

# East End Neighborhood Employment Center

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## I. Consulting Context

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### Organization:

The East End Neighborhood Employment Center (EENEC) was established in 1988 to provide employment services for East End Residents. The mission of East End Neighborhood Employment Center (EENEC) is to assist unemployed or underemployed people obtain viable employment opportunities that maintain or increase their standard of living. The funding for EENEC's endeavors is received from Young Men's Christian Association. (YMCA) EENEC is dedicated to serving the working community of Pittsburgh. Applicants and employers approach EENEC and EENEC matches up applicants with the employers. Over the past two years, EENEC has helped place over four hundred people.

East End Neighborhood Employment Center assists unemployed and underemployed residents obtain employment, upgrade employment, or enroll in training programs that result in marketable outcomes. Additional supportive services provided to EENEC consumers through the Homewood-Brushton YMCA include: childcare, food, clothing, emergency shelter, transportation, case management, and counseling. EENEC is currently serving the following areas of Pittsburgh: East Liberty, Lincoln Larimer, Homewood, East Hills, Squirrel Hill, Garfield Heights and Shadyside.

### Facilities:

The East End Neighborhood Employment Center is centrally located in the Homewood business district. EENEC is easily accessible as it falls on many bus routes and there is a big parking lot just in front of it. EENEC is a two thousand square feet newly furnished office staffed by two people, the Director of the Organization and his co-worker who serves as an Employment Specialist. EENEC is located on the first floor itself. The employment specialist sits in the outer office and the Director sits inside the Office. Within the office, there is an area where applicants looking for jobs, can come and use computers. The center has a comfortable and work-friendly office atmosphere. There is a sitting area for visitors and applicants. There is adequate tube light that is conducive to reading, writing, office work and usage of computers.

### Programs:

EENEC's programs fall under three major categories: Employment Assistance, Support Services and Technology Training.

### Employment Assistance:

- Employment Referrals and Job Placements
- Career Link Internet Resume Posting
- Independent Internet Job Search
- Resume and Cover Letter Assistance

- Interview Techniques

### Support Services:

EENEC provides support services to its applicants based on their need. These include:

- Clothing
- Food
- Shelter
- Transportation provided to people/applicants who need it.
- Individual and/or Family Counseling
- Drug and Alcohol Counseling

### Technology Training

- Computer Laboratory
- Software Tutorials

### **Staff**

There are two employees at EENEC. The Director and Job Developer and the Employment Specialist

*Director and Job Developer:* He is in-charge of managing EENEC. He is responsible for job development, community interaction, and promotional activities. He represents EENEC by being the go-between the applicants and employers. He helps determine matches between employers and applicants.

*Employment Specialist:* She is responsible for data entry of applicants into Excel files. She helps the Director with job referrals.

### **Technical Environment**

EENEC currently has 8-networked PCs. [Specifications: Pentium III 650 Mhz, 128 MB RAM, Y2K Ready, 20Gb Hard Drive.] The network has a central server. Operating System is Windows NT 4.0. Peripherals include three printers. There are two proprietary email accounts one for each employee. All computers support MS Office.

### **Technology Management**

The Director, James Faulks is in charge of how technology is managed at EENEC. He has worked for seven years with computers and is thus familiar with issues related to MS Office applications and Windows. If problems arise with computers that Mr. Faulks is unable to solve himself, he calls upon one of the EENEC volunteers. EENEC is lucky to have volunteers with technical expertise.

## **II. Consulting Partnership Focus**

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East End Neighborhood Employment Center's mission is to help people find jobs. It tries to match job applicants with employers. Before the consulting partnership, the process of matching applicant skills to job opportunities was labor and time intensive. The consulting partnership decided to focus on expediting this process.

## **Application and Job Matching process prior to consulting partnership:**

- .1. Applicant enters EENEC
- .2. Applicant fills in Job Application Form (Paper)
- .3. Mr. Faulks interviews applicants and discusses their career interests and qualifications with them.
- .4. Applicant information is entered into one Excel File.
- .5. Mr. Faulks himself goes through every individual excel record and when required needs to look at the paper application as well and tries to match applicants with employers.
- .6. EENEC calls up the applicants and employer who have been matched up and put them in touch with each other.
- .7. EENEC follows up with applicant and employers to inquire about the status of placement if any.
- .8. ENEC *types* up two monthly reports for submission to the City of Pittsburgh: One report identifies all applicants that have applied for jobs in the current month. The other report identifies all applicants that have been placed in the current month irrespective of when they applied to EENEC.

This consulting partnership identified two opportunities that technology presents:

- ***Placing more applicants:*** EENEC placed 200 of the 400 applicants that applied in the year 2000. Expediting their referral process, (The process of referring applicants to employers for jobs) will contribute towards placing more applicants.
- ***Meeting Employer Deadlines:*** EENEC needs to quickly get back to employers with a list of applicants that match the employer's criteria. Expediting the referral process will contribute to meeting employer deadlines.

These goals were achieved by building a well-organized MS-Access database.

## **Benefits of the Access Database were defined as follows:**

*Eliminate Manual Labor:* There was excessive manual labor invested in the business process. In order to find a match EENEC would take an employers job description and physically go through each and every applicants record trying to match job criteria with the applicant's profile. With the help of an Access Database, EENEC shall not have to browse individual applicants records. Instead it can query the database based on the employer's criteria and thus generate a list of applicants suited to the employer's criteria. This would take as long as it would take to generate the query and thus a much faster response time.

*Eliminate Redundancy of Data-Entry:* EENEC's business process involved a lot of redundancy in data-entry. The same information was entered in 3 different places. This took up much time making the process inefficient. With the help of an Access Database, any unique information is entered only once into the tables and it can be conveniently accessed by pulling it out of the tables with the help of queries. Thus the reports can now be produced by a single query and do not have to be typed out as they currently are.

*Ensure qualified applicants are not overlooked:* Since the process of matching applicant with employers at EENEC was a manual one, there was room for error in that a qualified applicant could get overlooked. Using queries to retrieve information from the database does not leave any room for error and ensures that all qualified applicants be considered for the job.

### III. Outcomes & Evidence of Increased Capacity

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*Approach taken:* Mr. Faulks built the database with the assistance of the consultant.

*Outcomes:* EENEC now has a functional MS Access Database.

In creating the database, Mr. Faulks accomplished the following:

- Determining appropriate fields for the database
- Setup tables
- Created SQL queries
- Transferred data from Excel to the new database

#### Examples of Increased Capacity:

Mr. Faulks has mastered Access to a functional level. Here are several examples of how Mr. Faulks can sustain the work of the consultant and of how he is capable of doing more than what he could do at the beginning of this project.

- He can create tables. He can create new fields as well as delete ones not needed.
- He himself has transferred all the data from Excel to Access.
- He figured out a new way to display information from tables that I was unaware of.
- Mr. Faulks has been practicing writing queries and is getting better and better at it as time goes on. He realizes that queries can be written to compare information and thinks about how this information can be presented as a marketing tool to attract more applicants and employers.
- Mr. Faulks suggested new fields to add to the database like “Incoming Wages” and “Incoming Benefits” to use as comparative benchmarks against the “Outgoing Wages” and “Outgoing Benefits” of a given applicant. Clearly, suggesting such fields means that a very clear picture has been painted in the mind of Mr. Faulks with regard to the dynamics and uses of a database.

#### Sustainability:

Mr. Faulks has demonstrated a high degree of motivation as well as skill in applying new technical tools to improving the business of the organization. He will undoubtedly continue to exploit the capabilities of the database as well as other technical tools. He has gained hands on experience in the working of the database. He knows how to use the help screens and has himself tried troubleshooting problems he has faced using MS Access.

### **III. Recommendations**

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#### **Recommendation #1: Adding Employers Section to the Database**

##### Problem:

Currently, EENEC has the Applicants section of the database up and running. However it does not have the employer's section to the database created. Mr. Faulks has to go through each employer's job criteria, identify the key criteria and query the applicant's database based on this criterion. Thus, individual queries need to be written to match applicants with employers. Clearly, going through individual employer's requirements is time consuming.

##### Recommendation:

The employers' information would be added to the database i.e. the kind of openings they have and criteria based on which they would hire applicants. Mr. Faulks would then have to run a few generic queries and once the list of qualified applicants is found, he just has to put the employer in touch with the applicant.

Creating the employers end of the database would significantly reduce the time and effort required to match up applicants with employers. With the employers end of the database up, no more individual queries need to be written. Instead a set of generic queries would generate a list of match-ups.

The time saved is important as it leads to a greater ability to meet demand of applicants looking for jobs as well as the demand of employers looking for applicants and that to within their short deadlines. Additionally Mr. Faulks would be able to devote even more time to individual applicants understanding what they want out of a job than the time he is currently spending with them. Understanding the applicants mind is very important when looking for a job for them. It is essential to understand whether or not an applicant would fit the work culture of a particular organization or kind of work.

##### Implementation:

In order to implement this, Mr. Faulks would have to identify what tables are required for the employer. Once this is determined he would decide what fields are required in each table. Once this is done he would transfer into the Database any incoming information of employers. This is definitely doable by Mr. Faulks, as he has already created the Applicant tables, and fields. Thus doing this for the employer would be performing a similar task again. Mr. Faulks could simply add to the existing Access database. He could build the tables along with his Co-Worker who has played a major role in every step of the database development process.

##### Expected increase in Placements:

I would expect the demand of applicants for the year 2002 (assuming they have it implemented by the beginning of year 2002), to be around 500 (increasing number of incoming applicants from 400 to 500) and the number placed to increase from the current 50% to around 75% i.e. 350.

##### Resources:

With regard to resources, the Access database is ready and would continue to be used. If any doubts as to the dynamics of Access arise then Mr. Faulks can refer to:

- *Access 97 Tutorial CD* available with EENEC presently.
- <http://www.athree.com/> Provides help for Microsoft Access users. Includes basic database information. This is a good resource for all MS Access related issues. It would direct you how to make tables, write queries etc.

- <http://www.helptalk.net/forums/access/> This is a discussion board specifically for MS Access. You can post your questions here and have them answered by other Access users. This is a great place for troubleshooting as well as broadening your understanding of MS Access.

## **Recommendation #2: Building a Website and Intranet**

### Opportunity:

A web site would promote the work of EENEC and provide information about the organization. This website shall give information about the projects that EENEC works on, its goals and mission. It shall display the kinds of jobs people have been placed into and how happy people are with their job. It can speak about the success stories of people placed through EENEC. EENEC can also build an intranet connected to their database where applicants can directly enter their job application information into the database from the computers at EENEC.

### Benefits:

#### *Why should EENEC Build a Website?*

A website would be a great means of publicity for EENEC. More applicants and employers shall be aware of the EENEC and this should hopefully increase the number of people coming to EENEC.

#### *Why should EENEC build an intranet?*

Having applicants directly enter information into the database shall save EENEC the time it invests in transferring applicant information into Excel or the database. This time could be better used in communicating with more employers and applicants. EENEC could serve as an administrator who approves of all the information that enters the database.

#### *Access to Site:*

Applicant would have access to the site from the computers available to them at EENEC and also through public libraries or wherever they have access to computers. Majority of the applicant population do not have computers of their own. EENEC has six computers for its applicants that gives them access to the Internet and to the EENEC website. This shall be made the default page that comes up when the browser is opened on EENEC computers. The site URL shall be associated with EENEC's name, such that people are aware of the site.

Access to the intranet shall of course only be through the computers of EENEC. Applicants shall fill out their application form only on EENEC computers and this information shall directly get added to the database.

#### *Increase in Business for EENEC:*

Websites have always tended to increase business for organizations. I would expect the number of applicants and employers approaching EENEC to increase.

### Resources and Implementation:

EENEC can have someone build a website for them.

They could also hire a consultant who teaches Mr. Faulks how to build the site and helps him build it. The Consultant would be needed for 2 months assuming he came in twice a week. There are also many cheap web-hosting services that can be found via the search engines.

- Websites like [www.techsoup.com](http://www.techsoup.com) are a very useful start for non-profits looking to build websites. It can direct you to sites that provide cheap or free web hosting for non-profits. This site shall also direct you as to where to find consultants who can help you out with building the website.
- Another great resource for web hosting is Three Rivers Freenet. ([www.trfn.org](http://www.trfn.org)) This is the “official” free web host for non-profits in the region. The maintenance of the website should preferably be done by EENEC itself. For this it needs to be familiar with updating the site and working with the database.
- Websites such as [www.webmonkey.com](http://www.webmonkey.com) and [www.htmlgoodies.com](http://www.htmlgoodies.com) are great resources to learn HTML and to learn the basics of how to update and maintain websites. The CP is familiar with Access. Thus sustaining the back-end of the website should not be a problem. The front-end has been already discussed.

The first step to implementing this recommendation is to work with the consultant to understand what shall be the content of this site. Having this established, the next step is to get a good solid understanding of HTML from the websites mentioned above. Mr. Faulks must then identify where he can host his site with the help of the resources provided above. It must then be determined with the consultant how the site shall be built. It would be simple for Mr. Faulks to build the site using a software application like Microsoft Frontpage. This software is easily available at the Microsoft website [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com). The remaining time should be spent developing the website and ensuring that the Mr. Faulks is capable of updating it and maintaining it. This in effect is sustainability of the work of the consultant.

### **Recommendation #3: Email Accounts for Applicants.**

#### **Problem:**

The employers find it hard to get in touch with applicants who they find as good matches for their job openings. The telephone number submitted to the employer rarely finds the applicant available to answer the phone. This further causes a lot of trouble on EENEC’s part to actually track down the applicant and make sure that he gets in touch with the employer. Even if messages are left at the applicants’ home, these messages are not passed or not passed on correctly.

#### **Recommendation:**

A simple and reasonable solution to this problem would be to setup email accounts for applicants. These accounts could be set up for free using free web-email services such as Hotmail found at [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com) or Yahoo, found at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). Thus if the employer wishes to get in touch with an applicant he can simply email the applicant who can check his email from wherever he has access. This could be from EENEC’s computers itself or from some other Internet access place.

#### **Benefits:**

This ensures that the messages of the employers definitely get to the applicants. The employer or EENEC neither has to be troubled with repeated phone calls. It thus becomes the applicant’s responsibility to check his or her email. EENEC currently spends around 20% of its time trying to facilitate effective communication between applicant and employer. Email eliminates the ambiguity of phone calls, which needs the applicant being present to answer the phone.

Another benefit of this recommendation is that it would draw applicants into the practice of using computers for communication, a practice that is the norm in the business world. The more comfortable they get with Internet tools, the more marketable they are.

Teaching Applicants how to use Email:

Many of the applicants do not know how to use email. EENEC can add Email tutorials to the tutorials it currently has with it. This software is cheap and easy to learn. The software is available at [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com) under their Hotmail tutorial section. Mr. Faulks is already completely familiar with Email and would be a good resource for applicants having problems understanding email. 'Teaching applicants how to use email', adds on to the other tutorials being taught to applicants like Word, Excel, Resume Writing and Typing Skills. Of course, those applicants unable to type on the keyboard would go through the typing tutorial and learn to type before they get onto email. Thus they are getting more computer savvy, which as mentioned before is a must for today's business world.