The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
Awareity

Organization URL:
www.awareity.com

Project Name:
TIPS - Preventing the Preventable

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

Painful, tragic, expensive and life-changing lessons learned continue to reveal that schools and organizations must find better ways to connect the dots and proactively intervene with at-risk individuals and alarming trends, including aggression, bullying, cyber bullying, mental health, violence, suicides and sexual assaults because most tragedies are preventable. Was the shooting in Tucson preventable? Was the tragedy at Virginia Tech preventable? Was Columbine preventable? Yes. Yes. Yes. So why are prevention efforts failing? Numerous reports and studies demonstrate incidents of targeted violence are rarely sudden, impulsive acts. Prior to an incident, other people have some knowledge of the attacker's plan or idea. In fact, 81% of school attackers tell someone of their plans beforehand or engage in some behavior prior to an incident that causes concern or indicates a need for help. Statistics also reveal very few students are reporting acts of bullying, cyber bullying, sexual harassment, intimidation, etc., and most cite lack of anonymous options, lack of trust their report will be taken seriously or acted upon, fear of retaliation or embarrassment from their peers, or they lack situational awareness of when, how and where to report an incident. Why are schools struggling to identify early risks, warning signs and behaviors? And in cases where warning signs are known (like the Virginia Tech tragedy, where over 70 red flags were identified), why are these tragedies not prevented? These are questions that Rick Shaw, President and CEO of Awareity, often asked and his research led to the development of a new web-based software platform called TIPS (Threat Assessment, Incident Management and Prevention Services). TIPS is a unique and innovative web-based incident

reporting tool. Although there are several reporting solutions available, TIPS's revolutionary back-end management tools are leading the way in threat assessment, coordination and response.

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.

The TIPS platform is award-winning and a proven software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution that can be accessed anywhere Internet access is available. The TIPS front end offers incident reporting that can be easily installed as an encrypted link/button on an organization's web site that empowers anyone to report suspicious incidents, security breaches, employment concerns, safety issues, red flags, etc. The TIPS front end offers both anonymous and non-anonymous incident reporting options so anyone can feel comfortable reporting incidents and suspicious activities. The TIPS front end offers customizable Locations, Incident Types, Required and Non-Required Fields, Surveys and much more. All incident reports are automatically routed to the appropriate team members (safety, prevention, security, etc.) so connecting the dots is automated rather than a manual and labor-intensive or paper-based process that is likely to fail. All team member actions are tracked and can be accessed by other team administrations/members in real time so they can securely share information and take appropriate actions without having to wait for meetings or paper documents or other common delays.

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

How does TIPS empower individuals (students, parents, faculty, staff, law enforcement, counselors, nurses, etc.) to report suspicious incidents, red flags, etc.? Easy, the TIPS platform offers a web-based incident reporting solution that allows individuals to securely and confidentially or anonymously submit incident reports from home, school, work, mobile, etc. When given the opportunity and when equipped to take appropriate actions, people can make a difference. Statistically only 1 or 2 out of 10 incidents/red flags are reported, meaning organizations face tremendous liabilities, especially when statistically they are unaware of 8 or 9 out of every 10 incidents and therefore unable to prevent serious and expensive consequences. TIPS can help improve insurability and legal liabilities for organizations ongoing. The TIPS platform ensures all appropriate risk managers, safety personnel and intervention teams are immediately notified and acknowledgements by team members are tracked and documented. TIPS enables all team members (including appropriate third parties) to collaborate effectively, securely share information and connect the dots ongoing to intervene and prevent incidents from occurring. The TIPS platform empowers team members to set automated reminders so follow-up actions for tomorrow, next week, next month and next year do not fall through the cracks. TIPS also includes a comprehensive longitudinal tracking system to connect related reports, tracking at-risk individuals and suspicious incidents over time to monitor if a situation is escalating and requires more attention. The TIPS platform has been implemented on several college campuses, and Awareity is working with campus leaders to continuously identify changing needs of risk management, threat assessment and behavioral intervention teams. The TIPS platform is much more cost-effective than labor-intensive and status quo approaches and very efficient, and most of all, TIPS helps risk managers on campuses and in all types of organizations prevent preventable incidents.

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 TIPS platform has been implemented by organizations of all types and sizes, including financial institutions, government agencies, healthcare organizations, higher education institutions and both large and small public and private K-12 schools. In its first 2 months of implementation

in a healthcare setting, the TIPS platform significantly reduced training and administrative costs by allowing employees from over 30 different locations to report incidents (suicides, threats to harm, fraud, ethical concerns, family issues, etc.) and share critical information with the appropriate team members and management staff. TIPS greatly improved information-sharing, accountability at the individual level and documentation obligations for HIPAA and internal controls. In a school district of 2,500 students, 3 incident reports were received from students and community members, within weeks of announcing the TIPS platform and the "anonymous button" on their school website for reporting. One incident report warned the school of a fight in an upcoming class, which was prevented, and another incident report alerted the school to a safety/traffic concern involving children crossing a busy highway, which was addressed immediately. Personal quote from Tulsa Public Schools: "Our teachers and staff are ever vigilant, but you can't prevent situations you don't know about. TIPS will provide us with one more way for students, teachers, parents and members of the community to alert us to potential problems -- either inside or outside our schools. Then we can be proactive and intervene appropriately, whether it's suspected bullying, harassment or fear that a student might take their own life." In a financial institution, TIPS was implemented to make sure employees can report escalating challenges with identity theft and account takeovers by cyber threats. The TIPS platform is also playing a critical role in meeting new FFIEC guidelines that must be implemented in 2012.