

Bedford Initiatives Inc.
Student Consultant, Danny Lam
Community Partner, Ada Ezekoye

About the Organization

Bedford Initiatives Inc. is a not-for-profit Pittsburgh subsidiary of The Community Builders Inc. a Boston based non-profit affordable housing developer. Bedford Initiatives was formed to carry out the Community and Supportive Services Program component of The Bedford Hope VI program and is located in a newly constructed year-old building known as The Bedford Hope Center at 2305 Bedford Ave. in Pittsburgh. Bedford Initiatives (used interchangeably with “The Bedford Hope Center”) is a community development organization serving residents living in more than 800 homes of the Bedford Dwellings Public Housing Community in Pittsburgh’s Hill District.

The organization focuses on comprehensive neighborhood revitalization and economic development of the nearby Bedford Dwellings community, as well as sponsoring social service programs. The mission of Bedford Initiatives Inc. is multifaceted and includes assisting residents in preparing for relocation to new homes in a new mixed income community with new management and overall a desire to enrich the lives of the people in this community by developing programs that would make the current community residents become more comfortable with the technology and general community living standards of other stable mixed income communities in the United States.

Bedford Initiatives operates under a contract from the Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh (HACP) which received a HOPE VI grant from the US Dept of Housing and Urban Development to support the transformation of this public housing community from traditional public housing tenement type structures to diversified housing (combination of condos, single family dwellings, and apartments etc. The building houses programs such as the HOPE Center, the Safe Place Program, The Family Support Center with its Drop In Child Care Center, the After School Program, The Community technology Center and the Resident Council Office. There is also a large licensed childcare center across the road which is overseen by the Bedford Initiatives Staff and which is geared to helping low income working parents.

The programs of Bedford Initiatives Inc can be divided into two categories: economic development and social services. In terms of economic development, the organization does many things but of particular interest to this consulting assignment, it tries to promote individuals and families to use the technology in this facility to help find employment. This is done through giving people access to the computers and other technology in the building to help find jobs. Residents engage in activities such as updating/building resumes, writing cover letters and computer aided job-search.

Bedford Initiatives Inc. has employees (Case Managers) working in the Hope Center, who dedicate their time and effort to finding jobs for the Hill District residents. The facility also has several free computer training classes that teach anyone how to use the computer in their own spare time. The Resident Council has an office at the Hope Center. The Council consists of a group of several elected residents of Bedford Dwellings who represent the community and provide input into implementing the Hope VI program input on how people can use the facility more effectively and other concerns of that nature.

In addition to the economic development programs, Bedford Initiatives in partnership with the resident council and other service providers organizes and runs a number of social programs and events with the goal of improving the well-being of the community. The Day Care Center and the After School Program are just two of these aforementioned programs that give youth opportunities that they might not normally

have in their homes such as the constructive use of computers in the Technology Lab and effective attention and mentoring by the staff.

The Bedford Hope Center houses a staff of twenty, of whom nine are employed by the Bedford Initiatives. Amongst the employees, Byron Wright, the Technical Coordinator of the organization, oversees all computer and telecommunication work at the Hope Center along with teaching classes and providing professional development for staff.

Ada Ezekoye is the Executive Program Manager for Bedford Initiatives Inc. She transferred to this facility when it first opened last April from the Community Builders Pittsburgh Regional Office. She works collaboratively with others in the organization in order to achieve the Hope VI goals, oversee the day to day operations of the Center and to make their programs run more efficiently.

She runs the Bedford Initiatives regular operations, which include meeting with clients, community people, The Housing Authority, The Community Builders staff in any or all of their 8 offices, and numerous sites, Pittsburgh area providers, residents, leaders, and other program managers with Michelle Hughson, Administrative Assistant. Ada keeps track of the organization's finances as well as works with partners in finding appropriate funding for serving residents through the organization's programs. She oversees the staff of the Bedford Initiatives. Also, as the Manager, she is in charge of making the organizational technology decisions.

The Technology Situation

The Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh was able to acquire the necessary funds and donations in order to obtain much of the equipment that Bedford Initiatives uses today since their opening.

Regarding computers, the HOPE Center headquarters has over 40 computers. Fourteen PC's connected to Verizon DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), a communication service that offers faster Internet connection than a standard dial-up connection via modem, are located in the Technology Lab, each equipped with a CD-ROM drive and several educational software packages. Anyone during open hours has access to these computers as long as they sign in.

Ada has a COMPAQ desktop in her office, with CD-ROM, speakers, and floppy drive attached. Along with this, she recently acquired a Toshiba laptop with Windows 98 and Microsoft Office 98 installed as well. However, the laptop is not connected to the building's network yet. Mainly, she uses her COMPAQ desktop for email and reviewing documents.

Anything regarding technology at Bedford Initiatives Inc. solely lies with Byron Wright, the organization's Technology Coordinator. He fixes whatever problems that arise with any of the technology installed in the building such as the computers, printer, and fax machine. Also, he is in charge of making sure the DSL network is running properly on all of the computers. He also oversees.

As a whole, the people of this organization want to be more technically literate so that they can have the knowledge to expand and implement on possible programs, involving technology, to the local community.

The Consulting Situation

Ada is responsible for:

- Implementing the goals of the HOPE VI Revitalization Program
- Handling financial contracts/budgets of the Bedford Initiatives
- Analyzing statistical information and write reports concerning the organization
- Mining resources to help Bedford Initiatives with their endeavors and mission statement
- Assessing client needs and in working with staff to meet these needs of obtaining solutions

The Executive Program Manager role in the organization requires significant time and effort. The utilization of technology would go a long way in making her job easier. This would require a comfort level with technology that she does not currently have, due to her reluctance in utilizing computers for certain tasks. At times, Ada must rely on the help of others to complete technological tasks assigned to her. This affects her work drastically in terms of the technological decisions she has to make within the company, such as which computers and software to purchase that would be most useful for the company. As a result, Bedford Initiatives paid for technical consultation to aid in their situation, which could be remedied by making Ada more comfortable with the company's reliance on technology.

The goal of this consulting partnership was to give Ada a mastery of technology in a broad sense. She needs to be made more aware of certain technology that would benefit Bedford Initiatives in terms of hardware, software and various accessories, such as computers. Most importantly, she needs to be confident and fearless when handling technology issues so that she can make valued decisions concerning the benefit of the organization, which is the most important consulting goal to achieve.

Client Objectives

These objectives are technical issues that Ada Ezekoye wants to master for her workplace:

- Having the ability to organize files on her computer. Ada usually saves her files on her desktop or on the hard drive (c:) with no type of directory/hierarchy structure, which can lead to disorganization in finding files later on for future use.
- Ability to use applicable software programs such as Word and Excel efficiently. Since many people and clients require Ada to read, write, and comment on important documents for business applications, the ability for Ada to effectively handle documents on computer (word processing, saving, making folders to save files in, hard-drive space management, etc.) is a must.
- Exploit her needs to use advanced functions on applicable programs for the organization such as Excel/Word. At times, Ada requires the aid of others to help her make documents such as a budget sheet, workplan, etc, which she wants to learn for herself.
- Master personal information management (PIM) tools for her workplace and home use. Ada usually takes notes, makes appointments, etc. by paper and keeps all this paperwork stacked in her office and desk. Also, she carries around a big notebook planner with important information on her at all times. With a PIM utility, the amount of writing she will need to do will be greatly reduced.
- Utilize the capabilities of the Internet. Many of the resources she obtains for the organization are made through phone calls and asking through word-of-mouth. By utilizing internet searching methods such as web-search engines, she can obtain the same resources, such as funds, hardware/software, etc., in a more efficient manner.
- Most importantly, Ada needs the mindset of being more accepting to technology. She needs to be more intelligent / confident with technology so as to improve on her efficiency with work, and become a role model in the organization to others that have the same concern about accepting technology as her.

Consulting Tasks

Within a span of 13 weeks, at 3hrs/week, the scope of work that the consulting partner and consultant selected for the duration of the partnership is:

- **Functions and Operations of work-applicable software (Microsoft Word and Excel)**
 - For 2-3 weeks, Ada worked on the fundamentals of how to use these software programs. Topics covered were how to save/open/make new files, control options such as editing fonts, making bullet points, etc. This was for both Word and Excel
 - Also, in Excel, Ada learned how to modify cells with input inside the spreadsheet, into output wanted such as using the sum function to total numbers, changing text size, etc.

- **Managing files/folders on the computer**
 - Ada learned how files/folders on any operating system were stored on the computer's hard disk.
 - With practice on her own, and with the consultant's help during the allotted time period, coverage included how a hard drive (c:) can be partitioned into separate folders/directories for personal use, so that files can be stored in a more efficient manner to be used later on.

- **Finding information on the internet**
 - Ada obtained information, through the internet with the consultant's help, on how generally the world-wide-web today works, and how people can find any information they want to use on the web.
 - Went over how to use popular search engines like google.com, such as entering in key words to get the sites needed.
 - Bookmarking important sites onto personal web browser for future use.

- **Personal information management (hotmail account, online calendar, PDA)**
 - Organization's Novell local DSL email system was very slow. To solve this, Ada set up another email account for herself on hotmail.
 - Learned how to write email entries using hotmail, and saving other people's information (such as address, name, email) onto hotmail database for easier access.
 - Invest her interest in acquiring a PDA and entering all her information from her personal planner onto it.

- **Raising her bar of expectation in using and being aware of technology**
 - Throughout the weeks, Ada became more confident in her abilities to use technology for her organization's benefit, as well as her own.
 - She started to research/find information on her own, during work and on her spare time, with the computer about various topics.
 - Downloaded software for internet radio in Pittsburgh, and listens to it everyday during her work time in her office.

Outcomes

- **Functions and Operations of work-applicable software (Microsoft Word and Excel)**
 - With Word, Ada is now able to edit/write documents on her own. She made changes to my consulting workplan for this class when I asked her to proofread it for me by editing it in Word.
 - With Excel, she is making spreadsheets for her own need. She made a budget sheet for a grant that she was proposing, in several hours, that she normally would ask the secretary to do for her.
 - Also in Excel, she is able to edit spreadsheets clients give her. For a meeting that she had to attend to where a spreadsheet a client had given her would be needed for everyone, she was able to color highlight certain points on the spreadsheet to make it more distinguished on her own.
 - Also, since the spreadsheet wouldn't print out entirely in one page, she is able to change the spreadsheet into landscape form so that it would print efficiently with my help.

- **Managing files/folders on the computer**
 - Ada has now a directory structure on her hard drive at work that separates her work documents into specific categories.
 - She is able to create new folders onto the hard drive and save them onto the appropriate location.
 - She understands how shared drives and local drives work in her office, and she is able to modify settings on folders so that users can have access to them.

- **Finding information on the internet**
 - Able to bookmark specific and applicable web pages, such as technology consulting and grant donation sites, to Internet Explorer and Netscape browsers.
 - Confident in using Google and other search engines to find necessary information that she needs for work and at home.
 - She can download programs from sites such as the software needed for her to listen to the Pittsburgh internet radio stations here at work.

- **Personal information management (hotmail account, online calendar, PDA)**
 - Ada now has her own hotmail account now (adae17@hotmail.com) that she gets her clients and co-workers to send email to now. She has the ability now to make other accounts if needed, or at least find out how to get back into her old account if she forgets some information such as her own password.
 - She uses her online calendar on a regular basis to schedule events and appointments. She checks this daily.
 - She entered some of the information on her personal planner onto her online calendar.
 - Requested order from her boss in Boston for grant money to acquire a PDA for work use.

- **Raising her bar of expectation in using and being aware of technology**
 - Ada has spent more time at home and in her personal time just using her computer and "exploring" other options that it might have. This includes reading articles from cnn.com and using local Pittsburgh internet radio at work.

Recommendations

- **Master Word/Excel and start broadening on other software programs to use.**
 - We covered the preliminary basics of using Word/Excel. Learning other functions in these programs, as well as learning other software packages such as Microsoft Powerpoint, would help her become more efficient in her work by being able to give clear presentations on a video screen to an audience, rather than just giving handouts to everyone. Also, this task would get her more comfortable with handling software packages in general.

- **Resources:**

Some sources to get more information about Microsoft Word/Excel, to extend more in depth with what was covered during the consulting session, are these tutorial pages:

www.baycongroup.com/wlesson0.htm - this page is a tutorial page that a private group set up. This site gives information about aspects in Word about functionality, uses, etc.

www.microsoft.com/office/word/default.asp - Microsoft's official page for a tutorial in Word.

www.usd.edu/trio/tut/excel/

www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/Excel/homepage.html - More pages that are informative tutorials for using Microsoft Excel for beginners.

For more details on other Microsoft Office software utility programs, that might be useful for Bedford Initiatives is:

<http://office.microsoft.com/Assistance/default.aspx> - Microsoft's official webpage telling what each one of Microsoft Office's software programs (Access, Frontpage, etc.) does. This page has links to these programs that give more extensive detail on each of their functionalities.

Special Edition Using Microsoft Office 2000 by Ed Bott, Woody Leonhard - a very good recommended reference book for beginners to use Microsoft Office for beginners, as recommended by Amazon.

This book (\$27.99) can be purchased on the Amazon website:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/search-handle-form/102-9778153-2060151>

- **Defragmentation/maintenance of hard drive in workplace**
 - The next step to utilizing computer space now after managing to organize files/folders onto the hard drive is actually maximizing and optimizing the space on it. One common method is defragmentation, a program built in any operating system which reorganizes the hard drive used space into more efficient sections. These maintenance tools would come in handy for Ada's computer in terms of maximizing efficiency and capacity when working, such as less instances of the computer slowing down when she works and having less unwanted files on her computer.

- **Resources:**
Some handy websites:

http://www.homeandoffice.hp.com/hho/us/eng/defragment_your_hard_drive.html - useful website telling what defragmentation is and how to run it on a computer with Windows OS.

<http://ab.homestead.com/basicmaintenance.html> - another useful website giving basic tips on how to maintain the hard drive on a computer as well as maximizing utilities such as the RAM, processor speed, etc.

As for software utilities to use, Norton SystemWorks 2002 (\$49.95) is the most current package that optimizes computer performance, system recovery, and virus protection from a world-renowned company.

More information on purchasing and software functionality details can be found on:

<http://www.symantec.com/sabu/sysworks/basic/>

- **Organization of bookmarks**

- Knowing how to save pages as bookmarks on one's web browser is helpful in terms of saving time finding/typing the webpage on the browser window when all one has to do is click on the bookmark to get to the page. However, in case if there is a situation where there is a need to format the hard drive, Ada may want to save her bookmark list onto a file and transfer it to another location so her links won't be lost. This can be done by learning how to use the import/export tool on the internet browser window (found under file menu).

- **Resources:**
Helpful resource is the help option on the internet browser client window. This is useful for finding how to use this import/export tool to transfer bookmark links into a separate file.

- **Synchronize PDA with her PIM tools on the web.**

- The importance of carrying her schedule, appointments, and personal/client information with her everywhere is imperative because of her position with the organization. Having her PDA being "synchronized" with her schedule on her hotmail account/calendar (transferring data from the hotmail website onto the PDA) would save her time from entering in the information more than once, and also would give her two mediums to check upon.

- **Resources:**
Handy website:

<http://www.palmpilot.org/file.asp?ObjectID=3447> - website that comments everything on how to synchronize web applications/software (such as hotmail) onto a Palm pilot. Also, gives other invaluable information on other useful tools that a Palm is good for such as how to get Internet connectivity with it and how to transfer files from one Palm to another.

- **Maintaining group calendar on server at Bedford Initiatives**

- Having everyone's schedules/appointments on a calendar, for the entire organization to easily see and access at any time, would help Ada schedule appointments and other events with less chance of conflict and with less hassle for others. This can be accomplished with Microsoft Outlook, an email client that comes with Microsoft Office which the organization already has.

- **Resources:**

Useful websites:

<http://www.slipstick.com/calendar/scheduleall.htm> - website documenting how to organize group calendars effectively under Microsoft Outlook

<http://www.microsoft.com/office/outlook/using/default.asp> - Microsoft's official website giving links to documentation, tips and tricks, etc. for Outlook.

Also,

Microsoft Office 2000 9 in 1 for Dummies Desk Reference (IDG Publishing) – useful reference book for beginners giving information on how to use Outlook (in addition to 8 other Microsoft Office products such as Word, Excel, etc.), as recommended by Barnes & Nobles website.

This book (\$23.99) can be purchased at:

<http://btobshop.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/results.asp?WRD=microsoft+outlook&u serid=18WNI2V5FS&btob=Y>

About the consultant:

Danny Lam is a senior pursuing a bachelor degree in Computer Science and double degree in Chemistry. He is planning to stay an extra year at Carnegie Mellon to finish up his undergraduate study. He would enjoy pursuing research work in Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon or at an academic/industrial facility after he graduates.