



Text Message Solution Helps Smokers Quit

Overview

Country or Region: New Zealand
Industry: Healthcare – Healthcare, Healthcare Providers

Customer Profile

The Quit Group is a charitable trust that provides support for people who want to quit smoking in New Zealand.

Business Situation

The Quit Group was tasked to implement, deliver and evaluate a text message-based smoking cessation solution to reach out to young smokers and help them quit smoking.

Solution

The Quit Group deployed STOMP (Stop smoking Over Mobile Phone), a text message-based smoking cessation solution built on Microsoft technologies. The group renamed the service 'Txt2Quit'.

Benefits

- Accessible cessation support
- Provides 24/7 support
- Value-added program enhancement

“Smoking is a difficult addiction to break. Smokers who want to quit experience cravings or the temptation to go back to smoking. The support functions built into Txt2Quit help them get back on track.”

Michele Grigg, Research Manager, The Quit Group

The Quit Group is a charitable trust that provides smoking cessation programs for New Zealanders. The Quit Group was tasked by the New Zealand Ministry of Health to deliver and evaluate a text message-based smoking cessation solution to reach out to young smokers and help them quit smoking. With help from Microsoft® Certified Partner HSAGlobal, The Quit Group deployed STOMP (Stop smoking Over Mobile Phone), a text message-based smoking cessation solution built on Microsoft® SQL Server® 2005 and Microsoft® .NET Framework version 3.0. The solution, renamed as 'Txt2Quit', has had a high impact on health and wellness by helping smokers in New Zealand to quit smoking, and augments The Quit Group's range of smoking cessation programs.



Situation

To address the growing concern with the continuing trend towards young people smoking, the New Zealand Ministry of Health decided to explore alternative media formats that would support smoking cessation programs. Due to the pervasiveness of mobile phones in New Zealand society, particularly among young people, and based on the positive results of the STOMP trial, the New Zealand Ministry of Health tasked The Quit Group to implement, deliver and evaluate a text message-based smoking cessation program.

The Quit Group was set up as a charitable trust to run smoking cessation programs in New Zealand. This Health and Wellness group aims to reduce the number of New Zealanders who smoke, with a particular focus on Māori smokers. Funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Health, The Quit Group develops and provides innovative quit smoking programs, television, radio and print quit campaigns, and runs the national telephone support Quitline. The Quit Group was founded in 1999 and has 100 staff.

In a report of tobacco trends in New Zealand for 2008, 23.1 percent of the population aged 15 to 64 years are current smokers. A current smoker is defined as someone who has smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and currently smokes at least once a month. Among New Zealand's youth aged 16 to 24 years more than one-quarter, 27.3 percent, were current smokers in 2008.

The Clinical Trials Research Unit (CTRU) at Auckland University undertook the STOMP study, a randomized trial with 1,700 participants throughout New Zealand. The participants were split into

groups; the intervention group received a personalized package of support, which included cessation advice, motivation and encouragement, educational information and feedback through text messages to encourage quitting smoking, while the control group received generic health messages.

The trial reported a two-fold increase in self-reported quit rates, with 28 percent of the intervention group quitting smoking, compared to 13 percent of the control group. "Evidence from the clinical trial undertaken by the CTRU demonstrated that delivering supportive text messages can help young people to quit smoking," says Michele Grigg, Research Manager, The Quit Group.

Solution

The Quit Group and the CTRU worked with Microsoft Certified Partner HSAGlobal to further develop and deploy STOMP (Stop smoking Over Mobile Phone), a text message-based smoking cessation solution built on Microsoft® SQL Server® 2005 and Microsoft® .NET Framework 3.0. The use of SQL Server 2005 provided HSAGlobal with a robust platform and a rich reporting environment that allowed a wide range of reports to be quickly developed, providing essential and valuable statistics to support the rollout of the service. The Quit Group branded the service 'Txt2Quit', and rolled it out nationwide in June 2008 as a three-year long pilot.

HSAGlobal worked closely with The Quit Group to customize and integrate the solution to the organization's existing systems. Developed as an Internet-based application, Txt2Quit is managed by a small team of administrators through a Web browser.

Txt2Quit is targeted mainly at 16 to 24 year olds, though it is a free service available for anyone living in New Zealand, and is designed to complement The Quit Group's existing smoking cessation services.

Smokers who want to quit smoking can sign up for the Txt2Quit service through the Txt2Quit Web site, www.txt2quit.org.nz, or by calling The Quit Group's Quitline and having an advisor guide the caller through the process over the phone. The smoker sets a quit date during registration, and Txt2Quit then sends targeted messages in stages over a 26 week period to support their efforts to quit smoking.

The Quit Group customized the text messages for sending through Txt2Quit. These range from motivational messages to the health benefits arising from quitting smoking. The service sends two text messages per day to participants before their quit date, three a day for the first month of quitting, then three a week after the first month to reinforce their quitting.

When a participant signs up for Txt2Quit, they have the option to join the Txt2Quit online community. This social networking community provides access to a members only section of the Txt2Quit Web site – a participant portal to update personal details, apply for nicotine replacement therapy, use a savings calculator, and blog about their experiences of quitting smoking.

A relapse program was also built into Txt2Quit, which allows participants who quit initially, but started smoking again, to receive four weeks of tailored relapse messages. The solution also has crave

support for participants wanting a cigarette and slip up support for those who have smoked a cigarette. Participants who text 'crave' or 'slip up' receive extra support messages.

Benefits

Accessible Cessation Support

By using Txt2Quit, The Quit Group can provide personalized smoking cessation support through a platform that is familiar to its target group of 16-24 year olds. Participants in the program receive text messages at 4, 12 and 22 weeks asking if they have quit smoking. At 22 weeks, 44.3 percent of participants who responded to the quit status message had quit; for respondents in the 16 to 24 year old age category this was 41.7 percent.

"Txt2Quit helps remind participants that they want to give up smoking, and provides relevant and motivational messages to help them achieve this goal," says Mark Smith, Program Manager, HSAGlobal. "Additionally, the fact that Txt2Quit is built on mature and reliable Microsoft solutions means that The Quit Group can focus on supporting smokers instead of supporting technology."

Provides 24/7 Support

Txt2Quit is able to respond immediately to smokers who need support, have cravings or slip ups, who relapse, or who want to opt out of the program. "Smoking is a difficult addiction to break. Smokers who want to quit tend to experience cravings or the temptation to go back to smoking. The support functions we built into Txt2Quit can help them get back on track," says Grigg.

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For more information about HSAGlobal products and services, call +64 9 984 1800 or visit the Web site at:
<http://www.hsaglobal.net/>

For more information about The Quit Group products and services, call +64 4 460 9899 or visit the Web site at:
<http://www.quit.org.nz>

Grigg provides an example, "A participant who indicates they have relapsed back to smoking will receive a series of text messages consisting of three tailored messages per day for four weeks, to help them start another quit attempt and hopefully enable them to quit smoking for good."

Value-Added Program Enhancement

Txt2Quit augments The Quit Group's smoking cessation programs by introducing an interactive mobile option. The flexibility of the technology has allowed The Quit Group to customize Txt2Quit to its needs, and reach out to its target group with an amenable solution.

"We reached our first-year target of 4,000 Txt2Quit participants, and are looking forward to developing the solution further by adding new features and functionalities," concludes Grigg.

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