



# WEM Success



## 7Senses – A platform for global participatory action research

'With a solid basis we're able to continuously develop.' This was the approach for the platform that Madelon Eelderink defined for her organization. Madelon is not only a researcher, but also an entrepreneur. She started 7Senses in 2013, an organization that enables participatory action research in developing countries. The organization was growing fast, and the need for a communication platform increased. But that's not all that was needed.

## Find a solution yourself, develop and implement

Students as well as graduates, with or without research experience, can register for participatory action research at 7Senses, which they call “Challenge”. Participants of such a Challenge gain experience in countries such as Uganda, Kenya or Brazil. “We don’t bring the solution, we facilitate the process in which problem-owners and other parties involved find the solution themselves, develop and implement,” Madelon explains. “We want to have a real impact and use our investigations in a sustainable way. This method seems to be more effective and sustainable compared to providing traditional development aid. “We bring the results found during our research immediately back to the respondents, so they can act on it accordingly. This is a great added value to traditional research, where data and recommendations often end on book shelves.”

## Worldwide communication

The organization is continuously growing and Madelon is not the only one, anymore, supervising projects. The 7Senses Academy makes the organization scalable, amongst others by educating prior participants of the Challenges to become supervisors themselves. Because of the growing need amongst participants and supervisors to communicate with each other, Madelon was looking for an appropriate tool.

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“Our people are supervising research projects all over the world. As you can imagine, they want to communicate with each other, whether they are in South Africa, Brazil or Zambia. All of them will be dealing with similar issues and have similar questions, that they want to discuss with each other.”

## A platform that grows with the organization

For the communication between participants and supervisors, existing communication-platforms could have been used, such as Facebook. “We’ll continue to grow in the future, such platforms won’t be sufficient, anymore,” Madelon explains. “We wanted specific functionalities, such as a document center, an interactive world map and a forum. For the development of a communication platform-basis, that we could easily extent ourselves, WEM turned out to be the appropriate tool.”



## Everything we need in one place

In the meantime, more functionalities were added to the platform. “Soon, we’ll have an environment for all participants, next to our already existing closed environment for supervisors.” Madelon explains. “In addition, we’re working on an environment where people from all over the world can share their experiences about participatory action research. No matter if they are part of 7Senses or not, they can join the discussion and get in contact with each other.”



“We also built an application for our administration in WEM. We could have used an existing accounting program, however, ever since we knew how easy we can create something ourselves, we did. This really became a useful tool, because now I maintain an overview on everything happening in one place.” 7Senses is also working on an interactive world map, a news-portal and more functionalities that support participatory action researchers and supervisors.

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## Self-taught and self-developed

Madelon and her colleague Evert Jan van Hasselt defined the basis of the platform. Madelon had a clear picture on what was practically needed, Evert Jan had the skills to get started with WEM. “He has mastered WEM and built the platform from scratch.” Madelon tells. “I decided what we needed and what we did not. Evert Jan is not an experienced developer, but very handy. Because WEM is easy to use, he was able to create a well-developed platform, with only a little help from WEM-experts.”

It was a great collaboration. “I indicated what I wanted and it was published in no time. Evert Jan was able to quickly gain experience and thought about new and smart functionalities. This was a very unique way of working together, because we didn’t have to outsource the development of the platform to an external IT-company. This enables us to learn and develop with the growth of the company.”

### **About WEM**

WEM is an application platform that enables any subject matter expert with minimal IT knowledge to create custom applications without programming. Developing fully functional multi-platform web applications is not much harder than modeling your process in a flowchart.

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### **About 7Senses**

Madelon is founder of 7Senses and specialized in Participatory Action Research. With 7Senses she strives for a global quality improvement in development through stimulating 'community-up' innovations.

[www.7senses.es](http://www.7senses.es)

