

East End Neighborhood Forum

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Introduction

The East End Neighborhood Forum, located in East Liberty, provides help to communities in Pittsburgh's East End in the form of leadership development and capacity building. During this semester, I have been working with Shakura Sabur, the Executive Director of the East End Neighborhood Forum, and the forum's staff to increase the technical capacity of the forum. I gathered information about the organization, including the staff, facility and technical environment. Shakura and the staff then explained to me the different problems and opportunities and together we decided which I would approach in the time I was there based on time constraints and importance to the forum. The outcomes and recommendations for the future have been documented for further use by the forum,

Situation

Organization

The East End Neighborhood Forum is a coalition of non-profit community-based neighborhood organizations, designed to increase the sustainability of households and revitalize neighborhoods in Pittsburgh's East End using collaborative multi-neighborhood economic development strategies. The EENF, located in East Liberty, represents nine East End distressed neighborhoods.

Through citizen engagement, leadership development, and capacity building, the EENF is designed to increase the sustainability of households in ways that result in revitalized neighborhoods. Their emphasis is on neighborhood organizing and planning to create multi-neighborhood economic development strategies. This is done through door-to-door organizing and linking citizens to existing community-based organizations, such as Development organizations, that share their concerns. The EENF builds leadership and organizational capacity for six common interest areas identified by East End communities: public safety, improving the quality of public education, business district development, housing, workforce development and multi-neighborhood initiatives. The forum provides strategic planning assistance for neighborhoods to develop sustainable well-defined neighborhood agendas and projects that improve the quality of life for residents in the East End. In conclusion, the EENF assists member organizations to become more empowered to serve their communities and reshape their destinies.

The EENF staff consists of an Executive Director, Shakura Sabur, and 3 Community Organizers, Lesley, Sandra and Sharon. The forum serves around 70,000 citizens. It is funded by the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, endowments and charities. They are in the process of writing more grants. The accountant's goal is to get funds from fundraisers and grants. They don't have a lot of funds to buy computers, software, etc.

Facilities

The forum occupies a rent-free apartment on the second floor of a building owned by West Penn Hospital. West Penn Hospital wants to sell so they might have to relocate.

There is one room upstairs, occupied by Lesley that contains 2 desks, 2 chairs near the windows. There is a larger table with folding chairs for meetings. There is a computer, fax, printer and phone upstairs. There is a closet and filing cabinets. There are 2 phone lines and a fax line outlet.

Also upstairs, there is one bathroom and an extra closet. There are narrow stairs that go downstairs to the

entrance of the apartment that is also a large room occupied by Sharon and Sandra. This room has 3 desks, chairs and filing cabinets. There is 1 computer that belongs to Sharon and 1 laptop that belongs to Sandra. They also have 2 phones and a printer. There is one phone outlet with 2 phone lines. The fax line is only upstairs. To the left of this room is a bathroom, closet and a kitchen. The kitchen contains a copier machine.

To the right, Shakura's office is located. It contains a computer, printer and phone. There is one phone outlet with 2 phone lines. It also houses a desk, chair and tables for meetings as well as a closet.

Since they are renting this facility, they cannot put any holes in the walls for wiring. The wiring they do have is along the bottom of the wall and concealed with tape. There is no security system. Lighting is good.

The computers are used exclusively by the staff.

Program

The community organizers work at their individual communities and help revitalize the neighborhoods through engaging citizens. The organization has 3 community organizers. They are in the office for 2-3 days and the rest of the time they are out in their respective communities. They are at their sites interacting with their communities. They go door to door finding issues that citizens are concerned with. They then link the citizens together to find solutions. They hold workshops to teach their communities how to develop leadership skills and build their capacities. They go to city council meetings and other events to help citizens solve neighborhood issues. They take pictures when they are at their workshops and sites to advertise the forum.

They have staff meetings on Fridays and sometimes in the evenings. They also have board meetings, which consists of 20 members, where they make presentations.

The forum produces newsletters using MS Publisher. They've only produced one at the moment. They send this newsletter to their board and communities. The newsletter contains information on events and issues that have occurred. Also using MS Publisher, they have created a pamphlet for advertising the forum.

Using MS Word, they write letters and memos. They send these out or fax them to their communities and board members. They have 2 databases that contain mailing lists for their communities and board. The databases are in Excel.

In the future, they are planning to build a resource center for members of the community to do research. The information they will have available will be on how to organize people, on education, on strategies, etc

They provide a web site. The site contains basic information and different projects. They are hoping to include the newsletter.

Staff

The 3 community organizers have been working for the forum for 6 months.

All 3 community organizers use their computer mainly for administrative use. In general, they know how to use the computer for basic uses. They are fairly computer literate and are able to use the WWW, e-mail such as AOL or Earthlink, and use spreadsheet and word processing applications. Shakura would like to see her staff increase their technical abilities and use technology to the fullest.

They use Excel to make budgets for different grants, etc. Lesley uses Publisher to make newsletters. Lesley is also in charge of the web site. At the moment, she uses Word to create the pages. They all use Microsoft Word to write letters or memos.

The staff spends a significant amount of time on the phone since most of their communities don't have e-mail. They are currently with Bell. They don't really use e-mail often or calendars on the computer because they are often on site and not at the office. They were given Casio BOSSs to use and be more professional but they haven't been using them. They are willing to learn.

They all have different e-mail accounts and some are home accounts. Sharon and Lesley have an AOL account and Sandra has an Earthlink account. They use e-mails to talk with their communities and board. They use the WWW to research information but they don't really use it a lot.

The staff is extremely willing to learn new and advanced skills.

Technical Environment

As of February 2000, the Forum's hardware and software include the following:

| Computer | Hardware | Software |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Director's Computer | x86 Family 6 model 5 Stepping 2 AT/AT Compatible 62,836 ICB RAM | Windows NT America Online (AOL) MS Office 2000 |
| Lesley's Computer | Pentium II MMX 56MB RAM Genuine Intel 56 K Modem CD Rom | Windows 98 MS Office 2000 AOL JFax Trend PC-cillin MS Office Business Tools |
| Sharon's Computer | Pentium II MMX 56MB RAM Genuine Intel 56 K Modem CD Rom | Windows 98 MS Office 2000 AOL JFax Trend PC-cillin MS Office Business Tools |
| Director's Laptop used by Sandra | Compaq 56K Modem | Windows 95 MS Office 97 AOL JFax Trend PC-cillin MS Office Business Tools |

There are 3 printers: 2 Xerox DocuPrint P8, 1 HP Laserjet 2100. There is also a Canon 622 Photocopier machine in the kitchen. At the moment, each computer is connected to one printer except for the laptop, which shares Sharon's printer. When they want to show each other their reports they print them out and then show them to each other.

Technical Management

There is currently no one at the Forum responsible for managing the technical environment. When they encounter computer difficulties, they turn to Shakura's husband for aid. He is really the only person they can turn to when they need help. They don't really know the nuts and bolts of the computer so they can't handle the problems themselves. They don't know what different errors mean or what to do when their screen freezes. Also they get this one same error when using MS Word. They also get illegal shutdowns a lot.

Problems and Opportunities

The problems and opportunities have been stated in order of importance to the Forum.

Databases

The forum currently uses separate excel spreadsheets to keep track of all their contacts in the community and on their board. They have specific columns for name, phone number, e-mail, organization, etc. The columns are disorganized and not in a format that would be easy to search. They also have separate categories in each spreadsheet that are just separated by empty rows.

As the contact lists gets bigger they just keep adding to the bottom of the list. It is becoming harder to find the information they need because there are so many names to keep track of. They are planning to also create another database with a list of potential funders and their information. They want to be able to access list of funders by selecting certain options like all the funders in one zip code or all the funders who fund different issues. They don't know how to do this in excel. They are going to be adding more databases with more information and they are finding it hard to keep track of all this information.

This problem is not allowing the forum to use it's information on funders and community people to its fullest. If they are able to select funders from different neighborhoods quicker then they will be able to provide the information faster and in a neat and efficient way.

My organization needs a Contact/Client Management Database to keep track of all the names and addresses of people who regularly receive mail from them. The lists can quickly grow into large files, which are too large to easily deal with.

The solution we have come up with is to transfer the existing excel spreadsheets into Access Databases. This will allow information to be accessed more easily and it will be well organized. Since this is a database it will be able to contain more information as the forum grows. Access is easier to learn and comes with templates that they will already be able to use – like mailing lists and membership info. They can also make their own templates. They will be able to link their database to a series of forms they have developed in MS Word, for example, and have set up as mail merges. Since they already have mailing lists in Excel, it will be easy to transfer them into Access. I have also shown how to make form letters and link them to make mass mailings.

Impacts

Implementing the databases in Access will reduce the time it takes to look up information they need. They will also be able to keep track of all the different categories. Once I show them how to create databases and maintain them, they will be able to create more of them if the need presents itself. The forum will be more organized in keeping track of all the funders and as a result get more grants, etc. The down side is that it may be uncomfortable for them to work with this application if they are just beginning. Access is a very complicated program and the staff will probably need much more practice to be comfortable and take full advantage of the program. But for keeping track of contacts, etc. it shouldn't be too difficult for them. This part will be sustainable but going further than making simple queries on the contacts tables may not be possible.

Feasibility

Since most of the databases are already in excel, it is possible to transfer them into Access. Some of the spreadsheets are a little complicated and may need time to input the information by hand. The staff is committed to learning how to use Access to create the databases and maintain them. Access is already installed on all computers. The only risk is inputting the information they already have and it may take time. I am not very knowledgeable with Access but I will learn it.

Flyers and Newsletters

The newsletters and flyers they create are not very eye-catching. They lack variety as well as lacking in images and photos. They don't know what options are available to create eye-catching newsletters and flyers. If the fliers were fancier, more people would take notice and this would help publicity greatly. Also if the newsletter is eye-catching, more people would be interested in reading it and they would gain more information on the forum.

My solution is to have a tutorial on MS Publisher to create attractive, professional designs that would help them advertise their organization. I showed them where to go in the city to scan images and photos instead of buying a scanner. I showed them where to go to get images and how to look on the Internet for ideas. This will help them create nicer and more eye-catching advertisements and newsletters.

Impacts

This would give the organization more publicity with the fliers. For the newsletter, more people in the communities will be aware of what is going on in their area and other areas. It will help them to become more involved when they see what other neighborhoods have done. Also, the board would be very impressed by professional and attractive features.

Feasibility

This is something everyone is willing to learn. It shouldn't take very long to teach them. They already have access to the internet and MS Publisher. I have experience with Publisher and will help them learn how to use it. After they understand how to use it, they will be able to create many other things in the future.

General Computer Skills

The staff does not know what to do when errors occur in the computer. They know how to use computers efficiently. I think it would be good for them to learn how to make their computers work faster by using different maintenance procedures. Also I will teach them how to organize their files in folders so as to be able to retrieve them faster. I will also show them the nuts and bolts of the computer so they will know what to do when different errors or problems occur. They need to learn what different errors mean or what to do when their screen freezes. They get this one same error when using MS Word. They also get illegal shutdowns a lot. I will show them how to virus protect their computer better by downloading updates. The cause of these errors could be viruses.

For the staff to create more efficient mass mailings, they need to use form letters and mailing labels. I will show them how to create this using MS Word. Also they don't know how to do Budget projections using excel formulas. They type everything in by hand and multiply each cell one by one. So I will show them how to use Excel formulas that are available.

I will give them a tutorial on the general nuts and bolts of a computer. I will also show them where to go to look for help.

Impact

The organization will be more organized and run more efficiently in its administrative work if the staff knew how to fix errors on the computers, etc. If they knew where to get help or how to fix errors, they would save time instead of having to wait for help to come.

Feasibility

The staff is very motivated to learn about the general computer and how to fix errors. I don't need any resources except for the computers which they already have. It won't take a lot of time as long as they know where to go for help or to look for information, such as the internet. I don't have a lot of experience with errors, etc but I can show them what I would do in these cases.

Internet & E-mail Access

The forum staff needs to communicate with their communities and board members more easily. Since the 3 community organizers travel around a lot it is harder for them to check their e-mail.

They use the internet a lot to do research but since they only have 2 phone lines they always give priority to the phone so they often get kicked off the internet.

If they have e-mail on the internet then they need to access their e-mail anywhere they are. This e-mail would also have to be able to download using MS Outlook so that while they are checking the e-mail, someone else could check their e-mail. So AOL would not work in this case. For the internet, since they spend a lot of time doing research, I think they need an ISP that will provide them with good connection.

Also, they are wasting a lot of paper printing reports when they want to show them to each other. When they want to organize meetings or check each other's calendars they are unable to do so.

This is a project that I will propose but it will have to be implemented when I am not there. I will research on the net and talking with people and choose a solution such as either DSL or cable modem. I will give them the pros and cons and let Shakura choose which she would rather have based on the options.

Impacts

The staff will be able to share files which will save paper. They will have access to the internet as much as they need, hence improving their information gathering. Having an e-mail account will allow them to make communication easier since they are not at the office most of the time. This can be a very expensive project if they choose DSL or something similar.

Feasibility

If Shakura presents a proposal that is complete with information on what they plan to do and she presents it to the board, they can get this project.

GIS System

The forum needs a system that allows them to keep track of their neighborhoods through maps. These maps will contain information on vacant lots, tax liens, owners, etc. They want to be able to cross-reference the maps which will enable them to create community plans to find out information such as where are the poor areas. The problem is that at the moment they have to go to all these different places to access this information such as the police department for crime incidents in certain areas, etc. It is hard to find all the information they need in short time.

This would help them target the areas they wanted to help. It would also allow community members to come in and learn about their neighborhoods and who owns what properties etc. to better help revitalize them.

I will assess the costs and benefits related to the GIS system, which she will use in writing a proposal to get funds to purchase and install the system. I will make recommendations on how to install a system and which system is best to purchase. I will research via the web for consulting companies who could aid the organization in installation.

Impacts

This will enable the forum to interact with the communities by allowing them to come in and access this information themselves. It will be easier to get this information through the Internet for users other than the staff at EENF than having to go to all these different places in the city and get the information there. The staff would be able to print out maps in different layers and get specific information much quicker than going downtown to get information. The staff would be able to do different types of analysis on the data than you would

otherwise be able to do. It would take a long time to get all the information they needed and to learn how to use the software effectively and clearly unless they got good consulting help.

Feasibility

This may take a lot of time and funds to get the software, buy the computer, set it up and learn how to use it. The funding could be available if necessary. The partner is very motivated in doing this project because it is something that could bring a lot of information to community members in planning their solutions for neighborhoods. I am not familiar at all with this type of software but I can look up the various types of software and get the information needed. The risk is that the software may not be learned in the time I will be there and when I leave the software will not be used.

WORKPLAN

| Task Name | Who Responsible | Target Date | 3 | 10 | 17 | 24 | 7 | 14 | 21 | 28 | 5 |
|---|----------------------|-------------|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|---|
| CASIO BOSS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Read manual ◆ Practice using BOSS ◆ Install on computer to practice | Consultant | 3/3/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Be able to insert addresses, memos, schedules ◆ Know the features of BOSS | Consultant and Staff | 3/3/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| DATABASE | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Learn basic features of Access ◆ How to prepare Excel databases for transfer into Access ◆ Learn to transfer databases from Excel ◆ Learn how to create database in Access | Consultant | 4/14/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| Tutorial on Access (see above) | Consultant and Staff | 4/14/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| Flyers & Newsletter | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Show how to use internet effectively to download images ◆ Show how to download and save images | Consultant and Staff | 3/10/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| Learn the features of MS Publisher to make newsletters more effectively | Consultant | 3/10/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| Tutorial on MS Publisher | Consultant and Staff | 3/10/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| NUTS AND BOLTS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a handout on basics on computer | Consultant | 4/21/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| Tutorial on Nuts and Bolts | Consultant and staff | 4/21/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| INTERNET AND E-MAIL ACCESS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research Domain Names ◆ Register Domain Names ◆ Tutorial on HotOffice.com | Consultant and CP | 4/28/00 | | | | | | | | | |
| GIS | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Research best quality GIS software that works best with resources available ◆ Research price ◆ Present report on findings & suggestions | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Misc. Prepare Oral Pres. | Consultant and CP | 5/5/00 | | | | | | | | | |

Outcomes and Recommendations

1. GIS System

Description:

The forum needs a system that allows them to keep track of their neighborhoods through maps. These maps will contain information on vacant lots, tax liens, owners, etc. They want to be able to cross-reference the maps which will enable them to create community plans to find out information such as where are the poor areas. The problem is that at the moment they have to go to all these different places to access this information such as the police department for crime incidents in certain areas, etc. It is hard to find all the information they need in short time.

This system would help them target the areas they want to help. It would also allow community members to come in and learn about their neighborhoods and who owns what properties etc. to better help revitalize them. This will enable the forum to interact with the communities by allowing them to come in and access this information themselves. It will be easier to get this information through the Internet than having to go to all these different places in the city and get the information there. It will be available via the web to users not actually at the EENF site. The staff would be able to print out maps in different layers and get specific information much quicker than going downtown to get information.

This may take a lot of time and funds to get the software, buy the computer, set it up and learn how to use it. The partner is very motivated in doing this project because it is something that could bring a lot of information to community members in planning their solutions for neighborhoods. After presenting my findings, my community partner is well educated on the appropriate GIS software to get and that this is the best GIS software for the forum and the reasons why. I have given them resources such as websites and contacts (see below) for them to be more knowledgeable on the subject.

Outcomes:

This is a as-yet-unreached opportunity. With my recommendations and resources, the forum will be able to install a GIS system. Given the limited time I have with the forum, I will be unable to install and connect the system. I had discussions with the staff and the CP on what requirements they needed in a GIS system. They showed me maps from other organizations who had GIS systems and explained to me how they wanted their maps to look. We also discussed what system the other organization had and they had ArcView. They told me what data they needed to be included such as crime rates, tax liens, etc. My research will allow them to present to the board the findings and what they would like.

Sustainability:

My Community Partner has learned many different aspects of planning for a GIS system and is moving forward with these plans, by presenting them to the board.

Recommendations:

I recommend getting a company or consulting group to build the GIS system by installing the necessary software and configuring the hardware. The company will also train those who maintain the system and those who use it everyday.

I recommend the top consulting company for GIS software, ESRI. They provide consulting and design services, database services, data publishing services, programming and implementation services. I picked this company because it is one of the top consulting companies for GIS software and was reviewed by many different sources. There are many others that were considered but this company provides a wide-range of services and is available all around the nation.

Once the desktops are networked together and networked to the different, relevant organizations then one of the desktops or the laptop can be used as the hardware for the system. The software components which are needed are tools for the input and manipulation of geographic information, a database management system (DBMS), tools that support geographic query, analysis, and visualization and a graphical user interface (GUI) for easy access to tools. The forum already has a DBMS, MS Access. I recommend ArcView GIS. ArcView GIS is a desktop geographic information system. ArcView GIS can create intelligent, dynamic maps using data from virtually any source and across most popular computing platforms. ArcView GIS provides the tools to work with maps, database tables, charts, and graphics all at once. ArcView also provide virtual classrooms online and training.

Resources:

ESRI (Pennsylvania Office): 610-337-8380

CMU GIS expert: Tom Cullen in the Heinz School (Thomas J Cullen tc2r@andrew.cmu.edu)

He is in charge of InfoLink which could take on the consulting job. InfoLink is a program that works with primarily at-risk youth and gives them skills in, as well as other things, building GIS systems.

2. Internet & E-mail access

Description:

The forum staff needs to communicate with their communities and board members more easily. Since the 3 community organizers travel around a lot it is harder for them to check their e-mail. They use the internet a lot to do research but since they only have 2 phone lines they always give priority to the phone so they often get kicked off the internet.

If they have e-mail on the internet then they need to access their e-mail anywhere they are. This e-mail would also have to be able to download using MS Outlook so that while they are checking the e-mail, someone else could check their e-mail. So AOL would not work in this case. For the internet, since they spend a lot of time doing research, I think they need an ISP that will provide them with good connection.

Also, they are wasting a lot of paper printing reports when they want to show them to each other. When they want to organize meetings or check each other's calendars they are unable to do so.

This is a project that I will propose but it will have to be implemented when I am not there.

Recommendation:

I have given them two separate options and have shown the pros and cons of either one. I recommended either Cable Modem or DSL. I recommend they get a DSL connection through Bell Atlantic or AT&T. DSL is a more stable, reliable connection. They can access the Internet *at the same time* that they are talking on the phone or sending a fax. Because the staff can share a single DSL line, this will eliminate all the separate dialup lines and separate Internet accounts. With cable modem it is very similar to the separate dial up lines they have now but with faster connection. It is also cheaper than DSL.

Resources:

<http://www.att.com>

<http://www.bellatlantic.com>

The sites given different information on cable modems and DSL lines and offer packages also.

Recommendation:

I recommend they get hotoffice.com which is a virtual intranet. It is a place on the web where they have a secure place to share files, leave messages and plan events through a common calendar. It is just like having the computers connected but instead they can access the information when they are not in the office. It is secure and no one has access but them. This way they can access each others files through the internet. They do not

necessarily have to be in the office to see this. It also provides them with an e-mail address. It will allow them to save paper by not printing copies to show to the staff, etc.

Resources:

<http://www.hotoffice.com>

3. Database

Description:

The forum currently uses separate excel spreadsheets to keep track of all their contacts in the community and on their board. They have specific columns for name, phone number, e-mail, organization, etc. The columns are disorganized and not in a format that would be easy to search. They also have separate categories in each spreadsheet that are just separated by empty rows.

As the contact lists gets bigger they just keep adding to the bottom of the list. It is becoming harder to find the information they need because there are so many names to keep track of. They are planning to also create another database with a list of potential funders and their information. They want to be able to access list of funders by selecting certain options like all the funders in one zip code or all the funders who fund different issues. They don't know how to do this in excel. They are going to be adding more databases with more information and they are finding it hard to keep track of all this information.

This problem is not allowing the forum to use it's information on funders and community people to its fullest. If they are able to select funders from different neighborhoods quicker then they will be able to provide the information faster and in a neat and efficient way.

My organization needs a Contact/Client Management Database to keep track of all the names and addresses of people who regularly receive mail from them. The lists can quickly grow into large files, which are too large to easily deal with.

The solution we have come up with is to transfer the existing excel spreadsheets into Access Databases. This will allow information to be accessed more easily and it will be well organized. Since this is a database it will be able to contain more information as the forum grows. Access is easier to learn and comes with templates that they will already be able to use – like mailing lists and membership info. They can also make their own templates. They will be able to link their database to a series of forms they have developed in MS Word, for example, and have set up as mail merges. Since they already have mailing lists in Excel, it will be easy to transfer them into Access. I have also shown how to make form letters and link them to make mass mailings.

Outcomes:

The board mailing list has been transferred into an Access table. There is also a general table for contacts for the forum. Also the staff is aware of how Excel spreadsheets need to be prepared to transfer into Access. The staff knows how to make queries to get certain contacts based on given criteria. The staff has been able to dial the phone from the computer and more specifically access. The organization now has the ability to create a simple contact database with separate tables for different section of the mailings.

Sustainability:

When the forum will start making mass phone calls to community members they will dial the numbers from a single click of the mouse on the Access contact listing for that member. They know how to record notes about the calls and they will be able to organize the calls by zip code or other criteria. It will take a while for them to be comfortable entering information into the database especially importing from Excel.

Recommendation:

I recommend that all files that contain contact information for the forum be transferred or imported into Access as soon as possible. The longer the forum waits, the harder it will be and the longer it will take to get all the

information in. Their contact information will be accumulating at an enormous rate and it will need to be organized well in order to access certain parts. If they want to input contact information from the United Way Directory or from directories with potential funders then they can scan this information or get it via the web and input it into the database. It will be easier to have the information scanned into an excel spreadsheets by a copying service like Kinko's. Also the forum can call United Way and get it in digital format.

Resources:

To get the directory scanned into an excel spreadsheet, the forum can go to a place such as Kinko's and they will scan the information for them. (412) 687-2752

United Way: (800) 411-UWAY

United Way can provide a directory of potential funders in paper format or digital. If you call this number they will send you either one.

Newsletter/Flyer

Description:

The newsletters and flyers they create are not very eye-catching. They lack variety as well as lacking in images and photos. They don't know what options are available to create eye-catching newsletters and flyers. If the fliers were fancier, more people would take notice and this would help publicity greatly. Also if the newsletter is eye-catching, more people would be interested in reading it and they would gain more information on the forum.

My solution was to have a tutorial on MS Publisher to create attractive, professional designs that would help them advertise their organization. I showed them where to go in the city to scan images and photos instead of buying a scanner. I showed them where to go to get images and how to look on the Internet for ideas. This will help them create nicer and more eye-catching advertisements and newsletters.

Outcomes:

The forum has created their second newsletter importing images. Leslie has been searching the web for images that reflect the forum's ideas and activities. She will use these images in the web site and newsletter. Leslie is primarily in charge of making the advertisement designs.

Sustainability:

Leslie will have a template of a newsletter so she will be able to have a consistent design for future newsletters. She knows the different features of MS Publisher so she can design snazzy fliers. The images they now know how to download they can use in their website. They are very comfortable with Publisher and it will last.

Recommendation:

I recommend they download images from community websites because they have images that are similar to the forum's needs. The forum needs images that reflect Black Communities and they're aren't that many web sites that have those kind of images and clip art. There is this type of clip art out there but it is very time consuming to search every site and every CD. I recommend that they purchase software or copy images from web sites that reflect the same things EENF does. Of course, permission would need to be obtained by the web master of that site. The web master is usually included in the information on the site.

I also recommend finding a local artist and paying them or asking them to volunteer to create a set of graphic images that reflect the organization. These images could be scanned by going to Kinko's or borrowing someone's scanner. Then they can just import them into the publications.

I also recommend they continue to update the MS Publisher software by going to the Microsoft website below. Go to the website and go to software updates to download the necessary files.

Resources:

MS Publisher site: <http://www.microsoft.com/office/publisher/default.htm>

4. General Computer Skills

Description:

The staff is familiar with the basics of the computer. The staff needs to know more about the errors that occur in computers such as screen freezing and illegal shutdowns. They also get this one error with MS Word. I have shown them where to look on the web when these errors occur and a window appears saying what the error or virus is. The cause of these errors could be viruses. I will show them how to virus protect their computer better by downloading updates.

I have also shown them how to make the work they do quicker and better by organizing files more efficiently in folders.

For the staff to create more efficient mass mailings, they need to use form letters and mailing labels. I have shown them how to create this using MS Word. Also they don't know how to do Budget projections using excel formulas. They type everything in by hand and multiply each cell one by one. So I have shown them how to use Excel formulas that are available.

I gave them a tutorial on the general nuts and bolts of a computer. I have also shown them where to go to look for help.

Outcomes:

They now use Excel formulas to sum up certain cells in their budgets. They also have learned about other formulas such as average, etc. which will help them in their budgets. When using Word, they have created labels for all their board members so that they can send out letters and newsletters. They have also made form letters that can be customized for each person on the mailing list with their name and addresses. They have made progress in finding new ways to use software to meet their varied administrative needs.

They also know how to make slide presentations with exciting pictures and animation using Power Point. I have shown them how to incorporate a projector with the software. This will allow their presentations to the board to be more professional.

Sustainability:

Excel can be hard to master if you don't practice using it. They may have trouble using other formulas and not realize that there are other formulas that could be useful. Since these skills have become part of their everyday work and are found to be useful, they will continue to use them and learn more. They are comfortable with exploring new options and formulas in the different software. I have shown them how to use help index and this has been very useful.

Recommendations:

The organization needs to keep current on changes in technology, such as hardware and software issues. This way the organization can improve their technology as the time goes by. They will know what new technology is available and what updates are available for different software and hardware. They need to know how they can keep their forum current with the rest of the world.

Resources:

<http://www.pj.org/technology>

This site contains technology updates for non-profits.

5. Technology Literacy Benchmark Recommendations

The following are recommendations for the forum based on observations of the organization

Organization has a 2 to 3 year technology plan that is integrated into the overall strategic plan and mission of the organization and is approved by the board. Organization has primary individual or working group accountable and responsible for implementing the technology plan.

Recommendation:

A technology plan should be written and shown to the board. It doesn't matter what the organization's mission is, what the size of the staff or budget is, or who an organization serves. An organization needs a technology plan. The organization needs to evaluate their technology needs and create strategies to meet those needs. How the organization will access and use technology will affect just about every function of the organization. If there is no technology plan, they will be in a constant state of reactive crisis management. A technology plan can help the forum become more effective in daily operations, budget and spend money more effectively, boost fundraising efforts and buffer groups from the effects of staff turnover.

Actions:

1. Explore whys.
2. Using the resources below, create a plan based on templates, etc. Take into consideration: learning curves, costs, vulnerability, access and political risk.
3. Present to the board.
4. Implement the plan using resources provided.

Resources:

<http://www.nonprofit-tech.org/>

<http://www.ncrtec.org/capacity/guidewww/gqres.htm>

Arts Wire Training and resources on technology planning –

<http://www.artswire.org/spiderschool/workshops/agendaplanning.html>

California Technology Assistance Project's Guide to Technology Planning -

<http://rims.k12.ca.us/ctap/planning.html>

Technology Planning: It's More Than Computers! -

<http://www.nctp.com/articles/tpmore.pdf>

South Central Regional Technology in Education Consortium's Guide to Technology Planning -

<http://projects.scrtec.org/%7Etechplan/techplanguide.html>

Links that provide different models to consider for technology planning and coordination -

<http://www.ecis.org/it/Planning.htm>"><http://www.ecis.org/it/Planning.htm>

<http://www.helping.org/frameset.adp?hosection=nonprofit&url=http%3a%2f%2fwww%2ecoyotecom%2ecom%2fdatabase%2ftechbuy%2ehtml&title=Why%20Your%20Organization%20Needs%20a%20Technology%20Plan>

Organization has a mechanism through which it keeps current on “best practice” use of technology in the nonprofit sector and incorporates this knowledge into the technology planning process. Minimum technology competency requirements are defined for every organization staff position. Staff members receive appropriate technology training that allows them to achieve these minimum technology competency levels. Staff members are evaluated against minimum technology competency levels as part of their regular performance review process.

Recommendation:

Many agencies invest considerable resources in computer hardware, software and staff training for computerized systems that then end up being under-utilized and failing to live up to their vast potential, because the staff had unrealistic expectations for the technology, or they never bought in to the idea of the technology in the first place. Staff needs to be more motivated to accept technologies.

Actions:

The successful integration of a new technology into an agency requires good and ongoing communication, long-term commitment by the entire staff, monitoring, support, intervention and patience.

1. The new systems need to be user-friendly.
2. Clearly identify the benefits of the new system to those who will use it.
3. There needs to be training and hands-on practice with the specific application.
4. There needs to be a clear commitment by management to support staff during their learning curve.
5. There needs to be a clear and communicated commitment by management to support the introduction of the new system.
6. There needs to be timely hardware/application support.
7. There needs to be clear expectations by management that staff are expected to use the new system.

Resources:

Change in nonprofit attitudes -

<http://www.gilbert.org/news/features/feature0015.html>

Organization has an adequate budget to implement its technology plan. The organization budgets for technology and associated staff training as a regular part of its annual budgeting process. The organization budgets for technology upgrades every 2 to 3 years.

Recommendation:

Nonprofits need to acknowledge that technology will have to become an ongoing year-to-year budgetary item. Upgrades of hardware and software, staff training and networking changes all have to be included into annual budget. The organization and the board are clear on just what technology is accomplishing for the organization and its mission, what it costs and what the organization needs to budget for it. The organization needs to create a budget to implement the technology plan.

Actions:

1. Meet with accountant and consultant to plan a budget.

Resources:

<http://www.pj.org/technology/tavernise0412.cfm>

Recommendation 2:

Create a plan on how to accumulate funds. When presenting to potential funders, etc. Add interesting technology components to proven ideas, know how you fit into past and current projects, involve a team, have a good evaluation plan, anticipate training, breakdowns and obsolescence, don't focus on your tech being cutting edge; focus on the outcome.

Actions:

1. Research potential funders.
2. Create plan based on resources. Discuss with accountant.

Resources:

Search Grants and Grantmakers -

<http://data.cued.uic.edu/donorsforum/>

<http://www.pj.org/technology/tavernise0412.cfm>