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Nonprofit Website Design for Mission and Stakeholder Impact

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Abstract

Idaho Giving Garden was founded in 2020, and official recognition as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization is set to be granted in January 2024. Idaho Giving Garden's mission is to combat food insecurity in its community by growing and distributing fresh and nutritious produce to the Meridian Food Bank, fostering a healthier and more equitable food system for all. For my service-learning capstone project, I developed a website for Idaho Giving Garden to raise awareness of its mission and goals and engage volunteers, funders, and donors to support its cause. With greater community engagement through the website, Idaho Giving Garden hopes for significant benefits to its beneficiaries and a sustainable future as a nonprofit organization.

Keywords: Idaho Giving Garden, nonprofit organization, food insecurity, community, website, beneficiaries

Section 1: Introduction to your Capstone Project

My inspiration for this project began during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the revelation that millions of people had lost their jobs and were accessing food banks across America, many of whom had never experienced food insecurity. I focused on creative ways to help our local community during this time, and my vision became clear. I combined my knowledge of being an Idaho master gardener and hands-on experience growing food, and Idaho Giving Garden was born. I expanded our backyard garden to 500 SQFT of growing space and donated well over 200 lbs of lettuce and tomatoes to the Meridian Food Bank our first summer.

Nonprofit organizations rely increasingly on websites to raise awareness, garner community support, inspire others, spread awareness, and increase volunteer participation and donations to support their mission and goals. Creating a significant and impactful first impression of the organization's mission, project goals, and the beneficiaries it supports through a website can expand its reach into the community, start conversations, and gain interest from volunteers and donors that help amplify its efforts to achieve mission goals.

Section 2: Elements coming together

Innovative Approach

Using innovative approaches to design a website for nonprofit impact was essential while meeting various stakeholders' needs. I researched and gathered information and perspectives from multiple sources and industry experts to solve the problem of creating visibility and gaining support for the beneficiaries of the Idaho Giving Garden. I researched contemporary and cutting-edge nonprofit website articles, including *The Importance of Having a Great Website in the Nonprofit Sector*. Nonprofit organizations rely increasingly more on websites to raise awareness, garner community support, and increase donations to support the mission and its goals. Websites

are not just for for-profit businesses. The article helped me understand and articulate the reasons why a website is essential to a nonprofit organization and how to create a professional website for a great first impression, tell the organization's story and those of its beneficiaries, expand its reach into the community, start conversations, and gain interest from volunteers and donors that help "amplify" (Cantrell, 2022) the organization's efforts in achieving mission goals.

Additionally, to develop and nurture stakeholder relationships, I created a Jotform survey linked to Idaho Giving Garden's new website, requesting feedback and suggestions to improve the website from various stakeholders, including volunteers at the Meridian Food Bank, Idaho Giving Garden's board of directors, family, peers, community members, and other stakeholders.

Emotional Intelligence

Developing and nurturing stakeholder relationships is the "path to organizational growth" (Raj, 2023) and sustainability. "A successful nonprofit nurtures great relationships" (Raj, 2023) with all stakeholder groups. Exploring stewardship principles is essential to identifying and understanding who the stakeholders are, what they care about, how to tailor targeted communication messages, listening to understand their needs, creating a culture of trust and transparency, recognizing the stakeholders, and "develop strong systems and processes" (Raj, 2023.) My research and coursework in recognizing and understanding the needs of others and then practicing collaboration in a website design meeting helped inspire, motivate, and create a strong rapport between various stakeholders by practicing the principles of emotional intelligence. "Emotional intelligence increases one's ability to make sound decisions, build and sustain collaborative relationships, deal effectively with stress, and cope to a greater degree with constant change. To wit, it enables an individual not only to perform well in the workplace but

also in accomplishing various other goals and objectives in his or her life” (The Importance of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace | Business Blog Article | Ottawa University, n.d.)

Having a microcredential in emotional intelligence and practicing those skills helped me better understand the value EI can bring to my stakeholders. I incorporated mindfulness in collaboration with stakeholders by understanding their perspectives and modeling the pillars of emotional intelligence - self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social awareness.

Creative Thinking

My creative framework and unique approach were the ability to think about the problem as part of a complex system and apply it to the big picture by contacting various stakeholders and requesting feedback to tailor the website to meet their needs. This creative approach helped me communicate effectively with multiple individuals from different disciplines and perspectives. I gained an understanding of their views and was open to new ideas for creating an impactful website to raise awareness of Idaho Giving Garden’s mission. I applied civic-mindedness through their perspectives to improve Idaho Giving Garden’s website, ultimately improving the quality of life for its beneficiaries.

Innovative Solution

Nonprofit organization websites “need to be strategically planned and aligned with the NPOs goals and targeted to various stakeholders such as the general public, volunteers and donors” (Carrillo-Durán et al., 2023.) When nonprofit organizations offer more ways donors, grant funders, and volunteers can help the organization, the greater the engagement resulting in a more prosperous and sustainable nonprofit organization and mitigating food insecurity.

Compelled to use various sources of information and stakeholder feedback for a fresh perspective and expert knowledge to design Idaho Giving Garden’s (IGG) website, enhanced the

creative and innovative process for visibility with impact, and demonstrated innovation. To gain substantial feedback, I met with a few stakeholders in a Zoom meeting to gain their perspectives and insight. We brainstormed new topics to add to the website: a Project” page outlining projects for 2024, providing opportunities for Idaho Giving Garden supporters to consider volunteering and donating funds for specific project outcomes. The Project page also explains why each project is significant and how it will positively impact Idaho Giving Garden’s mission. Another page we added was Garden Resources. It provides education on various sustainable planting methods, access to becoming an Idaho Master Gardener, a link to access the ID Master Gardener program book, and opportunities to create a certified backyard wildlife habitat and how to become a certified pollinator steward. Additionally, the Garden Resource page may inspire other growers to create a giving garden, community garden, or student garden in their community. Idaho Giving Garden’s website is impactful, raising awareness of the organization and an educational opportunity to inspire others to grow food to mitigate food insecurity in their communities.

Section 3: Results

I measured the success of my capstone project by embedding a Jotform survey link to Idaho Giving Garden’s website, adding the website link to Idaho Giving Garden’s Facebook profile, emailing the link to various stakeholders, and posting the link to two of my academic course discussion boards for feedback. I measured the impact of the survey using analytics built into Jotform and Facebook through quantitative measurements and qualitative data. Additionally, I hand-counted responses from the other various sources of feedback I received.

I anticipated more participants would provide feedback through the Jotform survey. Of the seventy web links I shared through email, course discussion boards, and linked on Idaho

Giving Garden's Facebook page and requesting website feedback by completing the embedded Jotform survey, I received 17 responses directly through the survey link and an additional 21 responses via personal emails, discussion board responses, text messages, or phone calls. The results were thirty-nine responses out of seventy (56 percent.) This number was less than expected, but the ones who participated provided excellent feedback. The feedback encouraged me to make a few changes to the website. I added an easy-access link for volunteers to sign up for upcoming garden projects and an option to sign up for Idaho Giving Garden's monthly newsletter, which will begin in January 2024.

When creating Idaho Giving Garden's website, it was essential that I define each of the various stakeholders and identify their needs. The range of stakeholders is broad, so balance was vital when designing to ensure each stakeholder benefits from the website. The benefits and impacts of the website (and garden) vary among the stakeholders. However, many share the same commonalities: the garden and website information can improve physical and mental health, provide access to fresh-grown produce and mitigate food insecurity, create educational opportunities, access community, and educational resources, nurture community relationships, provide teachable skills and a sense of purpose, and for some, their first opportunity in serving their community.

Section 4: Conclusion

I created a nonprofit website for Idaho Giving Garden for my service-learning capstone project. Idaho Giving Garden had minimal community visibility, and creating an impactful website would solve this problem by raising awareness of its mission and goals and engaging volunteers, funders, and donors to support its cause. I applied emotional intelligence principles by understanding the needs of the stakeholders and creating a culture that inspires, motivates, and

creates a strong rapport by understanding their perspectives by modeling the pillars of emotional intelligence - self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social awareness. I developed a creative framework in thinking about the problem as part of a complex system and applied it to the big picture by contacting various stakeholders and requesting feedback to tailor the website to meet their needs. I used innovative approaches and solutions from stakeholder feedback, suggestions, and expert knowledge to design Idaho Giving Garden's (IGG) website, enhancing visibility and stakeholder interaction. Nurturing a culture that allows innovation is vital to an organization's success. "Have a mission that matters, strive for continual innovation, not instant perfection, look for ideas everywhere, and share everything" (Wojcicki, 2021.) With greater community engagement through the website, Idaho Giving Garden hopes for significant benefits to its beneficiaries and a sustainable future as a nonprofit organization.

Section 5: References

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Section 6: Appendix

[Idaho Giving Garden](#)