



Innovation > Nonprofit & Social Cause > Volunteers can lend their eyes to the blind via video chat app

VOLUNTEERS CAN LEND THEIR EYES TO THE BLIND VIA VIDEO CHAT APP

 NONPROFIT & SOCIAL CAUSE

Be My Eyes enables sighted volunteers around the world to provide assistance to blind people via an in-app live video connection.

Smartphones enable users to share what they see and hear around them anytime, at the touch of a button. While this connectivity can often seem like a bit of an indulgence, for blind users it could help them solve some of life's everyday challenges, with the help of an app called [Be My Eyes](#).

Similar to [MySmartEye](#) which we have previously reported on, Be My Eyes enables sighted volunteers around the world provide help to blind people in need of assistance. The key difference is that Be My Eyes goes beyond picture based assistance and actually offers live video chat — letting volunteers effectively lend their eyes to the visually impaired. The app works in combination with iPhone VoiceOver which uses a speech and touch-based interface to provide visually impaired and blind users access to smartphones.

Sighted volunteers sign up to be part of a network of helpers who can be contacted via smartphone when a blind user is in need. Volunteers receive a notification, and if they are able to help at that time, a live video connection is established between the two users' phones. If not, they can rest assured that one of the other 74,000 helpers in the network is probably able to step in.

The simplest tasks can become difficult to those who are blind or visually impaired and this platform can enable blind people to become less isolated without infringing on their independence. The casual nature of the network means that even those helpers who cannot commit a large amount of time can take part. Assistance could mean directing someone around an unfamiliar space with audio

cues, describing an unknown object or even advising the user whether a carton of milk has gone off. You can see how the service works in the video below:

cap

Be My Eyes is a non-profit based in Copenhagen. So far, 5,500 blind and 74,000 sighted users have signed up, and over 12,000 helpful connections have been made. The company is currently running on initial funding which will come to an end in September 2015.

Are there any potential partnerships that could enable Be My Eyes to continue operating as a free service?

22nd January 2015

Email: info@bemyeyes.org

Website: www.bemyeyes.org