

Souktel JobMatch

Technology observation by John Tomlinson
for LIS 697-06 Social Media/Anthony Cocciolo



"In Palestine there're over 500 military checkpoints that keep communities apart and people isolated.

This technology is really revolutionary because it actually reverses that trend."

— Amber Houssian, Client Outreach
Manager, Souktel

High unemployment – at about 40% for 15-24 year olds – is a critical problem in the Palestinian Territories.

Transportation problems, due to roadblocks and poor infrastructure, contribute to difficulties for young people to find jobs, and for employers to find workers.

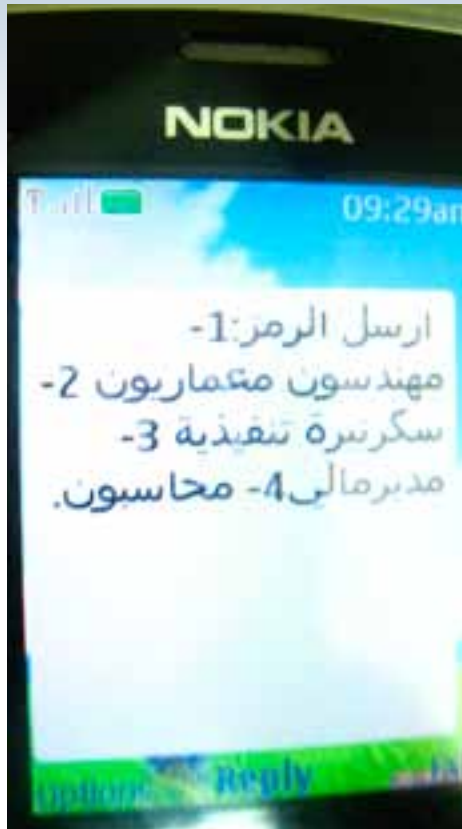


Unemployment figure for 2005 from the World Bank
Photo from Susan Taylor/*St. Petersburg Times*

Souktel JobMatch connects young people in Gaza and the West Bank with potential employers through text messages.

About 2,000 people use the service each month. Between 40 and 60 of them find jobs at average salaries of \$500.

Users pay premium text-messaging rates, which helps finance the service.



Jobseekers create a simple CV with Souktel by answering a series of questions about where they can work, skills, interests, and when they are available.

- Young man
- Farm job
- In Jenin
- High school ed
- Can work full time, all wkdays
- Skills in milking machine operation
- Call 0599245789

Employers similarly list job location, skills needed, etc. – all via text message.

- Offering farm job in Jenin. Need High School Ed; Skills in dairy milking machine operation. Work is full time, all wkdays. Call 0599400400 for info.



At any time, an employer or job seeker can text “match me” and receive a message listing five openings/applicants that match most closely.

"I looked around and found that everybody carries a mobile.

*Women living in villages have mobiles.
And youth studying in universities.*

*So we made a survey and found that
90% of the Palestinian youth carry
mobiles."*

— Mohammed al-Kilany, Co-Founder, Souktel

Access to mobile telephony is not only much more common than access to the internet in the Palestinian Territories, it is also more reliable with coverage over nearly 95% of the region.

In addition, Souktel's services are able to help young women, particularly those from more traditional families, who are often not comfortable using internet cafes (a typical means of going online) to search for jobs.

Souktel markets its services through universities and events to overcome initial reluctance of some young people and employers to use their phones for job connections.

Over 100 employers and institutions are involved as well.



Souktel is expanding its services to other places in the world, including Eastern Africa, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan.

For more information, visit www.souktel.org.



Souktel JobMatch is an example of the power of simple, task-directed communications.

- “Easy things tend to happen” (week 2 discussion)
- Mobile phones powerful technology for less affluent communities (*Pockets of Potential*)
- Job market “hive” has value (“anti-Lanier”)
- Some critical mass needed for success (week 10?)