

Conditioned for life

TeenSmart empowers
youth to make healthy
life choices



The critical need for a more engaging youth platform

TeenSmart International is a non-governmental organization created to help Central American youth rise above the challenges of society. With only 33% of the youth of the region having access to secondary education¹, their risky behaviors contribute to 75% of health care costs of illness and death².

To reverse such trends, TeenSmart's mission is to help adolescents and young adults from different economic and social backgrounds

develop the knowledge, skills and motivation to live healthy, effective and satisfying lives.

Committed to a philosophy of self-care and self-empowerment, it uses a virtual platform – jovensalud.net – to provide teens in Central America with counseling, training and access to mental health services. But how could TeenSmart capture their attention and bring them to the site when competing social media and online games already made it a challenge for the organization to get

teens to switch their screen time for educational purposes? The platform's rudimentary search functionality further complicated matters because the site was difficult to navigate and, therefore, limited interest and access to information.

With a young target audience accustomed to high-performing online search services, TeenSmart risked effectiveness and engagement if information was not easily found.

Users would not return to the site if they encountered even one instance of frustration. In order to dissuade users from leaving, the organization wanted a more sophisticated search application that would take advantage of leading industry features to make it easier for teenagers to find the life-changing support they seek.

¹YouthPolicy.org. (n.d.). "Latin America & The Caribbean: Youth Facts." Available at <https://www.youthpolicy.org/mappings/regionalyouthscenes/latinamerica/facts/#FN17>

²TeenSmart International. (n.d.). "Preventing Risky Behaviors." Available at https://teensmart.org/web/index.jsp?c=risky_behaviors



When tech meets human ingenuity

Engaging and empowering youth through better search

Accenture Costa Rica mobilized its social responsibility program to help TeenSmart develop a cutting-edge, holistic platform solution, donating the manpower and software licenses required to take jovensalud.net to an all new level.

Our Search and Content Analytics Group worked side-by-side with the NGO's management, content production and IT teams to improve the search engine, relying on user experience (UX) and user interface (UI) design to facilitate greater access to rich content and services.

For teens looking for immediacy, this design approach was crucial. It had to consider their interests, behavior and verbiage so they can type in a word or phrase and intuitively find what they

are looking for without extensive searching or click-throughs. An engaging, relevant site would achieve higher retention rates and empower more youth to make smarter decisions about their lives.

Understanding the significance of these requirements, our team of expert search engineers, architects and project managers then built the new platform using our leading proprietary Accenture assets—Aspire for content acquisition and processing, Saga for natural language processing, our Enterprise Search User Interface, and Elasticsearch, an industry-leading search engine. TeenSmart was at the center of the build process, contributing input and seizing on the opportunity to learn about the technology and potential capabilities to reach more communities in more regions.



A valuable difference

A virtual platform to help teens stay physically and mentally healthy

The ease of use, engaging user experience and flexibility of the virtual platform enables the organization to help over 75,000 teens from more than 18 countries prevent or reduce the risky youth behaviors that result in illness and disease and thereby, benefiting families, societies and overwhelmed health care services.

To date, over 10,000 youth have graduated from TeenSmart's virtual life-skills courses and each week 300-500 youth access online coaching. With this active engagement, TeenSmart has aided significant health improvements among youth, including greater family communication, less depression and suicidal ideation, less weapon carrying and fighting, healthier dietary habits, postponement of alcohol consumption and greater contraceptive use.

The tool also proved significant during the COVID-19 pandemic. TeenSmart's virtual coaches saw a 600% increase in demand for confidential, online counseling on jovensalud.net in the first few months of 2020.

The enhanced search capabilities made it easy for them to find important information on managing anxiety, staying healthy, reducing risk of infection, maintaining family and socially distanced relationships and coping with the economic and social consequences of the pandemic. Over 2,500 teens have since used the service and returned to the site an average of four times—double what they did in the past. As a result, the organization was able to make a bigger impact because teens could easily and quickly find relevant, up-to-date information when they needed it most through forums, one-on-one coaching, micro-messages, a virtual library and more.

Moving forward, the clean, simple and scalable design enables TeenSmart to maintain jovensalud.net so it can help millions of teens stay physically and mentally healthy. With the right knowledge, skills and support, youth can start distancing themselves from the risks that make them vulnerable so they can achieve a prosperous future.