Cliffrun Media Ltd.

Age Friendly IRELAND

ACORN PILOT 2019

Age Friendly Ireland Pilot Initiative
Smart Technology for Older Persons/Effective ICT Utilisation
by Older People in the Community

In the last ten years, there has been a revolution in social networks and human interaction; smart devices have fundamentally changed how people interact. They have become the primary mechanism for many in maintaining and establishing real-world connections and have become a source of news, entertainment and commercial engagement. Consequently, those not digitally connected risk social exclusion and loneliness and result in harm to health (Holt-Lunstad, 2015).

The ACORN Pilot Project was a collaborative partnership. It is distinctive in its approach, bringing service providers, services users and expert product developers together to develop a product that is relevant to older people and geared to encourage and support them to go online. Collaborative discussions began in late 2017.

Special thanks to ;

PILOT OBJECTIVES

The ACORN pilot project sought to demonstrate the impact of effective smart technology solutions for improving the health and well-being of older adults in urban and rural communities, specifically in:

- Demonstrating how an age friendly tablet designed solution, with the appropriate supports, can significantly impact on the health and well-being of older adults living in urban and rural communities.
- Gaining valuable insights and evidence on 'what works' in supporting older adults 'go online' in order to access the full range of supports and local services under 3 categories - social, commercial and E-Government. The pilot focussed on supports in the following areas:
  - Accessing local enterprise and community services
  - Improving rural connectivity, communications

- Supporting the Dept. Agriculture paperless initiatives amongst the farming community
- Improving online banking capability for older citizens
- Securing the evidence needed in order to inform the roll-out of a plan to optimise the number of older adults going online
- Identifying what supports (if any) are required to encourage independent enterprises.

ACORN AGE FRIENDLY SMART TABLET

Acorn is an age friendly smart tablet solution, purpose-built to solve the challenges of online adoption and to improve the quality of life for the user. Acorn's universal design principles are based around easy navigation and accessibility. Optimum screen size, clear colour-coding, uncluttered screens, a consistent navigation system, large fonts and zoom functionality help build fast familiarity and make it easier to use than mainstream smart phones, smart tablets and computers.

ACORN sees itself as differentiating from generic tablets by servicing the 3 core interaction elements - Inform, Interact and Involve.

- By Informing, the solution endeavours to provide comprehensive help, guidance and support on digital services and keep users informed on news and upcoming events.
- By Interacting, Acorn's aim is to give users a secure, user friendly interface to communicate and schedule events with family, friends and the wider community and by Involving.
- ACORN tries to encourage older people to get more involved and continue to contribute in their local community and areas of interest.

The ACORN Project team was led by Age Friendly Ireland in collaboration with Cliffrun Media Ltd, three Local Authority partners and older participants from the participating counties.

In addition, a number of volunteer peer mentors supported the learning in Meath and Fingal, while transition year students brought an inter-generational dimension to the project in Limerick. Maynooth University provided staff and resources to carry out an academic evaluation of the project.

At local level, many Age Friendly County Programmes, including Fingal, Limerick and Meath, committed to participate in the HaPAI Initiative. During 2015 and 2016, 500 random people aged 55 and older were surveyed in each county. The following sets out some HaPAI findings regarding smart technology usage amongst older adults in the particular counties:

THE PROCESS

Partnership was central to the ACORN Pilot Project. Age Friendly Ireland provided the support coordination of the project, interacting and communicating with stakeholders throughout the process. Maintaining strong connections between partners and trial participants was hugely important to the success of the initiative. This became increasingly clear as the project was rolled out in three different counties simultaneously, which gave rise to some logistical difficulties. These issues were managed successfully through the strong connections established from the outset of the project.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

- Technology designed for older people (ACORN) can have a direct positive impact on digital adoption. I.E 70% of participants found daily usage to become a norm. Increasing confidence and social connectedness.
- Users that developed moderate skills in digital utilisation became eager to learn more and utilise the digital services available to them.
- Participants accessed more applications more frequently with minimal training and intervention.
- Age friendly websites were more frequently utilised by participants.
- The social aspect of group learning for older people should not be underestimated. During training most of the trial participants indicated that they did not want the classes to end
- Peer mentoring (Mixing beginner's with experts) provided to be a very successful means of helping those participants who found the training more challenging.

DIGITAL CITIZENS!

" *I have become so addicted to it, I'd miss it after half an hour. I never expected to become so reliant on it!* "

" *"I don't feel like I'm on my own anymore. I can look up things for myself and be in contact with my family in seconds, its very rewarding to do it for myself"* "

> " "I don't feel foolish now because I know its ok to ask questions. They're not stupid, they're just questions"

> " "I left school at 15 and wouldn't be good at spelling but on Acorn that doesn't matter. This has been such a good experience, I now want to try other things"

Finance

Entertainment

ACORN

Dedicated to developing solutions
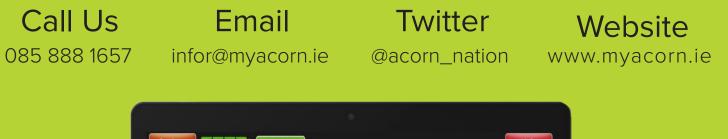which promote social   inclusion,
health and wellbeing for all.

INFORM   INTERACT   INVOLVE

Communications

Independence

Health

Security

Help & Accessibility

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ACORNS MISSION

We are dedicated to developing solution which promote social inclusion, health and well being for all.
We are committed to using practical research and intuitive design led by the insight and experience of those who are not yet comfortable with mainstream technologies
Our aim is Digital Citizenship for all through care, consideration and design experience

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