



Technology Consulting in the Community

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Final Consulting Report

Slow Food Pittsburgh

Marisa Hale

Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
www.cmu.edu/tcinc

Carnegie Mellon



Slow Food[®] Pittsburgh

Executive Summary

Student Consultant, Marisa Hale
Community Partner, Janice Romanko

I. Background Information

Slow Food Pittsburgh (SFP) is a local chapter of a national and international organization, Slow Food USA, dedicated to traditional, local, and whole food. It is run out of the homes of a group of four core members, including the two that started the organization in Pittsburgh. For the most part, each of these core members generally has separate responsibilities within the organization, as well as their own careers and/or hobbies outside the organization.

SFP's main goal is education, or in the words of the organization,

Slow Food is an international educational organization dedicated to the revival of the kitchen and table as centers of pleasure, culture, and community; to the invigoration and proliferation of regional, seasonal culinary traditions; to the stewardship of the land and ecologically sound food production; and to leading a slower and more harmonious life.

Though they have about 200 members, most of the planning of the organization's events falls to the core group of four women. The funds from these events come from the profits of past events.

II. Consulting Tasks

SFP's website (www.slowfoodpgh.com) cannot be easily updated and it is the organization's main marketing tool. Only one person (Janice) has access and the familiarity with HTML to update the website. If anyone else wishes to update, they have to email Janice with their update and ask her to do it. If they had the ability to quickly update their site, they could better keep people's interest with news and such and hopefully attract some new members.

The impact of this site will be in several aspects. SFP wants to continue to grow, and with new design and ease-of-use, they can attract new interested people into their site. Since the website is their major marketing tool, a site that connects them to the USA organization and is vibrant in design will attract a greater pool of potential members.

The CMS will also allow each of the core members to update the website from their own machine. There will be less wait-time between creating the update and completing the update. The website will have the potential to be continually updated and users of the site will be more aware of future and past events.

III. Outcomes Analysis and Recommendations

The ultimate goal of this project enable all the core member to update the site. To accomplish this, we reorganized and rebuilt the site. We decided the best way to achieve this was using the

open-source CMS Joomla. . With the new content management system, each core member can edit the content on any page, even without knowledge of HTML.

The following are the six outcomes of different steps of the project, in order:

1. Choose the CMS
2. Decide on web host
3. Design and configure in Joomla
4. Create content
5. Distribute responsibility of content among core members
6. Develop capacity to maintain site.

In more detail, each of the six outcomes contributed to the sustainability of the site.

One of the writers of the group could write a section of the website called “Tip of the Week,” where she discusses an aspect of whole foods. Part of their mission is to educate, and by including this on their site, a little bit of education would be accessed by a wide audience. An interactive part of the website could make the site more dynamic and encourage people to come back and keep interest.

Slow Food Pittsburgh holds events almost monthly. Tickets are paid for at the door, but they could pre-sell through their website. This way, interest for newcomers is peaked at the website and they can buy immediately before the event leaves their minds. This could bring more faes to their events, a goal that was stated at our initial meeting. If people commit to buying tickets ahead of time, they may be more likely to show up.

Community Partner

Janice Romanko
puddlepixy@verizon.net

Slow Food Pittsburgh
www.slowfoodpgh.org

About the Consultant

Marisa Hale
mhale@andrew.cmu.edu

Marisa is a senior in Economics.
She also has a minor in Computer Science and
will be graduating next May.



Slow Food® Pittsburgh

Context Analysis

Student Consultant, Marisa Hale
Community Partner, Janice Romanko

I. About the Organization

Organization

Slow Food Pittsburgh (SFP) is a local chapter of a national and international organization, Slow Food USA, dedicated to traditional, local, and whole food. As a chapter of this organization, SFP hosts educational events and public outreach that promote taste education, advocate sustainability and biodiversity, and connect producers and “co-producers.”

SFP does not have a central office in Pittsburgh. It is run out of the homes of a group of four core members, including the two that started the organization in Pittsburgh. For the most part, each of these core members generally has separate responsibilities within the organization, as well as their own careers and/or hobbies outside the organization.

SFP’s main goal is education, or in the words of the organization,

Slow Food is an international educational organization dedicated to the revival of the kitchen and table as centers of pleasure, culture, and community; to the invigoration and proliferation of regional, seasonal culinary traditions; to the stewardship of the land and ecologically sound food production; and to leading a slower and more harmonious life. Slow Food Pittsburgh has close to 200 members and is growing.

Though they have about 200 members, most of the planning of the organization’s events falls to the core group of four women. There is a steering committee of sixteen people, but only about five are active. The membership fee goes wholly and directly to Slow Food USA, so SFP completely funds itself with profits from events. There is usually a discounted price at events for members. They have one “kitty” that they draw from for anything that comes up—including technical issues. The kitty is made up of the money they collect from event fees. The four core members decide together on what and when to spend any money from the kitty.

Facilities

There is no central facility for the group. Most of the routine work is done at the homes of individuals. When they must meet for planning events, they meet either at the site of the event or at some agreed upon place like a restaurant or café. Members, even the core members, are spread around Pittsburgh, so it’s not necessarily easy to find a meeting place that is convenient for everyone.

Programs

The organization tries to put on one event a month, usually with an educational purpose. For example, around Thanksgiving last year, SFP had a Butterball® turkey cooked alongside a free-range turkey so that participants could see and taste the difference. Events are also meant to be a

fun, social occasion for everyone who comes. The number of people who attend each event can range widely depending on what the event is and the cost of attendance; however, many of the same people go to every event. Anyone can attend events, but there is usually a cheaper fee for members.

Laptop butcher is a program run through the website and emails coordinated by one the members. Orders are taken by email from anyone in the community (not just members) for cuts of meat. The member in charge of this organizes the butcher to have this ready every weekend at a place where people can pick up their pre-ordered meat.

Staff

SFP is totally volunteer-run. The core group of members includes Janice, Virginia, Marlene, and Susan:

- Janice
 - Updates the website
 - Has become the “go-to” techie
 - Helps plan events
- Virginia
 - Started SFP with Marlene eight years ago
 - Keeps track of the kitty
 - Helps plan events
- Marlene
 - Started SFP with Virginia eight years ago
 - Is in charge of the mailing list
 - Gets emails with general inquiries about SFP forwarded to her
 - Helps plan events
- Susan
 - Coordinates Laptop Butcher
 - Gets emails with inquiries about Laptop Butcher forwarded to her
 - Helps plan events

Technical Environment

Janice

Software:

Adobe Illustrator CS, Adobe Photoshop CS, Adobe Acrobat 6.0 Pro, Notepad, FTP program-WinSCP3, Microsoft Outlook

Hardware connections:

Processor: Intel Core2 6600 @2.4 GHz

Ram: 2 GB 2.4 GHz

Motherboard: ASUS P5B Deluxe

Hard drive: Seagate Barracuda 7200.10 320 GB

Network Connection: Marvell Yukon 88E8001/8003/8010 PCI

Operating System: Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition Version 2002, Service Pack 3

Internet Provider: Verizon Fios 10/2

Susan

Laptop:

Mobile AMD Sempron Processor 2000+

Total Memory 512 MB

Video Memory 64 MB

HD1 Primary Master Toshiba MK 4025GAS 37.26 GB

BusSpeed 800Hz

Software:

Windows XP

Microsoft Office -- especially Word and Excel

ConstantContact email management

Network Connection: FIOS

Virginia

Hardware Overview:

Machine Name: Power Mac G5

Machine Model: PowerMac7,2

CPU Type: PowerPC 970 (2.2)

Number Of CPUs: 1

CPU Speed: 1.8 GHz

L2 Cache (per CPU): 512 KB

Memory: 512 MB

Bus Speed: 900 MHz

Boot ROM Version: 5.1.5f2

Hewlett Packard Laserjet 6MP

DSL

Marlene

MacBook

Mac OS X v10.5.

Technical Management

Each individual is in charge of managing her own technical environment. Therefore, problems are handled like they would be if they were having personal technical issues. Marlene may go to the Apple store to ask a “genius”, while Susan or Janice usually tinkers around until they can figure out the problem and fix the issue themselves. Because no special software is used, they don’t run into technical problems that often. And since most of their jobs are not too specialized (laptop butcher may be the exception) if one leaves town or is having a technical issue, one of the others can take up that person’s responsibilities.

Technology Planning

Virginia is responsible for the budget (including technical budget), but when spending money the core group decides together. Though budgeting for tech does not seem to be a priority in the

past, the group seems ready spend a reasonable amount on software if deemed necessary to achieve wish list.

Internal and External Communication

All core members have personal email accounts that they use to communicate with each other, other members, and anyone else who may be interested in their programs.

Communication within the organization is done via email using the core member's personal email accounts. For example, Virginia wants to update something on the website, she must email Janice exactly what she would like. Janice would then complete the update when convenient because she is the only one with access.

SFP itself does not have its own email account, and people emailing the organization are dealing with the individuals in the core group separately. Any emails received by any member about the organization are forwarded to Marlene to be put on the mailing list. If anyone receives an email asking about Laptop Butcher, the email is forwarded to Susan, who then coordinates their order with the butcher.

SFP does send out emails to the people on the mailing list regularly with information on the farmers' market or any upcoming events.

Information Management

Information critical to the organization is the mailing list, list of members, and their own plans of the events. This information is mostly managed manually via email. The core group does not have access to each other's documents, so if there is an update that affects more than one document, this has to be done more than once and potentially by more than one member. The group has not tried to automate in the past, because this is made harder by the fact that they use their home computers in different parts of Pittsburgh.

The way the currently operate, each member is in charge of her own communications (with members, community members, etc) and these are not available to the rest of the members.

Business System

The only business system is the kitty. Profits made from fees at events are pooled together into a single amount which is used for any spending necessary to the organization (whether it's preparation for another event or technology).

II. Scope of Work

The website to SFP (www.slowfoodpgh.com) cannot be easily updated and it is the organization's main marketing tool. Only one person (Janice) has access to update the website, and if anyone wants to add anything, they have to email Janice with their update and ask her to do it. SFP is food sustainability and whole foods advocacy, and through their website they advertise their events and other things such as the farmer's markets. If they had the ability to quickly update their site, they could better keep people's interest with news and such and hopefully attract some new members.

Expected Outcomes

Design Site	Site with well-thought out design elements	CMS Chosen "Look and feel" discussed, type chosen, colors chosen by CP
Implement Site	Site works with no troubles for common user	Web host can take CMS application CMS supports all CP-chosen features Site exists and is complete Site contains all CP-chosen features
Develop capacity to maintain site	Core members of SF can modify and sustain site	CP can add, modify, delete pages Backup plan in place Core members can do above exercises from home
Expand the internal site	Core members can use upper-level authentication part of site to govern organization	Contact list included and CP familiar Member list included and CP familiar
Training/support/troubleshooting	Core members can handle normal problems that come up and know who else to go to for other problems	Use meeting as training session Members say they feel comfortable and confident running their site Members know where to find updated applications
Future plan	Plan for technical elements in future	Someone responsible for site Budget for site List of add-ons for site List of future possibilities of technology Protocol in case of problems in place

Additional Impacts

The impact of this site will be in several aspects. With a site that is dynamic, their passion for their mission is showcased, and with a site that has similar design elements to SFP Pittsburgh, a more cohesive view of their organization will be realized. SFP wants to continue to grow, and with new design and ease-of-use, they can attract new interested people into their site. Since the website is their major marketing tool, a site that connects them to the USA organization and is vibrant in design will attract a greater pool of potential members.

Also, by implementing the CMS, the core members will have easier access to organization documents, such as the mailing list, contact list, calendar, etc. This will cut down on much of the email communication among core members and allow each of the core members to see what is happening outside of their role within the organization.

The CMS will also allow each of the core members to update the website from their own machine. This too will cut down much of the email communication among members wishing to update. There will be less wait-time between creating the update and completing the update. The website will have the potential to be continually updated and users of the site will be more aware of future and past events.

Feasibility

The implementation of the deliverable is feasible, as a site is already running and the CP seems to be able to make quick, clear decisions about the site. Implementing a CMS is new work for me, but it is definitely within my capacity to learn and use within this semester. Getting the basic site running with the CMS application should not be an issue. Designing the site should not be a problem either as long as the core members agree on a look and feel. What could potentially present a problem time-wise is including the add-ons the CPs would like. However, if there is a time issue at this point, the CP should already know how to use the site and could continue this work after this semester is finished. One member shows knowledge of available software and another maintains the current website, so I believe learning to maintain and update a new one are definitely within the CP's skills. After the semester, the CP should be able to update applications and the CMS using the open-source releases.

III. Outcomes and Recommendations

Task 1. Rebuild the website

Outcomes

The ultimate goal of this project was to reorganize and rebuild the site, complete with a new design and a way for each member to easily update it. We decided the best way to accomplish this was using the open-source CMS Joomla. Before, only one person was familiar enough with HTML to edit the site, so everyone had to contact her and ask her to perform his or her updates. With the new content management system, each core member can edit the content on any page, even without knowledge of HTML.

The following are the six outcomes of different steps of the project, in order:

7. Choose the CMS

8. Decide on web host
9. Design and configure in Joomla
10. Create content
11. Distribute responsibility of content among core members
12. Develop capacity to maintain site.

In more detail, each of the six outcomes contributed to the sustainability of the site.

1. **Choose the CMS.** The main issue with the original site was that only person could update the site and it was a time-consuming process. The CP wanted a system in which multiple users could add, edit, and delete content from their own machines. A open source CMS was the chosen solution because it would allow these functions as well as support for the organization of the site. The core members chose Joomla because it has a large support network, allows many configurations, and has an easy-to-understand interface on the administrator side.
2. **Decide on the web host.** Joomla has certain requirements in order to be implemented properly, which can be found at <http://help.joomla.org/content/view/1938/302/>. These requirements on are the web host. SFP's host at the time could not meet these requirements, so the core members decided to choose a new provider. The new web host provides free automated backups of the entire site to the server and a file system viewer so that the core members can manually manipulate files of the site. The original web host did not provide an FTP service, backups, or free application downloads and updates. The new provider does have all these, plus additional free services. We have set up the backup feature to save a backup of the website each night, since the host allows for unlimited backups on the server. That way Janice and the others can work on the site knowing that they can restore a backup file if something goes wrong.

When the services were purchased, the core members decided to change to a .org domain to reflect the nonprofit nature of the group. While this seems like a small thing, I think it only serves to add to the intended cohesiveness of the group. Since they still have a few months left of the original web host's services, Janice simply put a redirect on the .com site, so that visitors will be directed to the new site.

3. **Design and configure in Joomla.** Joomla allows the core members to easily change design elements like font and colors. The colors and the font family now match the national site in order to present a more cohesive view of the organization as a whole. The original website's color palette was outdated relative to the current Slow Food USA's theme. The structural elements, like the menus and page information, remained the same for the most part. As the organization's main marketing tool, a well-designed site helps to form a great first impression of the organization and hopefully a further interest to the viewer. This furthers the educating and advocating part of SFP's mission.
4. **Create the content.** For the most part, the content on the pages that didn't include news or event information stayed the same and were copied from the original site. However, the core members are more easily able to keep up with the changing news and events information. The responsibility is split between the four core members, instead of only Janice. Now, the site has 12 separate pages, and content will periodically change on at least half of these.
5. **Distribute responsibility of content among core members.** The core members already had a split of responsibilities before this project. The plan now is to keep these

responsibilities, with the exception of updating the site. Now each member can update the pages dedicated to their part of the organization, instead of depending on Janice. For example, Susan will be able to change the page that explains the Laptop Butcher part of SFP.

- 6. Develop capacity to maintain site.** All CPs have passed a “quiz” that tested their ability to add, edit, and delete content from the site. Essentially, they all have a basic familiarity with Joomla and tutorials for basic operations that we created in case of problems. All of the current content on the site was added by the CPs. At least two of them know how to manipulate the content to make it appear on a different part of the site and have this on at least three occasions each. With the original site, only one person could add, edit, and delete content from the site. It was a time-consuming process. Now, it only takes each of the CPs five minutes to update the site. However, not all CPs are completely familiar with how the server, CMS, and site fit together. This means if it “breaks” then not all of them could fix it on their own; though Janice is capable of troubleshooting problems from her experience with the original site. I feel the risk here is mitigated if the backups are performed on schedule. Besides that, Janice has the tools to “fix” it—the help docs and her own knowledge of the backend of websites.

If the problem is with a Joomla application, she should be able to find help online in the help docs or a forum. If it isn’t, then the web host has excellent customer service (as evidenced by a phone call I made where I asked many questions to test this) and Janice has her own knowledge on the topic. There is a risk to CPs may feel limited in their abilities because while they know how to complete certain tasks, they are not completely aware of everything Joomla is capable of. It takes a lot of time to learn Joomla, but this can change with a “resident expert.”

Recommendations

Slow Food USA in the past has changed their design. I recommend following these changes in order to present consistent and unified view of the organization. For example, if Slow Food USA totally overhauls their design, Slow Food Pittsburgh should go into the style sheet of their website and change their colors and font family to match the national site. This is completely within Janice’s capabilities as she has proved by inserting the logo onto the title bar of each page. She changed the proportions on the logo and inserted it onto the HTML sheet. She did this with no tutorial or instructions which shows she is already familiar enough with the HTML format to manipulate the site.

The site map of the site has not been changed. If the time were taken to do this, a more concise site where the user is immediately aware where everything is makes the site more user-friendly. The organization’s mission is to educate people and provide people with an exposure to whole and sustainable foods. With a site that is more user-friendly, it becomes possible to reach more people.

I recommend that the organization appoint someone to learn Joomla. One member of Slow Food already makes websites using DreamWeaver and has expressed that he will use Joomla for his next project. Hopefully his experience with his own project will give him the knowledge to become the “resident expert” at SFP. Joomla has many capabilities that we could not take advantage because of either no knowledge or no time. If someone were to learn these, they could further enhance their site. If this person also researched extensions and kept up with new ones, they would be aware when a helpful extension was made available and use that too. Because Joomla allows separate applications to be added-in, there are many possible extensions available. If SFP had appointed someone to learn Joomla, he or she could find appropriate

extensions that are in working condition to add to the site. By keeping up with these, the organization may find new ways to improve communication among themselves and with the public.

They already have Janice who knows HTML and the basics about websites, but including an expert on Joomla on the team will increase the sustainability of this site. If any issues occur, Janice and this Joomla expert could consult and troubleshoot. Also, if any problems occur with the others remembering how to update the site, the Joomla expert could remind them. For example, if someone hasn't updated in a while and finds that she doesn't remember where to go on the admin site, then the Joomla expert would be the go-to person in this situation. This also takes some of the technical responsibility off of Janice. She no longer is the sole default techie and would share the duty with someone else. In the case where everyone is stumped, help is available at docs.joomla.org, which is a wiki that provides information on the structure of Joomla and tutorials to help perform specific tasks.

Recommendation 1. Create a broader campaign

The main mission of SFP is to educate people about food and advocate sustainable food. In the initial meetings, it was clear the core members wanted to attract more people, especially younger people. I think the best way to accomplish this is build a larger campaign using other media that will be more visible to more people. With only the website, awareness of the existence of SFP spreads only two ways: word of mouth and happening upon the site. With more media and advertising, more people will be exposed to the organization.

The most effective way to do this is to connect SFP to choices people make at grocery stores and organic cafes. Placing small flyers at these places with a small introduction to SFP and a general tip about choosing certain foods would accomplish this. This way people connect SFP to their daily choices. One thousand postcard-sized flyers can be printed by many companies online (companies can be found by googling "print flyers") for under \$60 and some may have a nonprofit discount. The flyers could also be used to create a cohesive image of SFP by using the same colors and logos from the website.

To accomplish a print campaign with the same colors and logos, an account with printplace.com (or someplace similar) must be created. Then download the template for the type of product you want printed. In this case, a 4.25x5.5 flyer would suffice. Then, using Photoshop, create the layout of the flyer. When done, delete the template layer of the flyer so that only your art shows. The higher resolution the artwork on the flyer, the better the image. Then simply log in to your account and upload the image. There you should be able to preview and then order.

Another way to implement a wider campaign is to use a search engine's pay-per-click advertising. This is a type of advertising where the advertiser only pays a fee when a user actually clicks on the link. The advertiser bids on a search phrase, like "sustainable foods Pittsburgh," so the phrases with the least competition cost less. Many search engines have a pay-per-click option, but I recommend using Google or Yahoo since those seem to be the most popular search engines for home machines. Good general information about search engines that have pay-per-click can be found at www.payperclickuniverse.com.

To implement this campaign with Google Adwords, an account must be set up at <https://adwords.google.com>. In the account settings, choose Starter Edition (you can change to Standard Edition later) and "Have a website." The next step is to indicate that the campaign will be in Pittsburgh and in English. Then you create the ad, which includes:

1. Indicate organization URL
2. Choose three lines for the ad

3. Choose the target keywords

Google Adwords lets you choose a total amount willing to spend on this per month, so once this number is reached, your ad will not appear again until the beginning of the next month. Once this is done, the account is created and you have a Google Adwords campaign.

One of the writers of the group could write a section of the website called “Tip of the Week,” where she discusses an aspect of whole foods. Part of their mission is to educate, and by including this on their site, a little bit of education would be accessed by a wide audience. I think this is a relatively easy addition that furthers the mission. If Virginia or Marlene, who are both writers, took on this task, they could add something every week that relates to an upcoming holiday or something at that week’s farmer’s market. It could be as specialized as they wish. An interactive part of the website could make the site more dynamic and encourage people to come back and keep interest. If people read it and think about it later, then it in some way aligns them with SFP’s mission, which is the ultimate goal.

Recommendation 2. Sell Tickets Through the Website

Slow Food Pittsburgh holds events almost monthly. Tickets are paid for at the door, but they could pre-sell through their website. This way, interest for newcomers is peaked at the website and they can buy immediately before the event leaves their minds. Also, there would be less cash and confusion at the door of events and credit card purchases would be possible. It could possible be beneficial in planning events if core members could see how fast tickets are pre-selling so that they could make accommodations for an unexpectedly popular (or possible unpopular) event.

Vendini is a company that provides a ticket-selling service on websites. It is a large company with lots of variations on the ticket-selling service, so that if SFP grows and requires more from this service, like a full box office, this is easy to accommodate. What is great about Vendini is that they don’t send customers to another vendor to purchase tickets. The tickets are purchased directly on the original site—in this case, customers would stay on SFP’s site while purchasing tickets.

Tickets can be customized with promotions, so if SFP wanted to give a discount to new members or the first 10 people to buy tickets to an event this would possible. For support, Vendini assigns each client a specific Account Manager so that advice specific to the client is given. More importantly, there is no term commitment when signing up for their services. Because ticketing sales online involves credit card information, Vendini owns all the hardware that this information is kept on. This ensures that the customer’s information is safe from outsiders.

They allow a free 30-day demonstration at www.vendini.com/solutions/demo.html. For more information, visit www.vendini.com. The only way to get their services is to contact them by phone. They will create an account for the organization, where you can set up the information on what website it is to be implemented on, event size, ticket numbers, ticket price, and promotions. The last step is to add a separate page to the website for the ordering information.

About the Consultant

Marisa Hale is a senior in Economics with a minor in Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University. She will be graduating in May and is looking forward to a career in IT and business consulting.