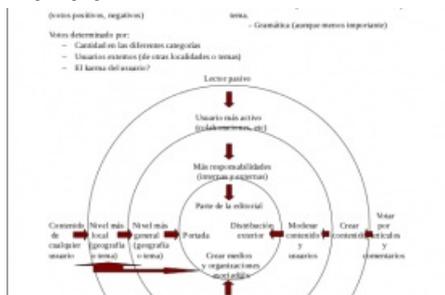


Encouraging participation in creativity in Costa Rica

Costa Rica
Eric French



Organization type:

nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector

Project Stage:

Idea

Budget:

< \$1,000

Website:

<http://revista-amauta.org/>

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- [Citizen sector](#)
- [Democracy & voting](#)
- [Journalism](#)
- [Information & communication technology](#)
- [Media](#)

Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Because there are different levels of participation, users are free in empowering themselves through creativity.

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

Journalism is in crisis and needs a new model. Not only that, people are not responding to each other and communicating, only when they hear what they like. Serious debate about our problems are hard to come by. Communities are not as cohesive and sometimes forget the problems they have in common. Therefore, communities need a space where they can debate, share, collaborate and create, while being able to eventually be trained by the amount of positive participation they partake in. Those who participate in a way that creates content that has a positive contribution (decided by other members) will have the opportunity to increase their understanding of how media works, as other members who are participating guide them through the process, and thus, fill a niche of information in a community where there was virtually no journalism of any kind at all. Community members can become journalists in Costa Rica, as they interact with the process in Amauta, and that is the need our community would address at the moment: that of disbanding the monopoly of information. For now, we are trying to interact with a small community of information activists, and experiment together in this process.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

People, anyone, can contribute content freely in Amauta. However, freedom comes with consequences, and depending on your actions, you will receive feedback from other members of the community. Depending on how that level of positive participation is determined by the community through reviews and votes, members will be able to get more responsibilities and tasks to participate in the next level. However, when other members facilitate others' participation, that is also considered positive, and so, would hopefully, bring about incentives for people not to be left out of the process. As members progress in level (and find other people from outside to get included), they will get trained in the aspects of content creation, and also, in bringing communication to their community. We are, in this way, engaging in providing a platform where anyone can collaborate in, but also, in a system where someone can learn their way into the possibility of becoming more than just a mere consumer of news, but a true actor of information. While members progress in their levels, and have more to learn, they will become empowered and at some point, be able to create their own independent media. Also, the content created is measured in similar terms, where people vote through certain criteria to determine what should be highlighted at a particular moment, but always in a way, that this important information comes from different sources so there is a variety of voices. Since users decide how information is allocated as important, creative and such, they would be the beneficiaries of it.

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

Someone will write, and it will be published. Yet, whatever they write does not gain legitimacy until a certain number of people in their geographic community decides it speaks to them. If it does, it will go the next geographic (or topical) level, and so on. These are decided through certain criteria (credibility, creativity, etc) that can determine how this community measures quality. So if a person writes an article, it won't gain any ground, until other people from her community (geographic or topical) votes, reviews or gives feedback on her article (or other creation). Also, the person won't have a good measure of positive participation if they do not do other activities like comment, vote (which would be an essential activity), etc. The key would be to have a variety of tasks so there is also a variety of participants. Technology helps because it would create the framework and platform for this interaction. This would all be different from other types of collaboration that are measured in other systems because this one guarantees progress in capacity building and fuller empowerment of their media space, as long as there is constant positive participation (measured by the way it creates further debate than not). In other words, if users have difficulty at first with writing or other activities, they would still be able to participate in a similar level-playing field if their participation is measured not by just the quality of the information, but by the time, genuine effort and other factors determined by the community. Opportunities would open up through engagement.

Sustainability

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

Basically, all media are potential peers in the sense that, as organizations, they can participate in the collaborative system that we are trying to develop. At this point, open-sourced and collaborative media systems like Wikileaks, Wikipedia and social network sites like Twitter and Facebook offer some challenges because Internet users are already sucked into them. It is hard for them to move beyond their comfort zones regarding certain "trustworthy" media. In this sense, many of this systems that paved the way make it more difficult for up and coming social media to come through with new ideas. Unless, of course, they totally change the way media is created (as Wikipedia did), or the way information was distributed (as WikiLeaks did). In that sense, these past media systems are just helping us evolve their ideas. And I would believe there are no competitors because we feed from each other to learn from each other and grow, not to shut down good ideas.

About You

Organization:

Amauta

About You

First Name

Eric

Last Name

French

Twitter URL

Facebook URL

About Your Organization

Organization Name

Amauta

Organization Country

Country where this project is creating social impact

, SJ

How long has your organization been operating?

1 5 years

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen..

Innovation

Select the stage that best applies to your solution

Start-Up (a pilot that has just begun operating)

How long have you been in operation?

Operating for 1 5 years

Social Impact

FOUNDING STORY: We want to hear about your "Aha!" moment. Share the story of where and when the founder(s) saw this solution's potential to change the world.

As I was studying journalism in college, I realized that we were in a moment of transition in the field. The profession as is is dying, and no one really was excited about becoming a journalist anymore. Not only that, it really did seem antiquated: the idea of objectivity being decided by one person, as if journalists don't have their own biases. You could see those biases in the news all the time by the way certain topics and people are portrayed. So my friend Carlos, who is also a trained journalist, and I teamed up to create a space where anyone could express themselves as unadulterated as possible. Bot how do we allow everyone to participate, with minimal censorship, and yet still create valuable, credible information of quality?

Another colleague, an information technologist, joined up and has helped us understand what technical potentials exist within the Internet to create such a space. The rise of citizen journalists, the ease with which almost anyone can share their thoughts, made us see the opportunity of tapping into this movement and organize a way where all these elements can interact in solidarity so to learn from each other, grow, and understand each others' views.

Specify both the depth and scale of your solution's social impact to date

At the moment, we have been in contact with different information activists in Costa Rica and the United States that have given us advice about our project, and will offer support once this model starts its experimental phase. The magazine itself, Amauta, already has a following because of the diversity of views and because of its original approach to sharing these views. In Costa Rica, Amauta is at the cutting edge of applying technology to interacting with information. Though it is not much, for such a small production as ours, we have some 500 users a day. We have been doing some community outreach through contacting several organizations to partner with, and also, through a feature we call "Hablando con la Gente" ("Talking with people"), where one of our colleagues interviews someone in the community that would normally have no access to Internet or still is not familiar with blogging tools, so they can also express their point of view, even if they have no access in creating it themselves. As we do this more, it will help us become a familiar and trustworthy medium of expression in San Jose.

What is your projected impact within the next 1-5 years? Is your idea replicable? If so, how?

At the moment, without the adequate funding, the impact of the project would be relative. For now, we are all volunteers working to create this space. We already have an online magazine where anyone can contribute. However, we are going to experiment with existing open source tools to create an experimental space that would shape up the organizational structure that will eventually become the way people would interact in the web site. With no funding, the project could show some considerable impact in the communities in four years. With funding, we can increase our efforts and perhaps have something developed in two years. The idea would be replicable since it could be used by any media, as the technology behind it would be open source, and users could create their own versions of Amauta.

Winning entries present a strong plan for how they will achieve and mark growth. Identify your six-month milestone for growing your impact

Create an experimental space to develop the structure of the project through trial and error.

Six-Month Tasks

Task 1

Look for existing tools that can be used for an initial participation structure.

Task 2

Identify community partners and do outreach within the community to recruit testers.

Task 3

Keep in constant communication and feedback with the community members in the space to see what works and what does not.

Now think bigger! Identify your 12-month impact milestone

Have a working sustainable model of participation that will begin to grow on its own accord.

12-Month Tasks

Task 1

Contact programmers that believe in the mission of the project so to create our own tools based on which ones worked.

Task 2

Do more sustained outreach strategies and incentives to get more community members involved beyond the first smaller group.

Task 3

Continue to test the system as it is used by a bigger number of participants.

How many people have been impacted by your project?

101 - 1,000

How many people could be impacted by your project in the next three years?

More than 10,000

Sustainability

Explain how your company, program, service or product is structured

Non-profit

What barriers have hindered the success of your project to date? How do you plan to overcome these and other challenges as you grow your solution?

Since at this moment, the members involved in the project are volunteers, our barriers have been time and money. However, as our project begins its experimental phase, and we see that interest in communities begin to grow, our community partners will help us out with some financial and logistical support. And also, as the project grows, motivation by the members to increase efforts will increase as well.

How do you see the information-technology and media sectors shifting over the next decade? How will your solution adapt to and/or drive that changing environment?

Media will have to incorporate their readers' participation somehow for it to become sustainable. People nowadays expect some interaction with

their spaces, and not passive consumption of information. In this way, our model of facilitating participation, and encouraging people to own their media spaces, would be a model that fits into this changing pattern.

Failure is not always an option. If your solution fails to gain traction in the next two years, what other applications of the idea could you explore?

Since the project is being developed through an experimental process, there is an open-sourced contribution to the structure of what the idea will be like. For now, the idea of creating an organizational structure for participatory creation of information within a Costa Rican community has some basic principles, but which can change if in the trial and error process we receive feedback that needs us to adapt. The project has general guidelines, but it is flexible to the needs and wants of the community, which means it will never have a final result, but will always be changing and adapting.

Expand on your selections, explaining how you will sustain funding

As I mentioned, the project is being supported on a basis of collaboration among individuals and community organizations, mainly, but not limited, from Costa Rica. As the project becomes more successful, we hope foundations and some other organizations will fund us. However, the project itself just needs money for the initial building of the technical infrastructure, and also when we are needed to provide training of use of the media we developed and in the continuation of outreach to the community.

Tell us about your partnerships

We are in contact with different media and journalists around the world that allow us to use their articles, and some of which are advisors for Amauta. We are also part of the network of alternative media in Costa Rica (redmica.org), and have a strong relationship with the Free Software Movement in Costa Rica, which will provide us technical guidance and expertise.

What type of team (staff, volunteers, etc.) will ensure that you achieve the growth milestones identified in the Social Impact section?

We have a core of four members that will take care of the direction of the project, from community outreach, design, media tools and programming. The person in charge of programming will guide the technical part of the project, and will probably need to hire two other programmers to support the work. Community outreach will be done through volunteers from the partner organizations, and we are hoping to recruit around twenty people from diverse backgrounds that would be interested in constantly testing the site.

Changemakers is a collaborative and supportive space. Please specify any community resources you would need to grow and sustain your initiative. Select all that apply

Investment, Human resources or talent, Marketing or media, Research or information, Collaboration or networking, Pro-bono help (legal, financial, etc.), Innovation or ideas, Mentorship.

Specify any resources you might offer to support other initiatives. Select all that apply

Marketing or media, Research or information, Collaboration or networking, Innovation or ideas, Mentorship.

Please elaborate on any needs or offers you have mentioned above and/or suggest categories of support that aren't specified within the list

As mentioned before, we are an all-volunteer group at the moment and would really appreciate financial support so we can focus our energies on this project. But money would be less of an issue if get volunteers that can help us out on administrative tasks for the project, getting the word out (marketing) so more people come and experiment with the space we are trying to build, research on tools that might apply to the ideas, or other collaboration in identifying better ways to apply those ideas. Also, we welcome any ideas that can improve on our own, and guidance in the process of putting them into practice.

Summary

Define your company, program, service or product in 1-2 short sentences

Amauta is building a space where users can dynamically participate with each other and collaborate in making it their own.

Source URL: <https://www.changemakers.com/citizenmedia/entries/periodismo-participativomodelo-amauta>