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CS639 Mobile Application development

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**Social Entrepreneurship**

The talk started with Archana Shah, the co-director of the Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship at Pace University. During her presentation, she introduced the class to the concept of Social Entrepreneurship. Social Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of innovative and sustainable solutions to social problems. Social Entrepreneurship has some difference(s) compared to entrepreneurship: it is geared towards solving social problems/concerns such as the lack of clean water, food, medical access, etc. For an entrepreneurship to be called Social entrepreneurship, it must take into account a positive return to the society. With Social Entrepreneurship, the problem is crystal clear; the struggle is to create a solution to fix them. The business models between the two also tend to be very different. Although they both focus on generating profit, social entrepreneurship measures its performance on the positive impact the business makes on society.

The second half of the lecture was dedicated to Matt Hennessy, the client and Partnerships director for First Access. He talked about how the company uses mobile technology to help money borrowers in countries such as Bangladesh, Tanzania, etc. where credit scores are not available and they create an appraisal for customers. The data they collect is used by microfinances to determine the loan amount, interest, etc. The primary targeted users of First Access are the borrowers in informal markets. First Access uses mobile technology because most of the times, customers in informal markets do not have access to computers. The spread of cellphone usage has made it that the penetration of cellphone usage has increased everywhere in the world especially in third-world countries were they are used for paying utilities, facebooking, etc. From Matt’s presentation, android apps would not make sense at the moment because most people in those countries use feature phones that have limited capabilities compared to modern smartphones. As smartphones become cheaper, more sophisticated mobile solutions could be implemented at First Access because the current phones used (Feature phone) do not allow for sophisticated solutions because they lack in capabilities. How much can be done really with a feature phone except calling, texting, and a few Internet access? Therefore, to develop more sophisticated mobile solutions, it would entail either catering to customers with smartphones (they aren’t that many) or design much cheaper smartphones that the targeted markets can afford.

In order to propose mobile solution(s) adapted to users, one must do a detailed analysis of what technologies the target user has and then plan accordingly. Different solutions will be created depending on whether users have smartphone, tablets, feature phone or other types of mobile technology.

Nice saying from Matt: Put smart in front of everything and everybody will like it!