A Voice Social Network for Teachers of Under-Served Areas
• What we are building:
  ◦ A "voice social network."
    • It's a voice "forum" that all the DSH school teachers can dial into, kind of like a "moderated mailing list" on the Internet, except here it's all done with voice over dumb phones.
    ◦ An example:
      • Teacher A leaves a voice message on the system: "following the examples in the DSH videos, I started practicing the idea of using real-world examples in my classes. This is what I learned."
      • A computer "voice server" answers the phone and stores the message. Kind of like an IVR.
      • Lucknow "moderator" retrieves this message and leaves a new message for the entire network: "teacher A had this great experience last week, and here's her message; in the coming weeks, all the other teachers, please try real-world examples in your own classes, and tell us what you learned." (This is almost like an "assignment" for teachers.)
      • All other DSH teachers dial into the system and retrieve the above messages; they try the "assignment;" dial back into the system and leave their own messages to share their own experiences with everyone else.
      • The cycle repeats.
    ◦ A system for exchanging experiences, feedback, and encouragement, continuing training.
    ◦ A prototype has been running for several months.

• Why?
- DSH video-sharing is only a part of a holistic solution to improving rural education.
- Need to build a sense of community for far-flung schools; overcome sense of isolation and apathy.
- Continued professional and personal education and development. Allow the better practice from urban experts and more advanced peers to help the rest.
- Positive re-enforcement (motivation) for teachers: "when I do something innovative and my kids learn better, there's a larger world out there who knows about it, who cares about it, who wants to borrow my techniques."

- The technology.
  - Based on the open-source Asterisk framework. Makes it possible for us to develop interesting and highly customized phone applications, entirely at the *edge* of the network.
  - The significance: allows our teachers in disadvantaged schools to interact with each other and experts using Internet-like applications (chat room, mailing lists) with nothing but dumb phones. (No computers, no broadband, cheap, effective, practical, doable on a large-scale)
  - In the longer run, our ambition is to expand this voice social network to include a far larger number of teachers from under-served schools, making it a part of a premiere platform for professional development and community-building for such teachers.

- Potential Idea roles.
  - Low end: donate a toll-free number line, on which our voice social network server sits.
    - Why? Even the costs of local calls are significant for the teachers we serve. Various schemes of reimbursement only introduce logistical complications that make the system harder to use.
  - Medium: donate cell phones, SIM cards, and air time that will be provided to our rural school teachers, who will use the phones to access the "voice social network."
    - Perhaps with the restriction that these SIM cards can only be used to access the teachers' voice system and nothing else.
  - Higher end: more significant Idea support for continued development of the voice social network.
    - PR and branding: the system can be known as the "Idea voice social network for teachers."
    - If the application matures, we could discuss moving the servers from the fringe of the network to inside the Idea infrastructure, potentially creating applications for for-profit purposes beyond today's non-profit DSH purposes.
    - Carriers must develop innovative phone-based applications, blurring the line between data and voice, competing against offerings such as Google Voice.