encourage and support the mobile counter staff in the development of skills and promote their self-esteem and ability to contribute.
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Main beneficiaries

Elderly people, Government bodies, Government staff, People with disabilities

- Disabled people.
- Elderly people over 85.

Results

Efficiency

The project helps the elderly and disabled users to obtain customised information and services, without physically visiting the Institute.

Effectiveness

Since the start of the project, 600 complex procedures were solved and 1 200 telephone transactions provided information. About 250 000 out of 650 000 users belonging to disadvantaged groups have been included in the initiative. 8 000 services have been delivered.

Service quality

Accessibility:

100% accessibility because the elderly / disabled people get the service without leaving their home.

Responsiveness:

Very positive feedback from users and professional associations due to the improvement of service delivery and the timeliness of responses.

Reliability:

The reliability of the project is linked to the user's sending a security code. By this code and a tax code, the user can be authenticated over the phone. Thereby the access to services is in full compliance with the regulations regarding privacy.

User satisfaction

Several users expressed their satisfaction with the mobile service and sent letters of appreciation.

Other improvements

The Mobile Counter project received several awards:

- May 2010: Special mention at the "Premiamo I Risultati" (Let's reward results) national contest.
 - November 2010: Special mention at the Open Public Administration contest organised by Forum PA and ASPHI awarding projects fostering an open and inclusive Public Administration.
 - Best practice certificate at EPSA 2009 and the UNPSA Award 2010.
 - 2nd place for Europe and North America in the category "Improving the delivery of public services."
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Evaluation

Although a specific evaluation of the innovation has not been undertaken, the satisfaction of external users is periodically measured with telephone and personal interviews.

The initiative will be extended very soon to every INPS agency. The related surveys will be conducted as soon as the full diffusion of the initiative at the national level is completed (scheduled for early 2014).

Development

Design

The idea for the project was developed following the real life experience of an INPS disabled employee who faced difficulties in solving a pension procedure for his mother. Based on his experience and ideas for improvement, the Mobile Counter project was developed by the INPS disability department.

Design time: 2 months

Testing

- Pilot project for 9 months including a sample of 3 800 users with different disabilities and elderly people in Rome.
- During the pilot a security code for remote user identification by phone was introduced.

Testing time: 9 months

Implementation

Tools used:

- 23 000 additional security codes sent to new users.
- The Blind Union printed letters in Braille to be sent to blind users free of charge.

Resources used:

- Most of the costs were related to the overall implementation of the procedure, which was externally contracted and based on open source software.
- Other costs were related to the distribution of security codes to home users.

Implementation time: 4 years

Diffusion

The innovation is based on voluntary adhesion from INPS offices. The project was adapted in the city of Ferrara. The INPS Director-General extended the project to the entire Italian territory. At the moment there are 130 Social Security National Institute organisations in which a module Mobile Counter is present. There are approximately 200 operators of units, plus about 100 representatives of the organisation. All these employees have been properly trained in the use of Mobile Counter Computing procedure and the use of speech synthesis.

Diffusion time: still ongoing

Challenges and solutions

The main barrier was the scepticism of colleagues and managers. Nevertheless, all barriers were overcome after the first positive results. The Blind Union provided a lot of valuable help and strongly collaborated during the project's implementation. The main difficulties are related to the use of the service by people who don't have enough knowledge of ICTs. In particular visually impaired and blind people, who have to learn to use a same speech program. To cope with this problem, training courses have been organised throughout the country. Furthermore, there is constant telephone and electronic support (via special email) to solve real-time problems encountered during our work.

Partnerships

The Italian Blind Union

Civil Society

The Italian Blind Union contributed in the development of the project by e.g. printing letters in Braille.

University of Rome

Academics and Research Bodies

Students of the Faculty of Psychology have done internships at the Mobile Counter.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- The success of this initiative is mainly linked to its simple organisational structure, as well as its flexibility and adaptability to the changes in society, in the legal framework and social structures.
 - A dedicated and well trained project team with a positive attitude striving to solve problems is crucial.
 - Flexibility, order, transparency, interchangeable staff, helpfulness in taking care of people with a disability.
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Conditions for success

- Smooth operation of the data processing system.
 - Constant training for specialist staff.
 - Advertising the initiative.
 - Full engagement by management.
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