

Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN)

Final Consulting Report

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Executive Summary

Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network, PIIN is an interracial, urban-suburban coalition of congregations and other organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania. PIIN draws together people of all faiths and income levels to act powerfully on local and regional issues of justice and equity through community-building, negotiation with decision makers and direct action.

PIIN's office is located on the second floor of the Lavelle Building in the Hill District at 2905 Center Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15219. The two offices and conference room in the building accommodate most administrative tasks. Activities, meetings and trainings are held throughout the city at various member organization facilities.

For the past twelve weeks I have worked with Evans Moore, the Executive Director of PIIN to increase their technical capacity. We identified several areas where technology can be integrated into the organization and its programs. Based upon the problems and opportunities analyzed, we focused on one major consulting task that resulted in two consulting outcomes. Time restrictions limited the scope of work for the partnership. Tasks that could not be completed during the partnership were discussed and included in the recommendations.

The first consulting task involved creating an online presence for PIIN. The organization sought to increase communication with the community and contributors through the use of a website. Additionally, the website plans be used in the future as a tool to increase the fundraising efforts; which is vital to any non-profit organization.

PIIN now has a template for a future website. This site will increase their impact, reach and communication with the world. Pete McQuillin, a community volunteer acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to create new web pages and maintain the site. Pete is able to make content changes and acquired the knowledge to complete more advanced tasks such as changing the styles defined in the style sheet. Pete and Evans were provided with several print and web resources, if needed in the future. The web site is located at www.piin.org.

In the process of creating the website, we set up piin.org email accounts. Evans is able to add, delete and modify e-mail accounts, using the Ready Hosting control panel. This resulted in the use of Microsoft Outlook as the email client. Before the consulting partnership, Evans had multiple email clients. After creating the piin.org email account, he now uses Microsoft Outlook to access all three accounts.

In order to ensure sustainability of the website template, Evans will need to learn some basic HTML. During the consulting partnership, Pete McQuillin, a volunteer was trained to maintain the website. Since Evans is the only paid staff member, it is important that he is able to create and maintain the site in the absence of a volunteer for long term sustainability. The second option would be to hire a website designer to develop the site. I estimate this would cost PIIN \$1,000 or more per year. Dedicating 3 to 5 hours now, can eliminate this cost in the future. In addition, Evans or other dedicated volunteers can enroll at classes at the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) or the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management. Evans and Pete were left with documentation on how to update and maintain the site.

The second recommendation was to create a technology plan and budget to strengthen current and future uses of technology within the organization. A focused technology plan will allow the organization to have a proactive, rather than reactive management of technology. The technology planning process will help minimize technology-related crises, use staff time efficiently, and avoid wasting money on equipment [2]. The technology plan and budget for PIIN will primarily focus on support for existing technology.

1 Background Information

1.1 The Organization

PIIN is an interracial, urban-suburban coalition of congregations and other organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania. PIIN draws together people of all faiths and income levels to act powerfully on local and regional issues of justice and equity through community-building, negotiation with decision makers and direct action.

The Pittsburgh Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN), a network of more than 30 congregations, mosques, synagogues and religious organizations. PIIN is an affiliate of the Gamaliel Foundation. Gamaliel is a network of 60 affiliates in 21 states across the United States and five provinces of South Africa. The network represents over a million multi-faith, multi-racial church-going people who work on social justice campaigns. Organized in 2000, PIIN uses community organizing and shared values to address problems in the community. Action is taken on issues such as civil rights, regional equity, public transportation, education, housing, economic and workforce development.

1.1.1 Facilities

PIIN's office is located on the second floor of the Lavelle Building in the Hill District. The two offices and conference room in the building accommodate most administrative tasks. Activities, meetings and trainings are held throughout the city at various member organization facilities.

1.1.2 Programs

PIIN is a community-organizing agency that supports individual congregations through congregational and leadership development as well as direct actions within the neighborhoods. Such activities include Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaigns where PIIN aims to increase the number of registered voters and an Annual Public Action Meeting. The Public Action meeting is on October 26 and expects to turn out 2,000 or more people who come to address their public officials to commitments in the areas of civil rights for immigrants, education, housing and public transportation.

1.1.3 Staff

Evans Moore was hired in 2000 as a community organizer and currently serves as the Executive Director. He is the first and currently the only paid staff member of the organization. Evans seeks to grow the staff to include an administrative assistant and two community organizers in the near future. PIIN's leadership consists of a Board of Directors who are representatives from each organization and an Executive Committee of elected officers and subcommittee chairs. The subcommittees are finance, communications, African American Leadership Caucus (AALC), Spiritual Leaders Caucus, Core Team Caucus, and task forces (which differ from year to year). The Board of Directors serves as the voting membership body and elects the members of the Executive committee. The Executive committee meets monthly to discuss programming and provide guidance within the organization. Evans is responsible for day-to-day operations, congregational and leadership development. Evans is the Community Partner and has final oversight of all activities related to the consulting partnership.

1.1.4 Technical Environment

While technology is rich throughout the organization for communication, data management and document creation, the available technology is not used effectively. The office has two Dell Pentium 4 computers running Microsoft Windows XP, a combination copy/fax machine, a digital camera and a Dell laptop, also with Microsoft Windows XP. The office computers are not networked and have no file sharing capabilities. Within the office networking and file sharing is not a major need, since Evans is the only person who uses the office. The organization does have a need to share files between the membership and leadership. All office computers include the appropriate software to meet the needs of the organization such as Word

processing, creating spreadsheets, accounting, Internet and email. Although the office is equipped with Internet access provided by Verizon DSL, Evans actively utilizes a Sprint Mobile Broadband Connection Card that provides nearly ubiquitous wireless Internet. The office wireless Internet connection is not stable, thus used less frequently. In addition, the organization purchased Etapestry, a fundraising tool which manages donor and member contact information. Etapestry was purchased in 2005 for a one time fee of \$1500. The system is currently used to store data, but can be expanded to communicate between PIIN, Gamaliel and donors through email, creating html based newsletters, printing labels or envelopes, tracking vital statistics and demographics or creating customized reports on individuals and groups within Etapestry.

PIIN lacks an online presence through a website. This is a major concern of Evans. He recognizes that a website will help to increase their communication efforts with the membership and local community. He wishes to create a simple website that provides the user with information about the organization, its mission, history, upcoming events, issues and contact information. Evans purchased the domain name, piin.org, earlier this year on a three-year contract. The organization has a small budget to purchase monthly hosting services.

1.1.5 Technical Management

PIIN does not have a formal technology management system in place. Evans handles or appoints technology issues to the communications committee. He is comfortable with the existing technology and has become the “accidental techie” for the organization. When technology issues arise, Evans handles them on a case-by-case basis; in effect, some problems are not resolved.

1.1.6 Internal and External Communications

External communication is often through the use of flyers created in Microsoft Word or Publisher, telephone calls, email or “word of mouth”. Evans communicates to the Board of Directors or Executive Committee, and they handle most, if not all communications to the member organizations. PIIN also distributes a printed newsletter that contains current and upcoming events, but not on a consistent basis. Dustin or Watson creates the newsletter in Publisher and are members of the Communications Committee.

Internal communication between Evans and the Board of Directors and Executive Committee is most often direct, through email correspondence or phone calls. PIIN utilizes Group Mail, an application that eases the task of sending mass emails. Etapestry is capable of sending mass emails, but is used seldom, because of lack of knowledge on how to use the application.

1.1.7 Information Management

Critical information is stored in Etapestry, an online system that is used to manage information of donors, members and participants in activities such as GOTV (Voter Registration). The system currently holds about 3,000 records. The Etapestry staff handles all maintenance, data storage and updates of the data and application.

While not a priority of the organization, there is a need for a server where the leadership can remotely access critical information. In the past, an Administrative Assistant backed-up critical information, weekly on CDs. Since his departure from the organization in June, no new backups have been made. It is critical that the organization has a data back-up system in place, especially since Evans frequently uses the organization's laptop, which has a greater risk of losing important data.

1.1.8 Business Systems

As the Executive Director of PIIN, Evans manages all accounting and financial operations using QuickBooks, an accounting and management software application. He uses it for tasks such as keeping track of expenses.

1.2 Major Consulting Tasks

Task 1 – Website Template Design

Create a website to communicate with membership and community.

In today's technology-driven society, it is beneficial for organizations to use the Internet as a tool to optimize their impact, reach and communication to the world. According to NetRatings, a global leader in Internet and market research, in 2004, three out of four Americans have Internet access in the United States. Confirming that an online presence is an important and essential tool for communication. PIIN seeks to increase communication with the community and contributors through the use of a website. Additionally, the website will be used in the future as an online fundraising tool by allowing individuals and organizations to make contributions online. As the only paid staff member of PIIN, Evans lacks the time, resources and skills needed to focus on online marketing efforts.

Approach

1. Learn about PIIN's current communication methods.
2. Learn about the available resources and experience of those who will work with the site after the consulting partnership.
3. Participate in discussions about *who* will visit the website and *what* type of information they will most likely seek.

4. Research the content and structure of websites from similar organizations.
5. Consider cost and post-partnership sustainability in design of site.
6. Create site architecture with Evans.
7. Research content management systems (CMS) and other methods for CP to maintain site.
8. Determine the method and language to use to build the site.
9. Get current information and access to the domain.
10. Find hosting services based upon current and future goals of website.
11. Obtain content for the site from CP.
12. Create layouts for the site.
13. Share design with Evans and Executive Committee and receive feedback.
14. Redesign and debug based upon feedback from CP.
15. Finalize the layout template of the site.
16. Create a plan to sustain the website after partnership.
17. Obtain all necessary materials and/or resources needed for training/teaching CP to update and maintain the site.
18. Provide necessary training and/or resources to CP to update and maintain the website.
19. Have CP update and create several pages before the end of partnership.
20. Work with CP and volunteer to add content to site.
21. Set up “piin.org” email accounts and show CP how to access email.

Expected Outcome

A professionally designed site using good design principles that effectively communicates the mission and vision of PIIN. In addition, the CP and a volunteer will be comfortable maintaining the website.

Currently, no site exists. The outcome will be assessed by the following measures:

- Overall satisfaction; site meets goals and expectation of CP.
- Site existence.
- Site completeness.
- Web hosting services.
- CP and volunteer can add or modify existing pages.
- CP is equipped with all the necessary tools and resources to maintain website.

- CP utilizes “piin.org” domain name and email account(s).
- Website is simple to maintain.

Additional Impacts

External communication will have the greatest impact from the creation and implementation of a website. This online presence will allow the organization to efficiently spend their time on relationship and community building while the website serves as a marketing for promoting the organization. Program participation, membership recruitment and fundraising efforts will benefit from an online calendar to promote activities and information for prospective member organization or donors.

Feasibility

With my extensive knowledge and understanding of web design, the site can be accommodated in the duration of the consulting partnership. Evans is motivated and enthusiastic about incorporating a website into the organization. He seeks to develop the necessary skills to maintain the site. This excitement and cooperation increases the feasibility of completing the required task and ensuring sustainability of the project. In addition, Pete McQuillin, a volunteer of the communication committee will be able to update and maintain the site.

Evans believes a website is a necessary tool for the organization, but does not want it to replace human interactions and relationships. His limited time and multiple roles within the organization, may limit the time required for regular maintenance. While this fact will be taken into consideration when designing the site, it can potentially affect the future management of the site.

2 Outcome Analysis

Outcome 1 - Website Template Design

PIIN now has a professional website template that utilizes images of their membership and is easy to maintain. Pete, a community volunteer acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to create new pages and maintain the current site. Pete is able to make content changes and acquired the knowledge to complete more advanced tasks such as changing the styles defined in the style sheet. Pete and Evans were provided with several print and web resources, if needed in the future.

Pete, who will maintain the site is comfortable with Dreamweaver, the industry standard web design software package. In addition, Evans is familiar with hosting services and is able to evaluate and select an appropriate hosting package, if needed in the future. The current domain and hosting service expires in February, when Evans may decide to switch to another hosting provider. The web page is located at www.piin.org.

Pete has completed the following tasks on his own, under my supervision:

- Changed content on an existing page;
- Inserted and modified hyperlinks and mailto links;
- Created new pages;
- Created HTML tables;
- Uploaded new or updated pages;
- Created ordered and unordered lists;
- Change font properties, background properties and hyperlink properties for the entire site using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS);
- Set up a site in Dreamweaver;
- Add/Delete the picture at the top of each page.

Before the consulting partnership the organization did not have a website. Evans purchased the domain name www.piin.org with intentions of hiring someone to design a site in the near future. Now, PIIN has a functional website and utilizes the domain name to access the site. In addition, a volunteer acquired the necessary skills to maintain the site, which increases the sustainability of the project.

The website and HTML knowledge obtained during the partnership indicates an increased capacity in marketing the organization. The website creates a professional image for donors and community members, allowing instant access to PIIN information at all hours of the day.

Pete has the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain the website. The website will be updated by Pete, and in the absence of the volunteer, Evans has some knowledge to make fairly simple content changes within the site. There is a risk that the volunteer, whether Pete or someone else, may not take the initiative or that the volunteer will not remain active in the organization. This is a considerable risk, because Evans may have a heavy workload and not be able to update the site regularly.

The website has encouraged a new vision of how technology can support the mission of PIIN through new communication and marketing efforts. PIIN can leverage the Internet to promote their events and activities as well as communicate their mission and vision.

Outcome 2 – Email management

PIIN now utilizes their “piin.org” domain name for the website and email. Evans is able to add, delete and modify e-mail accounts, using the Ready Hosting control panel. The organization also utilizes Microsoft Outlook as their email client. The following are observable outcomes:

- Add, delete and modify email accounts and settings.
- Utilize address book feature in Outlook.
- Forward messages.

- Access multiple email accounts in Outlook.
- Import addresses from AOL to Outlook.
- Access “emoorej@piin.org”, via Treo phone.

Before the consulting partnership, Evans had multiple email clients. He also used his Treo phone for both his AOL and SprintPCS email. After creating the piin.org email account, he now uses Microsoft Outlook to access all three accounts. This allows him the capability to manage all his email account and addresses using one application. Microsoft Outlook has additional features that will be useful in the future, as the organization’s use of technology expands. This may include sharing calendars and integration with other applications.

Evans now has skills necessary to create and send emails and use advanced email features in Microsoft Outlook such as filters and signatures. The domain, piin.org is easy to remember and will most likely increase the number of visits to the site. At the present time, this cannot be documented since the site has not been promoted. Email statistics are set up to send to the webmaster@piin.org email account monthly. The website statistics can be viewed by any administrator through the Ready Hosting control panel. Overall, this task has improved the email management and organization within the organization.

In six to eighteen months, maintenance involves the acquired skill set. This may include adding, deleting or modifying email accounts and renewing the domain name. There are payment reminders set in Outlook for the domain name, which is renewed yearly. Both the email accounts and domain are set up once, and require little to no maintenance. This outcome supports the organization by increasing the organization and accessibility of email and allows Evans to spend less time on email management. Additionally, PIIN previously paid for a domain name they did not use, and wasted scarce financial resources.

3 Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Basic Web Design Training for Evans is needed to sustain the website. During the consulting partnership, one volunteer was trained to maintain the website. Since Evans is the only paid staff member, it is important that he is able to maintain the site in the absence of a volunteer for long term sustainability. This will require familiarity with HTML, Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), Dreamweaver, the layout of the site and the organization of the pages. Knowledge of how to insert and format images to include on the pages, formatting text, adding events to the calendar and basic troubleshooting are some of the things that he will need a thorough understanding of to maintain the site.

In the case that Evans schedule does not permit him the time to dedicate to maintenance of the site, he can hire a web designer (see appendix for sample job

description). Typically, this costs \$25/hour to \$50/hour for a quality designer to maintain the website. This would be the second option for long-term sustainability of the site, but is not highly recommended. Most changes may involve 15 minutes to 45 minutes. If a designer is hired at \$40/hour, and maintenance is required twice a month, at the end of the year a total of \$960 would be spent to make simple changes to the site. In most cases, \$900 to \$1200 can pay for a newly designed website with advanced features. Dedicating 3 to 5 hours now, can eliminate the almost \$1,000 cost in the future. Additionally, there must be someone who has the required skills and dedicated that is responsible for the upkeep of the website.

The Community College of Allegheny College offers non-credit courses through the Center for Professional Development. These classes are offered at a nominal fee. The classes vary from time to time, and can also be tailored to the students needs. The Center also works with organizations to provide financial assistance. One option that PIIN can consider is creating committee of two to three individuals who will commit to attend the classes and update the site for a small stipend. The committee members are essentially being paid to learn.

For questions about noncredit courses or registration, contact Community Education at 412.369.3703 or e-mail at communityeducation@ccac.edu.

The Bayer Center for Non Profit Management (BCNM) also provides technology resources and assistance for non-profit organizations in Allegheny County. The Center can provide customized training or individuals can enroll in one of their courses. Information can be obtained by calling 800-762-0097 or visiting their website at www.rmu.edu/bcnm. I would recommend the same option as above – creating a committee that would attend the class(es) and commit to maintenance of the site.

BCNM created a Technology Resource Directory. The directory will be useful in finding a web site designer and other technical services that PIIN may require in the future. The directory can be accessed by visiting the BCNM website above and hovering over “We connect with you” and clicking on “Technology Initiative.” There will be a link on the page for Technology Resource Directory, or visit the following website:

http://www.rmu.edu/OnTheMove/findoutmore.open_page?iCalledBy=findoutmore&iPage=60395&iT=&iattr=&ivisor=0&ichap=bcnm_techinitiative

Recommendation 2

Create a technology plan and budget to strengthen current and future uses of technology within the organization. A focused technology plan will allow the organization to have a proactive, rather than reactive management of technology. PIIN relies on technology such as email, high-speed Internet, working and up-to-date computers, printing, and fax capabilities to meet daily needs. Inefficiency or inability in using any of these technologies will affect how and if areas of the organization are

able to function. The technology planning process will help minimize technology-related crises, use staff time efficiently, and avoid wasting money on equipment [2]. An article on Techsoup.org titled, *Introduction to Technology Planning*, breaks technology planning into seven phases [3]:

1. Establish leadership and support.
2. Assess your resources.
3. Define your needs.
4. Explore solutions.
5. Write the plan.
6. Get funding.
7. Implement the plan.

The technology plan and budget for PIIN will primarily focus on support for existing technology. This should not require much, if any, assistance from an outside consultant. To begin implementation, Evans can set up a team of PIIN members and volunteers who have an interest in the task or have experience writing a technology plan and/or budget. I would suggest including members from the Board of Directors for buy-in.

TechSoup.org is an excellent resource for guidance in developing a technology plan. Other useful resources include:

WebJunction – www.webjunction.org

WebJunction is a cooperative of library staff sharing and using online resources that enable us to identify and embrace appropriate technologies and apply them to our daily work [4]. Webjunction has a complete section dedicated to technology planning - <http://www.webjunction.org/do/Navigation?category=391> This site provides a variety of articles in regards to technology planning for libraries, that are useful for any non profit organization.

Guidebook for Planning - <http://www.nctp.com/guidebook.cfm>

This is a document prepared by Graduate students at Mississippi State University that provides guidance on technology planning. It can be used for quick reference.

Recommendation 3

Implement a backup strategy for data. Currently, important documents and files are stored on the office computers or Evan's laptop. In the case that the computer is dropped or stolen and important data is lost, the files will be unrecoverable. Computers and technology can be unpredictable at times, thus a system must be in place to ensure that critical information stored on the computer is available, even when the computer is not.

Microsoft Windows XP, currently running on all PIIN computers, offers an easy method to perform automatic or manual backups. An easy to follow tutorial can be found on Microsoft's website by visiting the following website:

http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/setup/learnmore/bott_03july14.msp

Follow the above tutorial to set up an automatic system for data backups on a weekly basis. An example of an ideal time would be early Sunday morning, between 2:00 am and 4:00 am, because the computer is most likely not in use.

4 About the Consultant

Tonya Groover is a graduating senior at the University of Pittsburgh studying Computer Science and Sociology. Ms Groover plans to pursue a career as an Computer Science educator.

5 Appendix A – Job description for web coordinator

The PIIN website coordinator is responsible for the layout, appearance and content of the website. The individual must be organized, have good communication skills and work well in teams. The individual must possess skills in Web Design, XHTML, CSS, JavaScript and PHP. Familiarity with graphic design is a plus. Additionally, the individual must be familiar with the following software applications: Adobe Photoshop or Macromedia Fireworks and Macromedia Dreamweaver. To be considered for the position, the individual must submit 2-3 working examples and references of their previous web work.

6 Appendix B- Screenshot of Template

