

Christian Life Skills

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The Organization

Christian Life Skills was founded in 1986, in part, as a response to a Bill Moyers documentary, "The Vanishing Black Family", which presented a bleak picture of African American family life. The founder and director, Mrs. Barbara Rogers, embarked on a vision grounded in the power of the church to provide prevention, intervention, support, enhancement and referral to families and youth facing complex difficulties and issues. A biblically-based curriculum of print and video materials teaches life skills in a way that addresses drug prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, crime, violence and gang prevention through several approaches to ministry; flexible enough to be used in the home, church and community. Parents, grandparents and other caring adults and young adults are trained in mentoring in order to equip youth to address the day-to-day issues of their lives. To date, Christian Life Skills has presented its training to several hundred individuals from congregations around our region who are serving as mentors to youth and young adults (age 6-25). There are currently eleven active programs under the CLS initiative, serving more than 170 youth with mentoring and life skills in various church and community settings. Christian Life Skills' mission is the following: *Christian Life Skills seeks to empower families and youth to live spiritually healthy and productive lives through the practical application of the Word of God by: Instilling Christian Life Skills, Mentoring, Training, Nurturing, Networking with Churches and Community Groups.*

Christian Life Skills is based at 100 North Braddock Ave Suite 203. They operate out of a two-room office rented from a larger apartment building which provides space to a childcare center and other small companies and non-profits. Christian Life Skills had a void in terms of a technology management position. The majority of the hardware and software they received had been through donations and had not come through any kind of organized effort to acquire a certain system. Because of this, there had been no systems administrator. However, various employees from the past had varying levels of familiarity with certain machines and could use them for emailing and document creation. Recent shrinkage in staff diminished much of the computer knowledge that had been around previously.

They are equipped with 4 computers, one is nonfunctional, the other three are 150MHz Pentiums (two with working modems. Most of their systems are running Windows 95 and older versions of shareware software. There are problems with their phones jacks; the company who wired their office did a very poor job and some jacks don't work. Otherwise, there should be 3 functional phone lines, one for telephone, one for Internet, and one for the fax machine. Their office also has 3 printers, two of which work (one with a scanner), one of which is rather old (and none of the computers have the driver for it). Additional hardware includes a fax machine and a laptop which Mrs. Rogers brings from home. All the Internet capability is through AOL and dial up.

Finally, they have a website with a linked database which is managed remotely from the office. Last semester, a group of IS students created a website linked to database for the organization. The database was designed to store information on participants in the program. Although the CMU students provided a user-friendly method for updating the database, it is very limiting in terms of changing the website appearance and functions. Because the staff has no knowledge about web publishing, editing the site is virtually impossible.

In recent times, due to the economic downturn and events of 9/11, like many other charity organizations, obtaining funds has been very difficult. Most of the employees and volunteers have left, leaving the two full time employees of the organization, one of which being Mrs. Rogers, the ED. The organization is trying desperately to find funding for its programs. At

current, much of the staff's effort has been focused on fundraising for their charity work. Document and presentation preparation for meetings with their board and potential funders have become major tasks in their daily work.

Problems & Opportunities

Enhancing skill with Windows OS file management and useful office software.

Because the most computer literate personnel had all left CLS, the prospective of learning about computers and utilizing their benefits had all but disappeared for the remaining staff. They were extremely unfamiliar with the Windows operating system and almost all software that run on the OS. Word processing, one of the major tasks in the office, involved more post-printing editing (cutting/pasting, bulleting, etc) than the initial writing.

The lack of basic pc software knowledge resulted in the following problems:

- A major task for Mrs. Rogers is creating presentations for fundraisers, meetings within the organization and lectures. Because she lacked the knowledge of how to effectively use word processing software, the creation of these presentations and various other documents took large quantities of time and the effects that could be rendered on them were very limited.
- Similarly, budget forms and spreadsheets were all done by hand or ineffectively with software use.
- Currently, their office has 4 computers, none of which are being used to any great degree. All but one had some form of malfunction (i.e. -broken modem, missing drivers). Because the employees were unfamiliar with the equipment and their use, they were intimidated to try to learn how to diagnose or solve hardware and software problems. Installing new software was virtually impossible and usage would have been alien.
- File management was not utilized because no one knew how to navigate the pc's memory or how it worked. Often when files were downloaded or saved, they were forever lost in the computer's memory because no one knew how to locate the file. Email attachments were never seen, or sent.

Enhancing Web and Internet Resource Usage

Although CLS has the capability to utilize the Internet, CLS had been making virtually no use it and other web resources like chat rooms and instant messaging.

The lack of Internet utilization had resulted in the following problems:

- In order for CLS to acquire new funding and grants it must be able to discover potential funders and other mentoring nonprofits by making its presence known on the web. Because Mrs. Rogers did not know how to surf the web, she had been unable to locate potential grant organizations or other mentoring groups that could assist CLS's programs.
- Valuable web resources for basic daily tasks like driving directions, plane tickets, and online stores were not used.
- Constant calls with the Board of Directors and grant organizations are extremely straining on CLS's already small funds. Usage of AOL's chat features as a free alternative had not been utilized.

If these problems were addressed, my CP's use of the computers in the office would have dramatically increased. Where they had been used as typewriters with email functions, the new skills would increase their productivity for Mrs. Rogers and demystify the computer so that she would learn more after I leave. The file management would allow her to maintain organization on her computer and help not to lose files

when trying to download email attachments and web downloads. Expanded word processing and editing skills would help to improve work efficiency with regard to time. Also, the more professional effects rendered on documents and presentations would greatly help in making a good impact on grant organizations. Internet surfing would provide a gateway by which she could contact prospective members for the program, other charities and funders. Chat features could greatly save money on phone bills with work associates and family. Additionally, it is a rich resource by which she would learn about troubleshooting and potential mentoring software or hardware that could be used to assist in programs.

All these skills were essential to warming my CP's relationship with computers. With a better understanding of how to use some basic features and the huge benefits they supply, it would increase curiosity in new software and hardware upgrades to improve work/services overall in the program. Primarily, these skills would allow my CP to make more usage out of the technology she had largely lying dormant in the office.

Given these skills, sustainability is not a major issue. However, if skills were to be forgotten, printed tutorials, notes or web links could easily be used for a refresher. Regardless, the enhanced computer skills will help my CP to utilize future donated computers and her ability to decide if she needs new software or computers in the future.

Scope and Approach

In order to provide a foundational knowledge about skills needed to utilize their current computers we decided to implement a three-part plan.

- Initially, we went over Windows memory management. By organizing her current files and finding lost ones, important skills in memory navigation, file movement, file structure, and searching would be learned. This would assist greatly in saving time when searching for files and downloading new software.
- Later, we spent time working on her current presentations and documents, converting them to Word or PowerPoint, and editing them. Through these efforts we improved her current work and taught valuable skills for efficient editing and improving document and presentation appearance. These skills would be crucial to impressing funders and saving time on editing tasks that could be spent more directly on the mission.
- The final area of concentration we went over was web tasks. We spent time using search engines to find important non-profit sites and services needed for CLS. Additionally, to provide a level of self-sufficiency, we created a list of bookmarks for important sites that can assist with troubleshooting and maintenance of computers and software. Further Internet related work concentrated on utilizing chat features in AOL by creating a buddy list and chat rooms in order to talk.

Outcomes and Recommendations

Task 1: Enhancing skill with Windows OS file management and useful office software.

Outcome 1: Familiarity with Windows File Structure

File management was a large speed bump for Mrs. Rogers. Our work on the subject has yielded the following results:

- Mrs. Rogers can navigate through the folders and drives in the computer using My Computer or Windows Explorer.
- She recently copied dozens of old files she had lost when her hard drives were replaced and organized them into meaningful folders under My Documents.
- She located where files are downloaded through AOL email and has utilized the search feature in the Start menu to find several lost documents.

Outcome 2: Improved Skills in Document Preparation and Editing Mastered

Word Processing related tasks account for a large part of Mrs. Rogers' responsibilities, from writing budgets to making presentations. As a result of our consulting sessions, Mrs. Rogers has accomplished the following:

- Mrs. Rogers has greatly decreased time spend on editing by utilizing the cut, copy, paste, and undo features of Word.
- Her efforts with Word Art, PowerPoint Animation and Clip Art have yielded several artistic flyers and prospective PowerPoint presentations.
- In an effort to utilize the improved features of newer Office software, she has switched from Works to Microsoft Word 2000.
- She has begun to invest more time in her computer work due to enhanced ease with the pc and computer related enthusiasm.

These skills present increased capacity in the following ways:

- Hours of lost work from old documents have been recovered.
- Email is now a tool by which more than email text can be conveyed.
- A level of security has been developed so that fear of the computer has diminished and ease with working on longer documents and presentations has increased.
- She can create professional looking grant proposals and presentations which will be crucial to CLS being able to acquire funds in the future.

Practice, in itself, is the key to maintaining the self-sufficiency of these skills. The self-sufficiency in this model is quite evident as enhanced skills in using the pc led to more efficient work and enthusiasm to utilize the machine. The positive feedback mechanism of high returns for learning skills on the computer guarantees the self-sufficiency of our efforts.

Recommendation

Now that Mrs. Rogers has a good foundation in basic software usage, she should build upon it. Software like Photoshop or Microsoft Excel and Access are valuable tools in most office environments. Graphics software could be a great tool to improve presentations and documents. Excel or Access could be used to help maintain records of participants in the program and have expanded use later.

Rationale

Currently, in order to maintain the learning obtained this semester, Mrs. Rogers must practice and expand her knowledge base. By utilizing software that can help the mission of the organization, it is an ideal method. A graphics software package like Corel Draw, Photoshop, or Microsoft Publisher could potentially provide the impressive effects on Mrs. Rogers' work needed to present an image of high tech competency. Beyond that, such packages are enjoyable tools that could not only be used for computer learning but fun and creative work for children in CLS's program. Microsoft Excel and Access software could help reduce the massive amount of paper records in the office, and increase efficiency at the office.

Resources

Currently CLS possesses Microsoft Excel and Access on CD. Microsoft Publisher is available in the CLS office also. Corel Draw costs \$466.99. Photoshop runs around \$600. (If an old version could be acquired, the upgrade is less than \$150.) They can be purchased at www.amazon.com, CompUSA, Best Buy or any other major electronics store.

Installation of the software is fairly straight forward. Once the CD is inserted in the computer, the installation menus pop up and tend to hold the user by the hand. Most of the work needed is clicking the "next" button.

Usage, on the other hand, will take some learning. Valuable tutorials can be found at:

- <http://www.microsoft.com/ms.htm> is Microsoft's main site and has several links to troubleshooting their software and usage tutorials.
 1. <http://www.microsoft.com/office/> This is the homepage to all Office software (Excel, Word, Access, and Publisher). At the bottom of the left frame there is a link called "office programs," when clicked, it gives a list of the homepages for every office program. The sites for the programs have tutorials, troubleshooting guides, and downloads.
 2. <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=fh:en-us:kbinfo> This page is the Microsoft product support site. It has a database of troubleshooting articles that can be searched.

The following two links are guides for novices using Corel Draw.

- <http://www.grafx-design.com/coreltut.html>
- <http://www.stickysauce.com/tutorials/coreldraw/tutorialsindex.htm>
- <http://www.mccannas.com/pshop/photosh0.htm> is list of links to tips on how to use various features of Photoshop.

These are fairly complicated software packages and it may be overwhelming still for a novice user. As such, I would recommend that Mrs. Rogers sign up Tech Consulting in the Community next semester with plans to work on these packages.

Task 2: Enhancing Web and Internet Resource Usage

Outcomes 1: General Ability to Surf the Web, Utilize Search Engines and Web Addresses.

Sessions on web surfing, utilizing search engines, and usage of AOL's chat features produced the following outcomes:

- Mrs. Rogers bookmarked various websites of personal and professional interest.
- She used MapQuest.com to get directions for a business trip.
- She used several search engines to find mentoring programs.

Outcome 2: Usage of AOL chat features

Meetings and conference calls constitute a great amount of hours every week of an ED's daily routine. Because CLS has minimal funding left, such expensive calls are a heavy burden on the organization and its board.

- Mrs. Rogers setup and now uses a buddy list and chat rooms to communicate with friends, family, Board members and funding officers.
- She experimented by running a Board meeting via an AOL chat rooms.
- During the consulting partnership, Mrs. Rogers would instant message the consultant during the day to talk and get help.

The increased capacity of these outcomes would include:

- Heavy savings in terms lower phone bills.
- An alternative way to meet and discuss issues without having to travel.
- Through her familiarity with the web, Mrs. Rogers is opened to a new world of possibilities. She can not only use the web for personal interest, but she can use it to locate funding, troubleshoot future tech problems, download useful shareware, or create a tech plan.

Recommendation

Christian Life Skills needs to acquire a better connection to the internet. Currently they are using 28.8kbs modems and many of their phone outlets are nonfunctional. This limited access to the web has greatly limited internet usage. The load time for a major website like www.adobe.com is 25seconds.

An average download of 1Mb takes over 7 minutes.

Rationale

Budgeting for DSL is also valuable because their current slow Internet connection limits CLS' ability to utilize the web. With a faster connection, email could be used without enormous download times and web surfing would be greatly sped up - increasing ability to find potential mentors, people in need of mentoring, or grant organizations. Additionally, Internet usage is crucial to Mrs. Rogers being able to troubleshoot tech problems in the future and expand her general tech knowledge.

With a faster, more stable connection, CLS employees will be able to receive more return from their technology, diminishing fear and dislike for computers, and providing a level of self-sufficiency as they will be able to surf. This will also help to satisfy the benchmark of External Communications, helping the organization's image in general.

Resources

The primary resource needed for this plan is money. Money cannot be guaranteed for the organization, however, by promising some percentage of future grants to tech upkeep, CLS can afford upkeep of a DSL system in the future.

In order to upgrade the connection to DSL, there will be a need for:

A new network card for which ever computers will be receiving the connection. Most cards run around \$15 and can be found at Comp USA, Best Buy, or at various online stores. Any pc compatible card will do.

(i.e. - http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00005OR5Z/qid=1020538137/sr=8-1/ref=sr_8_71_1/103-6529327-6131847)

Installation of the card might be a bit tricky as it requires knowledge of the hardware set up and possibly a driver or some configuration. Most electronics shops offer services to install parts often for free and could be utilized for this if needed.

DSL service can be acquired through a number of ways:

- Free service via Three Rivers Connect. This organization provides technology help for local nonprofits and businesses in hopes of improving Pittsburgh technology. The first year of service and installation is free, and later there will be monthly charges.
To apply, contact them at:
3Rivers Connect - 425 Sixth Avenue - Suite 1310 - Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1819
Tel: 412.392.1006 **Fax:** 412.392.1008 **Web:** 3rc@3rc.org
- Although there are a number of pay services available, because the office is currently using AOL, and it is so user friendly, I recommend that AOL DSL be looked into. It is billed monthly as \$23.90 for unlimited AOL, plus \$31.05 for DSL service. The modem and set up are given for free. To register for the service: When AOL is first signed onto, click the link in the welcome window for upgrading to DSL. That link will help you through the registration for your system.

Other Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

Mrs. Rogers should begin to set a standard schedule for updating her website. In order to present a more tech proficient image, CLS must maintain its website, keeping it updated, and enhancing it with time. This is crucial to communicating with the community and also, important with regard to attaining tech grants.

Source

Currently, there is a website with an administrative interface set up by a set of CMU students from last semester. The interface is relatively friendly, however, because she has left the website untouched for so long, she has become unfamiliar with the interface. Additionally, previous unfamiliarity with the computer provided a substantial obstacle for trying to learn and understand some parts of the system. This is a very self sustaining system because the administrative interface is set, so with continuous practice on it, Mrs. Rogers can become extremely capable with the system. With additional learning over time, she could either take on some new students from CMU or try to enhance it on her own.

Rationale

As stated earlier, updating the current website is crucial to making it useful to the community. Continuous updates will be able to spread news about programs to mentors and local youth. The tech proficient appearance of the organization will also make it appear more professional to the community.

Additionally, if the website is maintained and enhanced, it will provide a very tech savvy impression toward the community and grant organizations. Claiming tech skills is a great credential when applying for grants.

Resources

The only resources of this plan are that Mrs. Rogers still has an internet connection, diligently stands by the schedule and maintains practice with the rest of her pc skill set. CLS has a user-friendly manual for directions for all the front-end's features.

Recommendation 2:

Christian Life Skills needs to provide a tech plan for itself, devoting a certain percentage of raised funds for new parts, DSL, software, and courses. With a focused technology plan, CLS can provide itself with a great level of self sufficiency and better utilize and develop the skills we have jointly worked on. Mrs. Rogers who has the most skills in using the office technology would tend to the management of the tech plan and acquisitions.

Source

Christian Life Skills has traditionally obtained all its major technology through donations. Because of this, much of their equipment was obtained without any major plan and had not been organized or maintained since their reception. A technology manager position was never instituted and upkeep is nonexistent. This resulted in a spiraling effect, where poor tech management deterred employees from trying to utilize the machines, which in turn would cause them to ignore future tech planning.

This recommendation will help solve this problem satisfying the technology management benchmark. Future technology will be bought in a planned manner and utilized more effectively. As employees' efforts on the new technology result in more fruitful returns, they will have enhanced interest in developing new skills and searching for other benefits of computers.

Rationale

By developing a set of goals for future technology acquisition and providing money for it, CLS can prevent itself from having its technology run down. Providing better machines and software (Word, PowerPoint, Photoshop), employees can read most attachments and documents they receive, provide professional effects to their work, and save time in general on most of their office work.

With a better machines and a faster connection, email could be used without enormous download times and web surfing would be greatly sped up - increasing ability to find potential mentors, people in need of mentoring, or grant organizations. Additionally, Internet usage is crucial to Mrs. Rogers being able to troubleshoot tech problems in the future and expand her general tech knowledge.

With faster machines and newer software, CLS employees will be able to receive more return from their technology, diminishing fear and dislike for the machines, and providing a level of self-sufficiency as they will be able to surf for knowledge or take computer courses as needed.

Resources

The primary resource needed for this plan is money, followed by tech planning. Money cannot be guaranteed for the organization, however, by promising some percentage of future grants to tech upkeep, CLS can prevent its pc's, software, or tech skills from remaining stagnant or diminishing.

Tech planning will require an initial plan for the next year, which could be done with my assistance. In the future, however, tech planning will be in the hands of Mrs. Rogers. Her efforts could be greatly helped by self-initiative (searching the web or tech magazines) or through tech courses.

Some very good resources available on the web include the following:

- <http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=11&topic=Technology%20Planning&cg=content&sg=mainTechplan>. This website has a step by step process explaining how to create a tech plan. It is very easy to understand and thorough. The right frame of the page includes a list of other valuable articles describing how to diagnose your current technology situation.
- It is also helpful to refer to <http://www.isf.com/services/article1.htm>. This site provides a set of tips or guidelines that should be in mind when writing a plan.
- In the future, in order to save money to execute the tech plan it may be useful to do things in house rather than hire a consultant. <http://www.tech-library.org/howto.html> provides a series of valuable articles discussing how do various tasks on the computer for different software packages.
(Other valuable sites like this are listed in the recommendation regarding new software purchases.)

About the Consultant:

My name is Ersin Civanlar. I am a Junior Computer Science major in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon. I hope to graduate within one more semester and get an IS job concentrating on web and database creation/administration.