

THE RUMIE INITIATIVE

A Books to Bytes Revolution for Education in Afghanistan



PROJECT LOCATION: AFGHANISTAN



OUR PARTNERS



[The Rumie Initiative](#) is an ed-tech non-profit organization that leverages today's low-cost technology to deliver high quality, digital educational content to learners least likely to have access to it. In partnership with Roshan, Afghanistan's leading telecommunications provider, Rumie's Books to Bytes project was introduced. The goal behind the Books to Bytes initiative is to revolutionize access to digital learning resources by enabling all youth with a low-cost device to utilize the best learning materials available on the Internet without Internet access.

The focus of this project was to launch and test a beta version of the Rumie App. The app enables users to access a wealth of educational content stored on Rumie's [LearnCloud](#) platform and then preload selected content onto their own low-cost devices for offline use. Leveraging a human-centered approach, Rumie tested the app with end-users to gather critical feedback about the solution's ability to enhance job

skill development and to gain a better understanding of the local needs of Afghan learners.

Working in collaboration with Roshan, Rumie engaged Kabul-based staff who are familiar with local education and skills requirements. Rumie's Head of Product, Kyle Lubieniecki, spoke with Roshan's Director of Public Relations & Corporate Affairs, Shafi Sharifi, to discuss the uniqueness of this solution and its ability to positively impact access to education.

Kyle: How important is it for Afghans to have access to quality learning content, especially in offline environments?

Shafi: *Afghanistan has a very young population — individuals under 30 make up about 70% of the population. They are hungry for knowledge — quality knowledge and content — which is not readily available to them, and applications like Rumie allow them to access that content. As an example, in Afghanistan, people are*



multilingual and speak 2-3 different languages, however, many are keen to learn a “business language”, such as English or French, which will help them in their careers. Collections available on the LearnCloud include learning French and people were very excited and interested in this because it is something they do not generally have access to.

Also, less than 20% of the Afghan population across the country have access to Internet, so this content that is available offline would be extremely beneficial for many people.

Kyle: How is the Rumie App different than previous initiatives Roshan has done to increase access to education?

Students and communities are able to browse the Internet and access resources through Roshan’s E-learning Centers. The Rumie App on the other hand, enables students to access quality content on their phones without Internet.

Kyle: Is the Rumie App valuable to remote Afghan communities, in particular to women and girls?

Shafi: *The number of people using smartphones in Afghanistan have been rising recently because of the decrease in the cost of the smartphone. And the new generation of young Afghans are hungry for knowledge and for information and ideas to transform their lives. The Rumie App can help provide this information.*

“The Rumie App can enable an Afghan girl sitting in a remote village in Afghanistan... to obtain information and knowledge about women’s health and girls education”

Shafi: *Well first of all, the quality educational content provided through the Rumie App is available offline which means they can have it on their phone and access it whenever they need to — they have all of this information, anytime, all in one place.*

At Roshan, we also have social programs supporting access to educational content. For example, we have built 55 E-Learning centers across the country, which are basically small facilities containing about 6 to 15 computers connected to the Internet.

For example, it can enable an Afghan girl sitting in a remote village in Afghanistan who doesn’t have access to electricity or internet but whose family may have a shared smartphone, to obtain information and knowledge about women’s health and girl’s education — some of the things that may not be available to her otherwise.

Kyle: Where do you see the potential for the future of the Rumie App in Afghanistan?



Kyle Lubieniecki
Product Manager
at The Rumie Initiative

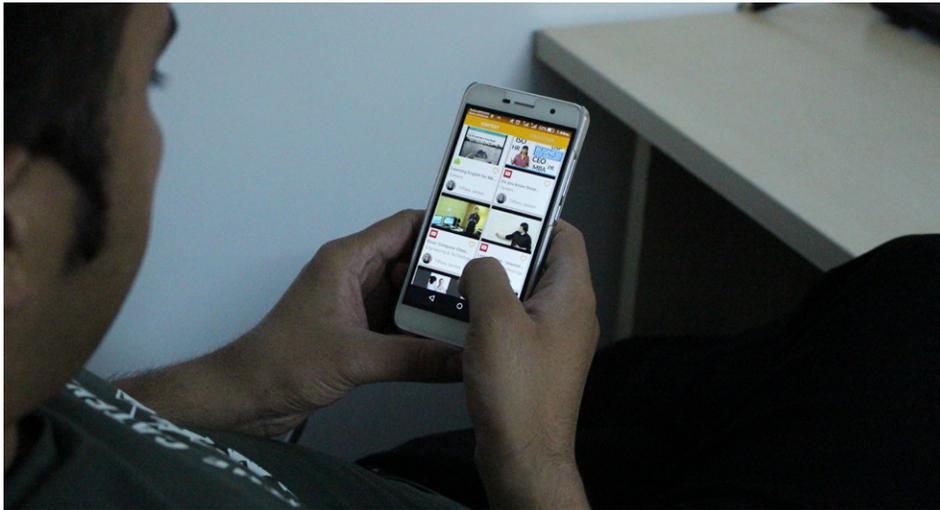
Kyle Lubieniecki leads product management, product design, and quality assurance across Rumie’s tablet, Android, and web-based solutions. Kyle joined Rumie from Shoelace, a 500 Startups advertising technology startup, where he contributed to the company’s significant growth. Prior to Shoelace, Kyle led the design and development of industry-leading research products and advised application development managers on product development, project management, and UX best practices.

Kyle has worked internationally and holds an HBA from Ivey Business School. Kyle also periodically works with Mind the Product to train Fortune 500 organizations on their product management craft.

Shafi: I think it has great potential especially by partnering with Roshan. The people of Afghanistan trust Roshan and by promoting the Rumie App to our subscribers, they are likely to download it and then they will have access to all of that great content. The greatest potential for impact is outside of the cities in the rural areas where Internet is even less accessible. The

phone is also available to others within the family to use. The youth are eager to use this for learning which the Rumie App would enable them to do and then they will share that knowledge and learning with the whole family.

Due to its ability to scale, the future potential impact of the Rumie App is



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good thing about the Rumie App, is that it brings together all of the information that a young person would be interested to know, all in one place.

Also, there is a very strong culture of sharing in Afghanistan. So if a family has a smartphone, that entire family has access to the phone. Usually the father or the mother will have a phone that is regularly used to contact relatives and then this

limitless. Sharifi sums up the power of this solution and Roshan’s commitment to an ongoing partnership stating, “We have over 6.5 million subscribers. We believe that education is incredibly important to the Afghan economy and we are committed to enhancing access for Afghans across the country. The Rumie App has the potential to scale across our country through both educational programs and our Roshan subscriber base.”



Shafi Sharifi
Director of Public Relations
& Corporate Affairs at Roshan

Shafi Sharifi is the Director of Public Relations & Corporate Affairs for Roshan, Afghanistan’s leading telecommunications provider. He has over a decade of experience in communications, journalism, marketing and media relations. At Roshan, Sharifi has been leading communications and public relations efforts, developing and expanding the company’s social media platforms as the largest channels in Afghanistan’s private sector, supporting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs and marketing outreach and campaigns. Prior to joining, Roshan, Sharifi worked as the Communications Director for the Alliance in Support of the Afghan People (ASAP), an international coalition based in Washington D.C. At ASAP, Sharifi developed and led the implementation of a successful communications campaign to promote Afghan women’s rights and advocated at the United States Congress and other influential public and private entities for strong support of Afghan civil society groups and higher educational institutions. Sharifi is a graduate of the University of New Mexico (UNM) in the United States with a degree in Economics and Political Science.