LinkNYC

Description:

Cities around the globe are facing aging communications infrastructure in an era of surging mobile data consumption and citizen expectations. In New York City, near ubiquitous mobile phone adoption has left its streetscape strewn with thousands of unused public payphones, while millions of New Yorkers lack ready access to high speed broadband.

In 2014, The City of New York issued an RFP to reimagine the City's obsolete payphone infrastructure. Through a groundbreaking public-private partnership between the City of New York and a consortium of private companies, LinkNYC is the largest and fastest free public Wi-Fi network in the world, bringing connectivity and digital touchpoints to every community and commercial street corner across New York City.

With a $200 million private capital investment, LinkNYC replaces more than 7,500 payphones with kiosks called Links, delivering free gigabit Wi-Fi, phone calls, device charging, web browsing, maps and directions, and a platform for civic and commercial applications. All of this is free to users and taxpayers because it's funded by advertising on the network's 12,000 fifty five inch digital displays, offering a hyperlocal medium for brands that will also generate over $500 million in revenue for the City. It is the rare urban-scale technology designed for continuous innovation, ensuring user and city needs are met today and for years to come.

As New Yorkers ourselves, we built a product we'd want to use in our everyday lives. That meant creating a super fast, seamless, and ad-free Wi-Fi experience to start. And we didn't want to just provide free Wi-Fi, we wanted to provide connectivity for the future, offering speeds that are 100 times faster than average public Wi-Fi and LTE in the U.S.

To ensure that LinkNYC serves a city as large and diverse as New York, we conducted user research with people that represented the City's range of needs, including city employees, the elderly, business owners, digital natives, and underserved communities. We learned how specific proposed features resonated, or didn't, with each test group, informing LinkNYC's design and features. As the rollout continues, we'll use direct feedback and anonymized, aggregate data on how people interact with Links to develop insights on how to improve the experience. LinkNYC's modular hardware and custom Android operating system will also allow us to ensure it remains useful for users, the City, and commercial partners for years to come.

Launched January 18, 2016, the LinkNYC Wi-Fi network has already been accessed more than 3.5 million times and is gaining over 15,000 new users per week. LinkNYC represents a new kind of public-private partnership which combines the technical capabilities and innovative approach of the franchisee, with the scale and support of The City of New York. With its citywide scale, modularity, and viable business model, LinkNYC's approach to urban infrastructure and public service has set a new standard for cities around the world.

Contributing companies:

Intersection, Qualcomm, CIVIQ Smartscapes