

## Challenges, Motivations, and Success Factors in the Creation of Hurricane Katrina “Person Locator” Web Sites

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**Abstract.** We interviewed six people who led teams that created web sites enabling Hurricane Katrina survivors to report their status. We learned that interviewees did not discover and communicate with other teams when they started their projects, which resulted in redundant sites. The absence of a shared task impeded trust between teams, ultimately inhibiting data collection and aggregation. Moreover, communication within teams was problematic; developers who had adequate technical skills to work alone were more positive about their sites' success compared to developers who had to shore up skill weaknesses through collaboration. These problems did not simply result from team leaders' over-sized egos, since site creators were generally motivated by concern for other people instead of self-interested motivations. Rather, these problems highlight the need for improved development methods and systems to help developers discover and communicate with other teams' leaders in order to collaborate on widely distributed, time-critical projects.

### 1 Introduction

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near New Orleans, LA. The storm breached levees, cut off phone and electricity service, flooded homes, and displaced hundreds of thousands of people throughout the Gulf Coast.

In this tragedy's wake, people turned to the web to learn whether friends and family had survived and, if so, where they took shelter. To assist in this search, dozens of people led teams that created web sites so users could store and retrieve data related to survivors' locations. The decision to lead these teams required significant invest-















