The Computerworld Honors Program

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Final Copy of Case Study

Status:
Laureate

Year:
2013

Organization Name:
Canvas

Organization URL:
www.gocanvas.com

Project Name:
Ante Up - Sabi Sands

Please select the category in which you are submitting your entry:
Mobile Access

Please provide an overview of the nominated project. Describe the problem it was intended to solve, the technology or approach used, how it was innovative and any technical or other challenges that had to be overcome for successful implementation and adoption. (In 300 words or less.)

Sabi Sand Reserve is one of the largest wildlife conservation areas in Southern Africa, covering an area of 153,000 acres as part of Greater Kruger National Park (South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe). South Africa is on the frontline of a poaching war between conservation officers and rebel militias who use high-powered weapons, night goggles and helicopters to hunt rhinos for their horns, which sell at prices higher than gold in Asia (approximately $100,000 a horn). Rhino horn is believed to cure everything from hangovers to cancer. Jewelry and housewares made out of rhino horn are perceived as status symbols in some Asian countries. The damage done by poachers to this rhino population has been severe. A record 668 rhinos were killed for their horns in 2012, up almost 50% from 2011. Animal poaching has become such a serious global issue that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently urged multinational leaders to form a coalition to combat illegal wildlife trading and poaching. There is a unique technology effort underway at Sabi Sand where conservation officers are combatting animal poaching by using mobile apps from U.S. technology startup Canvas to: Track and document where

poachers are breaking through boundary fences, using GPS coordinates and notes within the app, which allow officers to focus their (limited) foot patrol resources on hot spots. Keep a log of photos of the killed and wounded animals, unique human footprints and other "spores" evidence which can be used to criminally prosecute poachers. Share data in the Canvas cloud with Kruger and other Reserves about numbers and types of animals being killed and maimed. The results have been significant. Because of Canvas, Sabi Sand has been able to shift from a reactive approach to a proactive strategy.

When was this project implemented or last updated? (Please specify month and year.) Has it incorporated new technologies and/or other innovations since its initial deployment? (In 300 words or less.)

This project began in October 2011 and continues today. Sabi Sand is a pro bono Canvas customer. All user accounts are paid for through the Canvas "Ante Up" program, which is a companywide effort to sponsor employee projects and organizations that use mobile apps technology to solve social ills. In addition to providing Sabi Sand with free and unlimited access to Canvas apps, company employees decided last month to forgo the annual holiday party and to, instead, fund the purchasing of 20 additional phones for use by the Sabi Sand conservation team. In addition to purchasing the phones Canvas is sending the employees sponsoring Sabi Sands in the "Ante Up" program down to South Africa to train Sabi Sand on how to maximize the use of Canvas to combat poaching. Training these conservations officers, who have high school or lower educations, includes training them on how to operate the phones, how to complete apps and how to upload data from the field. Some of these conservation officers patrol on foot and do not report back to base camp for days. These smart phones will allow them to communicate from the far reaches of the Reserve. In areas where there is no WiFi, officers can queue up submissions until they are back in range. This program will continue through 2012 while we quantify the effects of using Canvas to protect wildlife and prosecute poachers.

Is implementation of the project complete? If no, please describe the project's phases and which phase the project is now in. (In 300 words or less.)

Phase I - Initial Trial (July, 2012 - February, 2013). This phase involved getting Canvas apps built and training field management officers on how to use Canvas (done by Sabi Sand internal). Phase II - Training & Optimizing Canvas (February, 2013 - May, 2013). This phase involves sending a Canvas rep down to South Africa to do face to face training on phones and Canvas apps. Phase III - Measuring Results (June, 2013 - December, 2013). This phase involves measuring tangible benefits of using Canvas to combat poaching.

Please provide at least one example of how the technology project has benefited a specific individual or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work. (In 300 words or less.)

Canvas has had a direct, positive impact on helping Sabi Sand to document poaching. From Mike Grover, head Conservation Officer at Sabi Sands, "Canvas allows us to identify certain areas that are high priority 'hot spots' so we can put patrols on that area more regularly. Canvas also allows us to send GPS coordinates to the guys who come to fix the fence." Mike adds that he is already seeing a direct impact in his ability to patrol

the fence, and as Canvas helps him to deploy more phones to more of his field officers, he expects to move from reacting to poaching to preemptively saving the lives of animals on the Reserve. The conservation officers have "shoot to kill" orders to shoot any poachers they find violating the animal rights laws. It is conceivable that, in addition to saving rhino lives, Canvas could save human lives as the South African Reserve officers take back control of the land and discourage poachers from even trying to trespass onto the land.

Would this project be considered an innovation, a best practice or other notable advancement that could be adopted by or tailored for other organizations and uses? If yes, please describe that here. (In 300 words or less.)

Using mobile apps to track animal poachers is an innovative use of technology. We are developing best practices so other Reserves in South Africa, and around the globe, can benefit from this application of Canvas technology. When our account manager travels down to South Africa in February 2013 he is going to meet with the heads of security for many of the reserves and also with Kruger National Park to talk about how Canvas can help save more lives.