

Building an Online Volunteer Call Center in Contribution to Government Efforts During COVID-19

Abstract

Included in this white paper is a full description of the development of a government-integration system that helps manage a volunteer workforce. The volunteer workforce is charged with the task of calling to check the status of citizens - such as elderly people - who may be in need of food delivery or medical assistance in the time of COVID-19.

This system has the potential to help governments, and their citizens, in countries around the world. The way in which this system has been created allows for it to be used with all manner of government systems - with no infringement on individual privacy - and make a significant contribution to the assistance of the elderly, and those who are unable to help themselves, during the time of COVID-19.

Outline

This white paper serves to detail:

- The problem brought forward by the Israeli Ministry of Finance and Welfare that necessitated the building of this system.
- A description of Corvid by Wix and the capabilities used to create this system.
- The timelines and manpower involved in evolving the system from concept to execution.

Introduction

This web application was built with Corvid by Wix. [Corvid is the Wix development platform](#), offering a node.js backend, database, enabling integrations and FE coding with an integrated visual builder. The result is a productive development platform, ideal for delivering web applications on a tight schedule.

The system created for this project can be adjusted to other government regulations, implemented and localized for a variety of markets globally.

Background

On Wednesday, March 18, the Israeli Ministry of Finance and Welfare reached out to Wix, with the request to build a system that would organize their outreach efforts. This included building a system with the capabilities to support hundreds of volunteers, who would need to call (via phone) over 1 million incapacitated, elderly and infirm Israeli citizens. The system was also required to support recording the needs of these citizens, that is, recording whether they were in need of food delivery, medicine, home assistance, etc, and deliver this data back to coordinators in order for action to be taken.

Solution

Within 24 hours of the government's request, a team was assembled. Initially planning of the system got underway, and within 1 week, a fully functioning system (apply.israelvolunteer.org.il/ www.israelvolunteer.org.il) was put into place. This became available for use by March 30.

Initial concept discussions brought to light 2 main questions, namely:

- What does the system need to solve?
- What is the minimum required for it to be functional, i.e. what key functionality is required in order to deliver the system on time?

The team worked closely with the Ministry office to design the web application's main user flows, understanding the roles and responsibilities and determining how the system could support those. Within the system, it was determined that 3 main roles would need to be scoped:

- Volunteer
- Coordinator - a volunteer who manages a group of volunteers
- Super Coordinator - an official from the local municipal authority who is responsible for an area

The system was split into major areas of operation, namely:

- The volunteer application system, in which volunteers apply to help, and government can identify, check, and approve them.
- A call center system - is used for volunteers to conduct calls.

The system was scoped to function in the following way:

1. A potential volunteer receives a link to the application system.
2. To apply, they must sign in using the government portal, and fill out an application form specifying who they are, their availability, etc.
3. Once they submit the form, it goes through a validation check to ensure there are no legal blockers to them becoming a volunteer.
4. Super Coordinators check the lists of potential volunteers and approve people, based on official criteria.

5. Once approved, a volunteer receives both an SMS and email to register to the call center system, via a one-time use URL and token. Both are necessary to ensure that, should the email land in the volunteer's spam folder or the SMS is not given priority (as in the case of some iPhones), a notification is not missed.
6. Upon registration, volunteers receive a list of 20 citizens who are potentially in need. The volunteer selects an individual from the list and clicks "Call".
7. The call center then creates a call between the volunteer's phone and citizen's phone, without exposing phone numbers to either party. The volunteer explains the purpose of the call, confirms they have reached the correct citizen, and asks about their condition, including if they need food, medical assistance, or any other type of assistance.
8. The information and details of the call are entered into a call summary form, which is then logged in the database for later review or subsequent calls. Based on this information, the relevant data is exported to a food distribution operation, as well as medical assistance providers, if required.

The Coordinator and Super Coordinators can also use the system to get reports and manage volunteers.

Some of the technical challenges that arose, and which were solved with Corvid, included:

- User Identification Through the Government Portal
In order to answer security concerns, there was a need to validate that the volunteer registering online was actually the person listed in the government-issued physical ID card. The system was fully integrated with the government portal, and this guarded against the possibility of stolen identities and impersonation of potential volunteers and coordinators.
- Scalable and Secure Data Storage
The Corvid database is scalable and secure but when facing tight timelines and government regulations, there was a need to find a trusted and approved database solution that could be used immediately. We used GCP Cloud SQL.
- Making Anonymous Calls
To protect the privacy of citizens, it was required that volunteers would not be able to see the phone numbers of citizens they were calling. This was solved by creating a web module that allowed volunteers to click a button in the web application. This initiates a call between the volunteer's phone and that of the citizen.

Conclusion

Wix is proud to have created a system that contributes to the health and wellness of Israel, and its citizens, in this time. The developers, designers, and product people who have worked on this system are constantly refining, tracking and ensuring it is optimized regularly.

In the same way this system was developed for the Israeli government, Wix now offers this system to governments - national, regional, and other - worldwide, and is available to translate it to other languages, adjust it to other government regulations, and assist in implementing it, if requested.

Please contact us if we can be of service in your region.