

CASE STUDY:



# AFRICA'S VOICES FOUNDATION



## Roadmapping Helps Africa's Voices Foundation Navigate its Future

IfM Education and Consultancy Services worked with a unique Cambridge University spin-out charity to help it develop its medium-term strategy

Africa's Voices Foundation (AVF) is a not-for-profit research organisation spun out from the University of Cambridge. Using the latest digital technologies, they enable more effective dialogue between citizens and their service providers.

AVF works with development and governance organisations, and aim for their insights to transform the policies and programmes of these organisations towards being more accountable, effective and impactful - leading to the enhanced wellbeing of citizens.

By developing rich insights into the shifting collective beliefs, opinions and sentiments in society, they support organisations to understand, better engage with and appropriately serve target populations.

Africa's Voices was faced with major strategic choices of their own: should their focus be to create new 'products', develop new techniques such as social data analytics, or utilise their tools, methodologies and expertise in new markets? What were the long term intellectual property (IP) implications for each of these options? Which option had the largest positive social impact and created a more sustainable future for the organisation? Faced with such a range of options, each

with far reaching implications, Africa's Voices decided to approach IfM Education and Consultancy Services (IfM ECS) for help in providing a more systematic, data-driven approach to their decision making. This roadmapping needed to include all key stakeholders and incorporate prioritisation methods especially designed for early stage organisations.

### Roadmapping process

IfM ECS introduced AVF to its proven roadmapping process. Roadmapping is a powerful technique for planning an organisation's capabilities to ensure they meet its commercial or strategic goals. The graphical nature of roadmaps supports strategic alignment and dialogue between functions in the firm and between organisations. Roadmapping helped Africa's Voices clearly define and prioritise their different options, and understand the IP implications of these alternatives. It also helped them to explore the different business models they had available.

A framework approach was adopted at a roadmapping workshop facilitated by Senior Industrial Fellow Dr Nicky Athanassopoulou at IfM ECS. Each option was evaluated using

a range of different factors such as its potential for growth, its synergy with the Africa's Voices vision, and Africa's Voices' capability to develop and sustain it in the future. An estimate of the timescale for its development and launch was also considered. This led to the shortlisting of the different options, and highlighted the importance of some opportunities that were not fully recognised by the organisation before then.

The key workshop participants included Dr Sharath Srinivasan, Director, Dr Claudia Lopes, Head of Research and Innovation and Lord Cairns, Chairperson of Trustees. Each had different perspectives of Africa's Voices, and the workshop facilitated a discussion to bring their ideas together. Roadmapping allowed all team members to share their experience and knowledge, and to arrive at agreed actions on how to develop options further. It also helped them discuss the specific processes they had to adopt to ensure that their IP and specialised know-how would remain the property of the organisation. Finally, important considerations such as the recruitment and training of suitable personnel both in the UK and Africa were discussed and agreed by the management team.

## IfM ECS

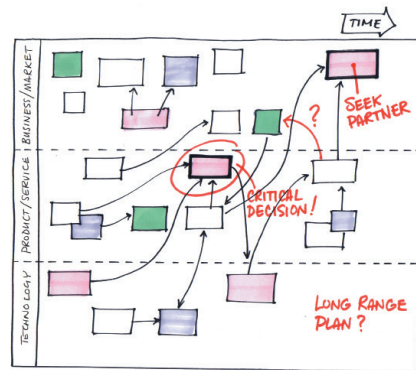
IfM Education and Consultancy Services works with companies of all sizes to help create and capture value, and with national and regional governments to support and grow their industrial sectors.

It does this by transferring the new ideas and approaches developed by researchers at the Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) through a programme of education and consultancy services.

IfM ECS is owned by the University of Cambridge. Its profits are gifted to the University to fund future research activities. For more details on its work visit: [www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/services](http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/services)

## Outcomes

Following the workshop, the most important option and associated strategy for its development was prioritised. Most favoured was the option to 'Give wrap-around 'product' definition to our full service end-to-end expert research consultancy for clients'. This could be achieved in the short term, and would require much more focus on client and stakeholder impact and long term relationships.



A second option was selected for subsequent implementation: 'To develop a Think Tank that conducts core research and produces insights on how to use the digital revolution to enhance citizen voice in governance'. This option, although not initially considered a forerunner, was realised during the workshop to provide a unique, longer term opportunity for Africa's Voices. It could bridge some world-class research from the University of Cambridge and the cutting-edge methodologies and tools from Africa's Voices to conduct social research, and to inform policy and support programmes in Africa. This option would require additional funding for a serious research initiative.

## Roadmapping at IfM

IfM is a world centre of excellence for roadmapping. It has been researching the application of roadmapping for more than a decade, and its techniques have helped more than 250 public and private sector organisations with their strategic and technology innovation planning.



Output from workshop brainstorming the challenges of citizen generated data

*"IfM's approach enabled us to consider some very disparate and complex issues in a systematic and informative way. It was a great surprise to see how methods that were originally developed to address technology problems could be applied so efficiently in areas of social sciences. The graphical approach provides for good communication outside the workshop group."*

**Dr Sharath Srinivasan,**  
Co-Founder and Director,  
Africa's Voices Foundation

➤ For more on **Roadmapping**, visit: [www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/roadmapping](http://www.ifm.eng.cam.ac.uk/roadmapping)



[www.africasvoices.org](http://www.africasvoices.org)

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