



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
Social Security Administration

Organization URL:
www.ssa.gov and <http://choosework.net>

Project Name:
Ticket to Work (TTW) Beneficiary Assistance and Support Services (BASS)

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The Ticket to Work program provides SSA beneficiaries with disabilities more choices for receiving employment services and increases provider incentives to serve beneficiaries who wish to become more self-sufficient through work opportunities. TTW is available to most people who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits because they are disabled or blind. Eligible beneficiaries may choose to assign their Ticket to an Employment Network (EN) of their choice to obtain employment services and assistance necessary to achieve a work goal. The EN will coordinate and provide appropriate services to help the beneficiary find and maintain employment. The purpose of the BASS project is to make eligible beneficiaries aware of the program and to educate them on how the program can benefit them economically and in other ways. Many of new communications initiatives were implemented in the first year of this effort, so success has been measured in increased participation by disability beneficiaries in the program as we devised new communications strategies and leveraged new technologies to execute them. National Webinar registration and attendance increased by 143% and 67%, respectively. Our redesigned and consolidated Website initiative increased average daily website visits by nearly 300%. On the social media front, Booz Allen assumed control of the Ticket Program Facebook (FB) account in December 2010. From that point through September 2011, total FB fans increased by 37%, average daily active users expanded by 359%, and average daily news feed impressions grew by 354%. We introduced our Twitter account, gaining 390 followers with a potential reach of nearly 150,000 people due to re-

tweeted content. We expanded the Ticket Program YouTube channel to six videos, resulting in over 1,300 views. All this represents a major expansion of communication channels to potential Ticket beneficiaries.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

Booz Allen launched a new 508-compliant, beneficiary-focused website, www.choosework.net. This site consists of a wide range of beneficiary-related content and features, including an event registration system, directory of program service providers, video library of participant success stories, and the Choose Work Blog. The website plays an integral part in providing information as well as staying connected to beneficiaries. The TTW website uses a technology stack including Java, JBoss, Apache, Oracle database, and Red Hat Linux and KVM for server virtualization. This largely open-source stack enabled SSA to reduce core system costs and expend more resources, enhancing services on the website. Booz Allen also applied Web 2.0 and social media technologies in a way the TTW program had never seen before. By incorporating best practices and using targeted messaging and tactics, the TTW program Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts gained significant following and reached new beneficiaries in new ways. Engagement tactics, such as "The ADA Challenge" and the team's integrated social media strategy, resulted in audience growth and also enhanced fan and follower engagement and interaction. Finally, Booz Allen introduced the use of an integrated voice response (IVR) system to contact new beneficiaries and inform them about TTW. Booz Allen applied specific beneficiary-related data criteria to determine which new beneficiaries are most likely to participate in the Ticket to Work program and developed an IVR call list based on that analysis. Each month 20,000-40,000 new beneficiaries are contacted in this manner. The 17% response rate to the IVR calls far exceeds the traditional direct mail response rate (2.5%). This cost-effective approach has saved SSA more than \$1M in postage and has focused outreach efforts on the beneficiaries most likely to participate in the program.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

For the thousands of people with disabilities who have taken advantage of the Ticket to Work program, it has provided several tangible and intangible benefits. TTW has helped these people increase their income. It has provided assurance and stability while exploring work options, as well as helping to build confidence and a sense of control. It puts people with disabilities on the "fast track" to receiving benefits again, if despite the support of an employment services provider the person's disability makes it too difficult to work. And finally, it connects people with disabilities with the resources, services, and people that can help them develop a work plan that matches abilities with needs. In the past year, TTW saw over 9,000 Tickets assigned to people receiving disability benefits, giving these people access to resources they would not have had otherwise. With its infrastructure in place; a Call Center staffed with fully-trained agents; an innovative IVR system in place; a new, dynamic, user-friendly and visually appealing website; multiple social media accounts; and a growing circle of Community Partners and allied organizations, BASS is ready to build on the successes achieved and meet new challenges as they emerge.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

The BASS team sponsored booths at three national disability conferences in 2011. This activity provided unique opportunities to interact with disability beneficiaries, family members, service providers, and organizations -- all key stakeholders in the TTW program. BASS team members

listened to the heartfelt, inspirational stories from those who have successfully participated in TTW and from those who have become staunch advocates of the program's numerous benefits. One individual's story resonates strongly with the BASS team and the Social Security program leadership. A former beneficiary was born with cerebral palsy; his parents noted that at a very young age, he enjoyed putting small items into containers, and that the activity strengthened his motor skills. When he became an adult, his parents helped him to start his own business in which he continued to apply his finely honed motor skills. Today, this former Ticket holder provides a recycling service to three clients. Due to the increased demand on businesses to "go green," he is now considering hiring other people with disabilities to help him with his growing workload. And his mother is looking ahead: She is investigating acquiring small business status so that her son can someday apply for and become an "Employment Network" within the TTW program. His mother shared with the BASS team, "Working and owning a business has given my son a reason to live, and we have the Ticket to Work Program to thank for that."