

MSMEs Digital Upskilling in Cambodia

BACKGROUND

Digital technology has transformed the Indo-Pacific region. Digital connectivity has increased among consumers, Cambodia has 16.1 million internet subscribers for the country population of 16.25 million. There are 11+ million Facebook users in Cambodia(1), which accounts for almost 70% of its entire population. This indeed creates opportunities for MSMEs that are able to utilize ICTs tools to gain their growth from this digital revolution.

The unprecedented COVID-19 has forced many MSMEs that have not yet adopted their business to be online to face hard times or go bankrupt. During the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, a survey(2) conducted by the Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Association (CWEA) showed that 59% of women-owned businesses were affected by the pandemic, and 17% of the businesses were closed. This phenomenon urged business owners to be innovative to keep their business alive.

Produced by:



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Implemented by:



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PROBLEM

The digital transformation in Cambodia has created an enabling environment for businesses to go online like never before, mainly with the growth of digital payment and domestic logistic services. This growth was even before pandemics and skyrockets during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the majority of MSMEs are still lagging behind this digital transition particularly in utilizing digital technologies to achieve their maximum potential.

From the in-depth interviews we conducted with 13 MSMEs in the period of January to March 2021, we learned that the majority of MSMEs were using mobile phones and social media tools to promote their business online. Facebook is best known as the gateway to e-commerce for MSMEs in Cambodia. The findings from the interview revealed that most of the MSMEs have a limited understanding of Facebook page management, how to keep their account and page safe, and most importantly, how to create interesting and attractive content to boost their businesses.

SOLUTIONS

Using the human-centered design methodology with the in-depth interviews with MSMEs, it allowed our team to decipher the actual challenges and pain points that MSMEs are facing. In addition, our team had engaged with the existing MSMEs associations/networks in the ecosystem such as the Woman Entrepreneurs Act (We Act Cambodia), NOMI Network, SHE Investments, Cambodian Women Entrepreneur Association (CWEA), the Young Entrepreneur Association of Cambodia (YEAC) to learn about their existing initiatives and explore potential complementary activities to support MSMEs. The combined learning enables us to comprehensively understand the area of needs and the specific digital skills demanded among the MSMEs in Cambodia.

STAY CONNECTED

www.ilabsoutheastasia.org

Phnom Penh Center, Building E,
4th Floor, Phnom Penh, Cambodia



producing a digital guide book focused on storytelling, digital marketing on Facebook, and basic digital security



Providing intensive training and customized training (coaching support) to MSMEs



Providing training of trainers to interested partners organizations

(1) <https://napoleoncat.com/stats/facebook-users-in-cambodia/2021/01/>

(2) <http://www.cweacambodia.org/en/news-update/227/how-small-businesses-have-coped-with-the-impact-of-covid-19>

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT OF DIGITAL UPSKILL TRAINING FOR MSMEs

Local experts from InSTEDD, using our findings from the MSMEs and networks to develop the initial curriculum, focused on the main three topics – digital marketing, storytelling, and digital safety.

The curriculum was shared with MSMEs associations/organizations for feedback, and the validation was conducted with MSMEs. Key findings from our validation was 1) the examples have to be based on Cambodia context 2) demystified technical terms and jargon to make it simple and easy to understand. The final curriculum was updated incorporating the findings from our validations.

2 FULL DAYS INTENSIVE TRAINING ON DIGITAL UPSKILLS TO MSMEs

The offline training method was not possible due to the COVID-19 restriction. Hence, the InSTEDD team decided to explore the alternative method. We did the validation by hosting a half-day trial run training with 9 MSMEs to test our 100% online training method that combined pre-recorded tutorial video and live conference.

Participants and trainers joined the Zoom call and then the lead trainer provided a Google Form of lesson bundles. Each form consisted of video tutorials of the lesson along with a short quiz. Within 5 - 10mn, participants were assigned to watch the video and then answer the quiz right away. The trainers could then access their trainees' understanding through the realtime response from the quiz. Once the time is over, all participants return to the Zoom call and the trainers will provide the summary, leading to the practice session if there is any, and students can raise questions anytime.

The trial run training proved the effectiveness of our online training method. With this confidence, we proceed to the official open call for application for the MSMEs Digital Upskill training course. We received 254 applications to our total 5 cohorts training.

We conducted the screening and interview process to select only the potential committed MSMEs. Out of 254 applicants, 85 MSMEs (47 are women) from 13 provinces and cities were selected to our 5 cohorts. To ensure the effectiveness of the training, we limited each cohort to 15-12 participants. Each cohort received 2 full days of online training (using the proven validated delivery method) from InSTEDD trainers.

TRAINING OF THE TRAINER SESSION (TOT) FOR INTERESTED INSTITUTION AND MSMEs NETWORKS

The goal of the ToT was to share our training materials, methodology, what worked and what did not work from our project experiences to the network partners, in hope that together we could create a ripple impact effect to more MSMEs in the country.

The session had participants representing 12 SMEs/MSMEs associations and organizations in Cambodia. According to the pre-training assessment survey, the majority of participants were not confident with the subject of digital marketing, storytelling, and digital safety. All participants were provided additional self-learning activities such as going through the lessons and video tutorials, the digital upskill toolkits guidebook. The guidebook and the pre-recorded tutorial videos were great resources to help participants catch up.

Following that, the InSTEDD team provided one and half day training to all participants (trainers from various organizations) on how to deliver the training on the subject. The focus was mainly on teaching methodology, lesson plans, and key technical support.

CUSTOMIZED TRAINING (COACHING SUPPORT)

From our initial interview study, MSMEs wanted the training to be practical so that they can apply what they learned directly to their business. In response to this finding, we created the customized training (coaching support) to provide more in-depth, direct, and case-by-case support to each MSMEs after they completed the two full days training.

coaching support session was done once a week for three weeks straight for each cohort. Each session had 2-3 trainees for the duration between 60 minutes to 90 minutes. In this session we guided MSMEs to create a content plan and how to turn those ideas into actual contents (photo, poster, captioning). Furthermore, MSMEs were encouraged to bring in their real business case and raise any problems they had with their Facebook Pages to the coaching support sessions. This way, not only will they receive guidance from the coach, they also had the opportunity to learn from their peers.

DIGITAL GUIDEBOOK TOOLKIT DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION

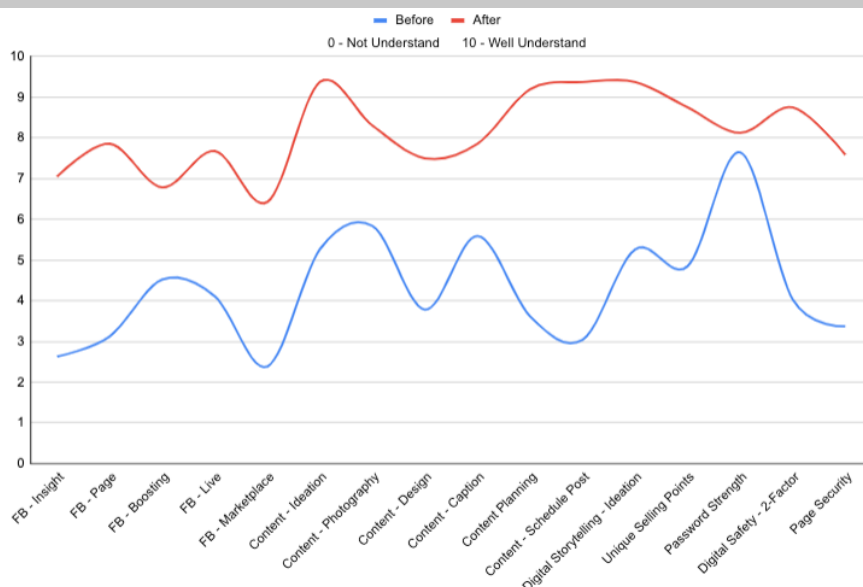
At the time of our project, there was not much content in Khmer language on this subject for MSMEs. In addition to the two days of intensive training, the InSTEDD team had compiled the curriculum and learning materials into a guidebook toolkits having creative commons license. We disseminated the guidebook among MSMEs trainees, MSMEs' network, partner organizations, the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications and provided public free download via InSTEDD iLab SEA website and social media. Up to November 2021, the guidebook of Digital Upskill toolkits had 1800+ downloads.



PRE AND POST ASSESSMENT SURVEY

InSTEDD team used pre and post training surveys as a method to understand and monitor the 5 cohorts participants' level of understanding and their progress. This method provided valuable insight that enabled our team to be more adaptive with the ongoing training and to improve the following one. The survey's responses were also used to evaluate the effectiveness of the training that was delivered

The summary of the pre and post training surveys with the MSMEs from the 5 cohorts is shown in the graph.



PERSONALIZED COACHING SESSION PROGRESS MONITORING

After the 2 days of intensive training completed, the personalized coaching session started. Each MSME was provided with an opportunity for 3 personalized coaching sessions. This coaching session aimed to provide more in-depth, direct, and case-by-case support to each MSME to help strengthen their skills and execution on the digital marketing, storytelling creation, and digital safety practice. We conducted ongoing monitoring of MSMEs trainees that took part in the personalized coaching sessions. The summary can be found in the table below.

Cohort #	# MSMEs created and executed a digital marketing content plan	#MSMEs established online presence	#MSMEs created storytelling content	#MSMEs applied digital safety
Cohort 1	11	11	11	11
Cohort 2	8	4	4	4
Cohort 3	13	14	10	14
Cohort 4	12	15	9	15
Cohort 5	10	14	9	14
Total	54	58	43	58
Total in Percentage	63.53%	68.23%	50.58%	68.23%

CHALLENGES



Throughout the training, the main challenges were 1) internet connectivity and 2) Zoom call experiences. Each cohort had a mix of MSMEs trainees from various provinces in Cambodia. The internet connection was not stable for everyone. That caused some participants to leave the training before time after several unsuccessful attempts to reconnect.

The coaching support sessions required commitment from MSMEs themselves. Those who were committed, found the coaching support sessions very useful. They received personalized support that was very helpful and practical for their online businesses.

Some of them saw immediate results in their business growth as they applied the method they learned. However, out of the total 85 MSMEs participants, only 42 MSMEs completed the full three coaching support sessions and 21 MSMEs took part in less than 3 coaching support sessions. InSTEDD team had studied those who were absent and learned that their reasons were mostly time conflict and lack of enthusiasm.



3 topics focused



digital marketing



storytelling



digital safety



254

Applications Received
from 5 cohorts

10 Days
Online Training

99

Customized Training
(Coaching Support)



85

Selected Candidates
from

29

Applications Received
from ToT training

1

TOT Training
to

13

Provinces

12

Organizations

54

MSMEs trainee created
and executed a digital
marketing content plan

58

MSMEs established
online presence

43

MSMEs created
storytelling content

58

MSMEs applied
digital safety

1800+

Online downloads

**Digital Toolkits
Guidebook**
(download link)

disseminated to

8

MSMEs
associations/networks

TESTIMONIALS



Pav Channalin

Baitong

"I had a plan to set up a business online but I didn't know how...and then the InSTEDD training answered the question of HOW. From my first day of the training, I applied the skills that we learned immediately to set up my Facebook page, which now has more than 400 organic Likes to date. From this training, I understand why brand identity (logo and color) are so important for business owners to stand out and differentiate from other, and then I created my own logo and put it on my posters."



Nou Oudomboth

Madam Choco Online Shop

"I have a better understanding of how to manage my Facebook Page. I can now boost the post effectively after being introduced to the target group and Facebook insight. As a result, one of my posts has reached more than 4000 reach spending a lot less than before."



Tim Den

D'fresh Cut

"After the training I set a target to sell 100 kilograms of longan [fruit] on my Facebook page. Surprisingly, I sold 1,500 kilograms of longans in just three days!"



Tath Vina

H&G Sewing Center and Handcraft

"I really enjoyed the course. This is because this course has given me something I have never learned such as preparing content for pop-ups, photography and design to be attractive and protect your page or account as well."



LESSON LEARNT



Customized Training (coaching support)

The commitment and enthusiasm of MSMEs were not all the same. If we had to run the project again, we would inform the MSMEs about this coaching support session opportunity but leave it to them to book to their sessions if they are interested. This way it might help sort out their real commitment.

ToT (training of trainers)

If we had to re-run the ToT again, we would start first with how to teach the lessons. Then using the knowledge assessment form to identify which participants are not very confident with the contents and potentially could recommend them to enroll in the 2 full days training.

NEXT STEP/LEGACY



We believe that the distribution of the Digital Toolkits Guidebook made through MSMEs association/networks and the sharing of our learning and methodology via this case study will help to spread the impact broader to MSMEs in the country. InSTEDD will continue to further collaborate with the MSME networks and associations to improve digital upskilling for MSMEs in the country and the region.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



- Understanding the pain points and the needs of MSMEs is a crucial start and is a must.
- Do not assume that local team experts can decide what solutions would work for MSMEs without the validation with MSMEs.
- Do not assume the participants' understanding after the training. Survey assessment is important to monitor their progress and use that data to provide targeted support.
- Let participants practice. If possible with their real business case as an example.
- Maintaining the relationship and open for post-training advisory support to the participants.
- Be flexible and open-minded to try new methods. Validate that with the target audiences to see if it works.