

PSI Case Study

Faster Access to Information Enables PSI Field Staff to Improve the Quality of Work in the Developing World



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— Marie-Laure Curie, Deputy Director of Learning and Performance, PSI

AT A GLANCE

Industry

Non-profit / Healthcare

Corporate Headquarters

Washington, D.C.

Employees

8,500

Socialcast Users

2,400

Website

www.psi.org

IN BRIEF

Business Challenge

Time zone differences, lack of access to high speed Internet, a firewalled HQ and the limitations of email made communication with field staff difficult, especially for time sensitive issues.

Socialcast Solution

Socialcast keeps field-based employees across 69 countries connected to the information and experts they depend on to better serve people in need.

Business Impact

Socialcast has made it possible for PSI employees to quickly get answers to work problems and find expertise when working on challenging problems in the field. This has significantly improved the quality, timeliness, and impact of PSI's programs in countries they serve.



PSI is a global health organization dedicated to improving the health of people in the developing world by focusing on serious challenges like a lack of family planning, HIV/AIDS, barriers to maternal health, and the greatest threats to children under five, including malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and malnutrition. PSI's headquarters are located in Washington, DC., and employs a staff of 8,500 in 69 countries around the world. PSI works in partnership with local governments, ministries of health and local organizations—creating health solutions that are built to last.

PSI was founded in 1970 to improve reproductive health using commercial marketing strategies. For its first 15 years, PSI worked mostly in family planning (hence the name Population Services International). In 1985, it started promoting oral rehydration therapy for children, for diarrhea treatment. PSI's first HIV prevention project—which promoted abstinence, fidelity and condoms—began in 1988. PSI added malaria and safe water to its portfolio in the 1990s and tuberculosis in 2004.

PSI has an uncompromising focus on measurable health impact and measures its effect on disease and mortality much like a for-profit measures its profits. In 2011 alone, PSI helped prevent approximately 57.5 million malaria episodes and 481,000 malaria deaths; 4.7 million unintended pregnancies; 4.7 million cases of diarrhea; and 207,000 new HIV infections.

Business Challenge



PSI employs more than 8,500 trained staff throughout the developing world. These health workers, program managers and educators often serve people in remote towns and villages. Time zone differences, lack of access to high speed Internet, a firewalled HQ and the limitations of email made it extremely challenging for field-based staff to communicate with others from HQ and other countries, especially for time sensitive matters. In an employee satisfaction survey, PSI learned that many staff workers felt disconnected from PSI headquarters and from PSI's global network. PSI employees felt they needed better access to expertise and critical knowledge when working on challenging problems in the field.

Time zone challenges and lack of Internet access made communications difficult

In order to improve communications and collaboration across the extended organization, PSI set out to find an enterprise social networking (ESN) solution that would enable staff to have timelier access to information and to tap into each other's practical experiences.



“Socialcast has become so important to improving the way our employees work. It has made a significant contribution to improving the impact of our programs, and therefore to bettering the lives of the people we serve.”

— Marie-Laure Curie, Deputy Director of Learning and Performance, PSI

Socialcast Solution



PSI wanted their ESN solution to be accessible anytime, anywhere. It also had to be incredibly easy to use in order for people to readily adopt it. They hired a team of business school students to determine the criteria for a viable solution. PSI then identified and tested several ESN tools. Ultimately, PSI chose Socialcast because it met most of the criteria right ‘out of the box’ and offered critical features such as customized user profiles.

Socialcast gives PSI staff the ability to communicate in real time with others in the field. This has saved staff workers countless hours—questions get answered quickly and problems solved faster. The ability to share documents and best practices avoids the need to ‘re-invent the wheel’. Perhaps most importantly, the Socialcast platform was considered extremely easy to use and required no training, an important consideration for any non-profit organization.

Sharing documents and best practices avoids the need to ‘re-invent the wheel’

Marie-Laure Curie, Deputy Director of Learning and Performance for PSI and co-lead on the ESN implementation explained it this way, “We needed a tool that allowed our employees based in the field to connect and help each other in time sensitive circumstances.” Socialcast lets each employee create a profile that identifies their area of expertise and focus. This makes it easier for those who have a specific challenge or question to identify those with the right experience who can help.

Socialcast also allows PSI staff to form groups based on their focus area but also their interests and expertise. “A colleague working on malaria might also have expertise in HIV prevention,” Curie explained. “This colleague, as a member of the HIV group, might be able to lend valuable insight and assistance to HIV staff workers even though his/her official focus is in malaria treatment. Without Socialcast, these connections would never have existed.” Socialcast has detailed individual profile information, helping those in the community to form linkages and to make the most out of everyone’s collective skills and experience.

Business Impact



The Socialcast platform has made an immediate impact by helping employees get answers faster. “Now if a team is working in Myanmar and a pressing question comes up, they can post it to a specific group and receive responses within minutes from teams in Vietnam or India, instead of waiting for headquarters in Washington to open 12 hours later and respond,” Marie-Laure Curie said. “This is happening for teams all over the world.”

The Socialcast community caught on quickly. Within two months of the launch, the community had grown by 200%. In a survey of individuals who joined in the first month:

- » **67% immediately felt more connected to the global organization**
- » **72% liked the easy-to-use interface**
- » **64% felt that Socialcast helped them share and access knowledge and best practices**
- » **68% said that Socialcast helped them network and connect with other employees**
- » **62% advocated for the solution to be globally available**

Profiles help field staff form connections and tap into others’ skills and expertise

Two years after the launch, more than 2,400 PSI employees use Socialcast to connect, communicate, and collaborate. More than 290 groups have been created to cover topics ranging from reproductive health, HIV, malaria and tuberculosis to support for those using Mac computers. Employees simply post questions in the Socialcast community and get answers from colleagues in just minutes.

Marie-Laure Curie said, “Socialcast has become so important to improving the way our employees work. The ability to get answers to questions and find the right resources in the field allows them to address needs much quicker and more efficiently. This solution has made a significant contribution to improving the impact of our programs, and therefore to bettering the lives of the people we serve.”



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