Mon Valley Unemployed Committee
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About the Organization

Organization and Program:
The Mon Valley Unemployed Committee (MVUC) is a non-profit organization committed to helping unemployed and low-income people in the Mon Valley region get assistance needed to remake their lives. The Mon Valley region still struggles from the loss of the once thriving steel industry. MVUC works on a $140,000 budget, from which their main source of funding comes from the United Way Contributors Choice Program and other sources that include donations and grants from foundations and individual sources.
MVUC is involved in helping people through a help-line to having reform or change occur in the system. They help individual people get unemployment benefits, TRA benefits, welfare benefits, health care, subsidized child-care. They also lobby the state and federal government for reform and changes in welfare and unemployment laws. The everyday operations at MVUC involve speaking with people over the phone, as well as communicating through e-mail. When people run into trouble getting benefits from government agencies, they can call and get help. If they need help applying or get denied for something, they get in touch with MVUC to get help. The same is true for their e-mail communications. MVUC also deals with many administrative appeals, unemployment, and also retraining. When MVUC notices that laws or policies need changing, they go out to talk to members of congress and legislators to get that policy reformed, whether it is healthcare, childcare, or any other big issue. MVUC also holds meetings and updates on different issues that concern people they help. These meetings help bring in support and understanding to the problem at hand.
The MVUC program also involves databases of their contributors, volunteers, related information, and people whom they have helped. They also make newsletters and messages to send out to people through e-mails as well as postal mail and flyers to hand out at rallies or to stir some interest. Newsletters and flyers are made through use of Microsoft Word. The database is maintained through Microsoft Access.

Staff:
MVUC has three full-time employees: Paul Lodico, Sandy Kolenda, and Barney Oursler. Paul is my community partner and therefore my main point of contact. He uses his computer to write documents in Microsoft Word, look at Access databases, and check his e-mail. Sandy is the more technically inclined of the three. Paul learns things through her. Therefore Sandy has the most recent computer as she uses it extensively compared to either Paul or Barney. She makes documents and flyers and updates databases and printing. She also mainly checks the e-mail account. Sandy has working knowledge of computers and its programs but not much formal training. Therefore if there is any real problem or question, they try to get in touch with someone more technically inclined than they are, usually Rob Toy whom is a member of their Policy Council.

Technical Environment:
MVUC has a computer set up at each of the three workstations. The first of the three computers is a Dell Pentium 4, 1.3GHz, 128MB RAM, 37 GB hard drive, 32MB NVIDIA Gforce 2 graphics card, with a TrueMobile 1150 wireless PC card. This system runs Windows 2000 and has a range of software, but most used is Microsoft Word, Microsoft Access and scanning software. The second of the three is also a Dell, but a much older one. It is a Pentium 1, 300 MHz, 128 MB RAM, CD/RW Drive, 1 GB Jazz tape drive, with a TrueMobile 1150 wireless PC card. This computer runs Windows 98 and uses mainly Microsoft Word and Microsoft Access. The last of the three computers is a Pentium 1, 233 MHz, 32MB RAM, CD-ROM Drive, with a TrueMobile 1150 wireless PC card. This system runs Windows 98 and

uses Microsoft Word. These three computers are networked together through a wireless router, which also connects them to the internet through a DSL courier. Their e-mail provider is MSN. There main account is for MVUC and there are personal accounts for each of the main staff.

Technology Planning:
The responsibility of planning and budgeting for the technical environment falls mostly on Paul, but concerns the three of them. Their technology plan is to replace a computer every 12 – 18 months and be up-to-date on information and technology.

Information Management:
MVUC keeps records of old e-mails, sent and received, by means of keeping them in folders. They store and archive these to reference them at a later time. They keep e-mails that are pertinent for the time being as well as ones they judge as important, that they may archive for future use. This has been done on the e-mail server itself, which has limited space.
MVUC also has an extensive database of all their contributors and some volunteers and some people they have helped out. At the moment they have a couple databases, but only one is in use. This main database is in Microsoft Access format. Sandy manages this database mainly. They sort through this database to see who has been to certain meetings and certain campaigns. They use this to look for interest in other campaigns. MVUC also uses this to send information to donators so they can ask them to donate through the United Way Contributors Choice.

Problems and Opportunities:

1. **Managing E-Mail**
    Background:
    Since MVUC keeps records of all their previous sent and received e-mails in folders on the server, it takes up space on allocated space on the server. As all e-mail providers, MSN provides only a limited amount of space for keeping their e-mails. Because they need to keep these e-mails for reference, they cannot simply erase them, so they build up. They were unable to figure out how to put them on disk or hard-drive using the MSN Explorer. This created trouble because when space ran out on the server, there was no longer any space for new incoming e-mails to arrive. Incoming e-mails are from contributors and individuals needing help and other organizations requiring MVUC's services. Because MVUC was not able to receive these new e-mails, they are unable to aid these people or get further support, which prevents them from fulfilling their mission as an organization.

    Proposal:
    It was proposed to switch from using the web-based e-mail, MSN Explorer, to store e-mails and also send and receive to using an e-mail interface such as Microsoft Outlook to do all those. Setting up the interface would be the fundamental challenge. Other challenges include showing the staff of 3 at MVUC how Outlook is used. Outlook was suggested because the computers already had it installed so there was no need to spend more money on purchasing a different program that did the same thing. With Outlook, it is possible to save e-mails onto the hard-drive as well as archive them later on. The option of deleting e-mails was not used because they do delete e-mails, but they make a judgment call on which e-mails could be important at a later date.

    Anticipated Results:
    Once clearing up the e-mail server, MVUC will be able to receive e-mails from people in need as well as people that require or donate services to MVUC enabling their mission to be accomplished.
    MVUC will be able to save e-mails and archive them on respective folders on a local drive using Microsoft Outlook so they may be able to reference them at a later time.

Benefits/Results:
MVUC has adapted to using Microsoft Outlook. They now have saved all the e-mails from the folders onto the hard-dive with Outlook in their respective folders so they are not ambiguous. They have also opened up space on the server so they can receive e-mails with large attachments and forms and such.

2. **Technology Assessment and New Computer**
    Background:
    Currently MVUC has three computers, one printer, one copier, and a scanner, and a fax machine. With all the newsletters and information they store and such, they would like to know if they are set up for the next year or two. MVUC is also looking for a computer to replace an old Pentium 1. Since MVUC uses Microsoft Access, they need all the computers to be able to run it. Microsoft recommends Access 2002 to be on a Pentium III with 128 MB RAM but needs a Pentium 133MHz, where one of the three computers cannot run it. Also they are looking for things that could last them for a couple of years so they can be up-to-date with technology.

    Proposal:
    With my knowledge of the current market and what MVUC does on a regular basis, I may assess the current technology that they have, see what may be needed and then find best deals. I would suggest many recommendations with these findings to Paul and if he thinks it is for the best, we'll go through with the purchase. Also look for the best deal on a new PC to help replace the oldest computer, and configure once it was purchased.

    Anticipated Results:
    MVUC will have improved its technical capability, by being able to run Microsoft Access, what they manage their database with, on every computer. Also MVUC will replace any equipment that may be out of date or not working correctly.

    Benefits/Results:
    Paul will understand what is important for purchasing new equipment for next upgrade. Having the new computer will keep them set for a couple of years and enable them to use the database more regularly.

3. **Only Working Knowledge of Database**
    Background:
    There is a database that MVUC uses, but have not used it to its fullest functionality and not regularly. MVUC has a couple databases that were made for them but have settled on using one of them. Sandy and Paul wanted to be able to make improvements to this database when needed, but were not sure how they could go about doing it. It is important for them to keep a database of people, especially ones that donate money to them, as well as people that they deal with so they have a record of them and so they can also get in touch with them. They use this record to help find interest and support in other campaigns as well as let people who donate know what they do, as to get more donations from them. Because this is a relatively small organization, the budget does not always allow for a consultant to come in and fix or change things in the database whenever MVUC wants. Also, just

using the database is on one computer was not efficient if all three people wanted to look at it on the one computer. Enabling them to use it on all computers is the key for efficiency.

Proposal:
As a proposal, Sandy and Paul will have short run-through lessons from a book on Access at every session to help better understand the database. We will go through a chapter or section in the book every session, going over the material and I will answer any questions they may have. It will also be good if notes were taken, to help remember what was gone over. Also if able, look at how the database can be networked to all three computers so everyone can access to it and use it at the same time.

Anticipated Results:
Paul and Sandy will be able to make changes to the databases when the need arises. They will also use the database on an even more regular basis so they can keep accurate records of things that progress.

Benefits/Results:
MVUC will be more efficient in keeping their data, which will help reference records and also keep a forum of people to send newsletters and campaigns to. MVUC has already been able to add a field in the database telling them whether that person has been active or not. If the person has not been active, i.e. attended a meeting in 2 years, or not donated in 2 or 3 years, then that person would be put inactive meaning they will not waste time and money sending information or campaigns to them. If that person ends up coming back, then they can just be put back on the active list and MVUC will have all the records at their fingertips instead of treating this person as a new affiliate. This can also help save some money on mailings if they are able to query whether people have been active or if they have moved or other circumstances. They have not yet had a mailing done, and most likely will not while the partnership is going on, but they have demonstrated that they are able to make queries using this new field. In addition to adding the new field, Sandy has found to be using the database more often than she has in the past.

Task	Who	4 Oct	7 Oct	11 Oct	14 Oct	18 Oct	21 Oct	25 Oct	28 Oct	1 Nov	4 Nov	8 Nov	11 Nov	15 Nov	18 Nov	22 Nov	25 Nov	29 Nov	2 Dec	6 Dec
Project: Managing E-Mail																				
Look For All Possibilities																				
Check capabilities for Outlook, Mulberry, and Netscape Mail	Consultant	X																		
Pick E-Mail Interface																				
Choose what is convenient	CP	X																		
Configure interface to E-Mail Provider	Consultant	X	X																	
Figure out how to save to local drive	Consultant, CP		X	X																

Task	Responsibility																				
Figure out sending, receiving e-mails	Consultant, CP		X	X	X	X															
Project: Technology Assessment and New Computer																					
New Computer																					
Find out what they are looking for	Consultant, CP	X	X	X																	
Place an Order if Accepted	CP, Consultant					X	X	X	X												
Receive Package	CP											X	X								
Put together and Configure Computer to network.	Consultant												X	X	X						
Show all the features	Consultant, CP													X	X	X					
Technology Assessment																					
Check to see specs of each item.	Consultant			X	X																
Make suggestions of what can be done	Consultant				X																
Project: Only Working Knowledge of Database																					
Short Lessons																					
At the beginning of each session, go over a lesson from an Access Book	Consultant, CP, staff					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X							
Development																					
Research how to use one database between 3 computers at the same time	Consultant										X	X	X	X	X	X					
Show how to make changes to the database	CP, Consultant									X	X					X					
Implementation																					
When a solution is found for using the database on all computers, set it up.	Consultant, CP																	X	X	X	X
Explain what was done and show how they can use it.	Consultant, CP																			X	X
Preparations																					
Tie up loose ends	Consultant, CP																	X	X	X	X

Outcomes and Recommendations

Results of Consulting Work

1.   Managing E-mail

Task & Outcomes
MVUC has run into a problem with e-mails being bounced back to sender. It turns out that the e-mail server had reached its quota and was not receiving more. Since MVUC saves these e-mails for reference, it was not a simple answer to just delete the e-mails to clear up some of the space on the server. Therefore we have decided to use Microsoft Outlook.
With Microsoft Outlook, we were able to move all the saved e-mails into folders onto the local hard-drive. With this done, MVUC could then get rid of the files from the server to clear up memory. MVUC is now able to receive e-mails from important contacts as well as people they help. MVUC has been using Microsoft Outlook more often. They have sent e-mails with and without attachments through Outlook where in the past they always used the web-based e-mail system, MSN Explorer. MVUC is able to move received e-mails into respective folders on the hard-drive as they have demonstrated that on many occasions.

2.   Technology Assessment and New Computer

Task & Outcomes
MVUC has a budget set aside to update/replace computers every 18 months. They have planned to replace one of the computers presently, and the other in one or two years. Since MVUC is looking into replacing the one computer, they are also looking for an accurate survey of other technology in the office that may suit their needs' better.
MVUC was happy with previous dealings with Dell, so they were interested in purchasing from them. After seeing what MVUC does on a daily basis, many suggestions with pros and cons were made to Paul as to what to get. Because a special deal from Dell was ending, which included a free CD-burner and free shipping was ending, Paul had made a decision to go with a computer he had seen in an advertisement, which had similar configurations to the suggestions. MVUC had decided to go with a computer from Dell, the Inspiron 4550 with this configuration:

>   Pentium 4 @ 2.0 GHz
>   128 MB RAM
>   30GB HD
>   CD-RW Drive
>   Harmon-Kardon Speakers
>   19" CRT monitor
>   Windows XP professional

   There was a mistake made in the ordering of the computer. MVUC wanted to get Windows Office XP Professional because it had Microsoft Access which they use regularly, but instead had orders XP Professional (the Operating System). After talking with Dell a day after ordering and discovering that the computer had already shipped, MVUC was unable to get a package deal for Office XP Pro and it was much too expensive. We found a great deal on Microsoft Office XP Professional at http://www.techsoup.net for non-profits. So we created an account and purchased the software through them.
   Once the computer had arrived, I proceeded to set it up. Previously, Rob Toy had set up the computers and the current wireless network, and he will still be available to help in the future. I removed the wireless TrueMobile card and PCMCIA slot from the old replaced computer and placed it

in the new Dell without much complication. I have run into a problem getting the new computer onto the already existing network. For some reason the XP computer cannot detect or be detected by the other two computers, but is able to access the Internet. As of now that has not been resolved.

The Microsoft Office XP Professional arrived a session after the computer. Sandy was able to install the software with ease.

MVUC also had a problem with their fax machine, as it was not sending faxes correctly. After some inspection, we decided a new fax machine was the best solution. So Paul, the CP, found a deal at a local office supplies store to replace it.

Recommendations
Recommendation 1
Current Situation: The new computer is essentially a stand-alone computer that cannot share any documents, print to the shared printer, or access the database off the other computer. Even though the new computer can access the Internet and substantially the e-mail account, it is functional. The problem comes about when everything else comes into play. When Paul tries to make a flyer or document, he cannot print it or share it from his computer, which hinders the purpose of a new computer. Also since it cannot access the database, Paul will not be able to make any changes from his computer, which will use up Sandy's time because she will have to enter the information in.
Recommend: I recommend is to resolve the network problem. In my time working with MVUC, I was unable to get the new computer onto a shared network with the other two computers.

There are a couple things that may be done.
1. If MVUC wants to try to upgrade the older computers to Windows XP, they can look at http://www.techsoup.net to find decent prices for the operating system. Another choice is to install Windows 2000 or 98 on the new computer, also purchasing it from http://www.techsoup.net.
2. MVUC can try to have Rob Toy look at Windows support page or Dells support page at:
   http://support.microsoft.com
   http://search.dell.com
   Search for "Networking Windows XP and Windows 2000 with Truemobile 1150" and find some literature about how to go about fixing this problem.

Recommendation 2
Current Situation: As of now, MVUC goes to meetings, takes notes and attendance and people's information. Then with this information, they arrive back in the office and then enter it into the database at a later time. This adds work and time when they could potentially help others during this time. The other suggestion I have is to obtain a notebook to make this task easier and eliminate the time spent entering information into the computer at a later date.
Recommend: There are many notebooks out on the market, but MVUC should obtain one that will last them a while, and not overly expensive; something quite functional. After searching much online, here are some websites I feel will suit MVUC quite well and aren't hurtful on a budget:
   http://www.dell.com/us/en/bsd/products/series_inspn_notebooks.htm
   http://webshop.fujitsupc.com/fpc/Ecommerce/buildseriesbean.do?series=AC
If these are not what was in mind, MVUC can search the web at:
   http://www.google.com
and search for "Small Business Notebooks or Laptops". As well as searching the web, the *Wall Street Journal* has many advertisements of notebooks or laptops for businesses.

3.   *Only working knowledge of Database*

Task & Outcomes
MVUC uses Microsoft Access for managing their database of people whom contribute and attend meetings. They only have working knowledge of Access and would be valuable for them to know more about it.

Going through a *Microsoft Access for Dummies* book with Sandy and Paul, they have demonstrated an increased knowledge base. Sandy and Paul have added a field into the database, which helps MVUC tell if the person has been active. With this they can make queries only including active people, so as not to waste time and money sending campaigns to the inactive. They have not done a mailing, so they have not done this as of yet, but Sandy has expressed with confidence how to do so. They have also been able to add entries into the database without hassle. Before adding fields to the database would have needed a consultant or paid professional.

We have not been able to go through the whole book together, so MVUC has a better knowledge base, but not much more than they already know.

Recommendations
Recommendation 1a
Current Situation: Sandy and Paul have not gone through the entire book, *Microsoft Access for Dummies,* with me. So they have not gone over all the aspects in the book. Because they have not had formal training in Microsoft Access, it may benefit them to do so. A course in Microsoft Access will develop database planning, analysis and design skills, and strategies for applying those skills, which will help better understand and use Access database.
Recommend: MVUC can look into taking a course at the Community College of Allegheny County. The website is very easily navigated. They can reach the main page at:

> http://www.ccac.edu.

To find courses,

> click on the *Perspective Students* button on the left side of the page.
> Then on the *Class Schedule, Forms, and Catalog* link.

For example, they have a one day course called Database Management: Access in the summer 2003 which requires Windows experience and previous use of the software offered for the Sunday in the week of June 14th. This is a beginner's course in Microsoft Access.

For an expert course, CCAC provides an advanced one-day class called Microsoft Access Expert User in the spring term of 2003. They have two sessions, one on Feb 8th, and one on May 3rd.

> *Recommendation 1b*
Since the book purchased is a valuable resource, it would be best to finish going through it. I will not be there to answer any questions, but MVUC has two sources they can go to, Rob Toy and Dave. They also have my information and they can get in touch if they have any questions.

Another recommendation is to look at tutorials online. Among the many sites out there here are some examples of ones I thought were helpful:

> http://www.functionx.com/access
> http://www.fgcu.edu/support/office2000/access/
> http://www.cs.unc.edu/Courses/wwwp-
> s98/members/barman/databaseLesson/accessTutorial.html

Also if further searching is needed, go to http://www.google.com and type in "Microsoft Access tutorial" in the search for field.

This will expand not only Paul's and Sandy's capacity at searching the Internet, but also help them further their know-how on Microsoft Access.

Other Recommendations:

To keep up with the technology plan that MVUC has, it would be valuable to keep up-to-date on software that is out there, and also tips and news of technology out there and beneficial to non-profits. I recommend going to TechSoup on a weekly/biweekly basis to see anything that may help in the future. The site is:

> http://www.techsoup.org

MVUC has established an account there, it would be a great resource to keep using it.

About the Consultant:
S. Ali Imam is a senior undergraduate student majoring in Operations Research and minoring in Computer Science and Business at Carnegie Mellon University. Future plans are to get a career in the field and return to graduate school after 2-4 years.