Taya-Kilos Volunteer Management System

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Abstract:

Community Engagement is not only beneficial for the community itself but also for the people who spend their time and effort as well for the betterment of the community. Technology plays a big role in volunteering efforts today. Fast response time of volunteers is needed nowadays. Through the use of the internet, organizations now are enabled to be able to recruit and respond to different causes in less than 48 hours. Available volunteer programs can now be disseminated and accessed over the web specifically through the use of social media (VolunteerHoward, 2011).

This capstone project focused on the concept of social awareness, collaboration, volunteerism, events management and most importantly volunteer management. It is a study on volunteer management to help foundations and centers gather enough volunteers for their volunteering opportunities by thinking about how to motivate possible volunteers to join and how to take care of them when they do. The test bed for this study is the De La Salle University-Manila - Center The proposed project of the team is a volunteer management system, which will help in handling the information about volunteers and volunteering opportunities. It is aimed to serve the Lasallian community, which includes its students, employees, alumni and most importantly the COSCA staff. The study aims to develop a Volunteer Management System for De La Salle University-Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA). The methodology used by the group in developing the project is rapid application development wherein the group is working in collaboration with COSCA in doing the system for the said organization and is scheduled to be developed within less than a year.

Key Words: Volunteer; Social Awareness; Community; Engagement; Event Management;

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the Philippines, storms and other forms of disasters are a common occurrence. An average of 20 storms is said to enter the country every year. In addition, the country also experiences other calamities such as flash floods, earthquakes and the like. At the event of such calamities, the first act of the government is to send out relief operations to the affected areas. Besides the government, other non-profit organizations also send out help to these areas and are made possible with the help of volunteers from all over the country. Seeing these as a common scenario in the country, the group decided to research on upon volunteering from different countries in order to gain knowledge on how to improve on the current volunteer management of Philippines. The group partnered with the university's social-development arm in the study to help in coming up with a volunteer management system to help in the easier and better management of volunteers and the volunteering opportunities that are available. Interviews were conducted with the partner organization and consultation was done with the group's adviser which led to proposal and development of the group's project.

1.2 Relevant Developments in the Literature to date

1.2.1 Trends in Volunteerism

The interest in volunteerism has been continually increasing through the years. Volunteer efforts may be non-profit, examples of which are those for charity, disaster response, teaching programs and the like. It may also be profitable like in corporate or commercial companies, which accepts volunteers to do some similar tasks to those of dedicated employees. A number of new trends in volunteer management have been adapted and became the focus in most organizations today. To start it off, one of the trends in volunteerism is about the encouragement of the youth to be volunteers. Volunteerism is not limited to those adults who just have more time to spare in order to join and become a volunteer(Cohen, 2010). Organizations do not solely focus and consider the age as a barrier in considering volunteers, as long as the aspiring volunteer has the necessary skills and expertise that can be of help to the volunteer program. In relation to age becoming less of barrier, another trend in volunteer management today is the adaptation of skill based job appointment. In this trend, the purpose is either help a volunteer to seek additional training and experience, or give chance to those volunteers who seek to share a specific skill. Most volunteer management practices today benefits its volunteers through helping each of them develop and grow throughout the duration of volunteering efforts. (VolunteerHoward, 2009)

Technology plays a big role in volunteering efforts today. Fast response time of volunteers is needed nowadays. Through the use of the internet, organizations now are enabled to be able to recruit and respond to different causes in less than 48 hours. Available volunteer programs can now be disseminated and accessed over the web specifically through the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and the like. The scope of people that can be recruited widens because of the use of social media to disseminate volunteer programs which helps recruit more potential volunteers for the causes. Volunteer efforts are no longer limited to the human resources that are available only near the area it is being conducted but can also now reach out to other people within wider geographical scopes which also widens the available skills, abilities and expertise that may be of great use. Through social media, volunteers are kept interested in the volunteering efforts and are also kept updated quickly and easily. (VolunteerHoward, 2011)

Volunteering today is not limited to just having people with spare time to volunteer

but instead a lot of factors are considered in ensuring that the volunteers are utilized to their fullest potential. Also, it is beneficial for the volunteers themselves by developing them throughout the process, which makes volunteering efforts much more successful than ever before. (Chen, Yuqing & Riedl, 2010)

1.2.2 Importance of Volunteer Management

Volunteer management is simply known as the selection and supervision of volunteers. It is the gateway to the community, providing citizens with opportunities to become more involved in local issues and global causes, and serving as grassroots source of public relations and marketing. Most importantly, it is the guardian of well-being, for volunteers and constituents and for the organizations involving them. (idealist, 2013)

As soon as an organization has decided to involve volunteers there are a lot of things needed to be done such as finding them, matching their skills and interests to the needs of the organization, supervision and recognition and so much more. Volunteer management is very important because without proper volunteer management, the end result is a volunteer who does not feel valued or engaged and will no longer be interested and eventually will leave the organization. (idealist, 2013a)

Nowadays, there are already information technologies that can help in managing volunteers. The use of volunteer management systems is very beneficial in a number of ways. First, it helps organizations have a centralized source of keeping track of volunteer information and the activities that they are working on. It will be very beneficial for those volunteering efforts that have more than 100 volunteers and have volunteer activities from two or more geographically apart areas. These systems also help in a lot of decision making efforts. It can come up with different reports that may be regarding on how successful the conducted activities are and

suggest better ways to make it more successful, help in choosing which volunteers to recruit and which volunteers to retain based on their performance assessment reports, and much more. The use of such systems could also help in assigning the right volunteer to the right project which helps volunteers to effectively utilize and develop their skills, leading to a more successful project. Another advantage of having a volunteer management system is the easy dissemination of available open projects to people which in turn helps in recruiting and reaching out to the potential volunteers. Lastly, some volunteer management systems may have social network features which help in improving communication between participating volunteers on each project. It can help volunteers brainstorm on how to make their assigned projects more successful and promote cooperation and teamwork amongst them.

1.2.3 Impact of Volunteer Management to Society

Community Engagement is not only beneficial for the community itself but also for the people who spend their time and effort as well for the betterment of the community. The people who help out get to facilitate various learning activities for out of school youth, public school children, and other community-based partner organizations, they may serve as trainers for community engagement and social development. The people are given education and training for their betterment as well. Volunteers also become aware of advocacies and become involved in these advocacies and become ambassadors or better yet, advocates. They also get trained in program support which helps give direct service assistance in the field of resource management, community organizing, disaster risk reduction, and the like. Lastly, volunteers keep track or have knowledge management in order to contribute in the process documentation of activities, design, and management of database or the organizational website. The volunteers, aside from helping the community that they engage in, not only help these people in disadvantage

but also help themselves by being exposed to such issues regarding real life situations and by training their skills as well rounded citizens. This can be applied not only for schools but for non-profit organizations that deal with volunteerism and relief operations that provide relief goods. Volunteers are clearly essential in community engagement. They are needed in order for a CE activity to be successful. However, it's not as simple as recruiting volunteers only. They should be taken care of to be able to retain them and encourage them to join in CE activities more. That's how big volunteer management affects the society.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The study aims to aid in the proposal and development of a Volunteer Management System for De La Salle University-Center for Social Concern and Action.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims to:

- Research about the general community engagement framework and the current framework used by the organization
- Research about the proper management of volunteers and volunteering events including the life cycle of a volunteer
- Compare existing related information systems that can be applied in the organization
- Identify the system modules that are fit to help lessen the problems encountered by the organization such as information redundancy and inconsistency, ineffective report generation and ineffective dissemination of events

- Research about the possible added features of the system that may be of help to the improvement of the organization's current process such as events matching and skills training

1.4 Background of the Organization

The Center for Social Concern and Action (COSCA) is the social development arm of the De La Salle University (DLSU). It was established in the school year 1983-1984. It is involved in social development work both in urban and rural poor communities.

COSCA is the primary unit responsible for promoting the Lasallian Social Development principles and ensuring that the Lasallian community is aware of and animates these principles. It engages the university to put faith into action through service and solidarity with the poor.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study will tackle the volunteer and events management process that is followed by COSCA. The processes to be researched upon by the group will include, the proposal and approval of volunteering events process, volunteering event information dissemination, volunteer recruitment, orientation and training, and lastly, the evaluation process.

1.5 Problems Identified

After conducting several interviews with COSCA, the group identified the following problems that the organization is currently encountering: *(1) Events do not get enough visibility, (2) Volunteer Information is prone to loss, (3) Ineffective report format which results to ineffective decision making, (4) Redundant Information Recorded* and lastly, *(5) Inconsistency in data stored in different machines.*

(1) This problem is encountered because the information dissemination of the organization is

ineffective. All information related to these volunteering opportunities are found in different websites which makes it difficult for the possible volunteers to access the details. Volunteers do not know where to exactly look for volunteering opportunities.

(2) All volunteer information gathered through the application forms are kept and piled together in the COSCA office. The information kept on the machines are not backed up regularly which results to some instances wherein COSCA loses some information and is only able to recover outdated information. Also there are a large number of files kept on the computer and it takes some time to find some of it. The names and contact numbers of volunteers are encoded but with the large volume of information that needs to be handled there are instances wherein some information cannot be found which results to some volunteers not being contacted and followed up regarding their volunteer application.

(3) COSCA produces a documentation about everything that has happened during the event and is recorded and compiled for the purpose of post-event, yearly, and other types of reports. However, the reports they are currently generating are not able to effectively help in decision making purposes due to having an inadequate report format.

(4) The documents of all events of COSCA containing volunteer information are kept in file folders of COSCA. These information are also encoded into the computers of COSCA in excel format. These information are kept by COSCA in the machines and does not dispose of it even after a long period of time. It was stated that some volunteer information kept in the machine are repetitive and usually only differs based on the event.

(5) Volunteer information are kept in the different machines of COSCA. The information kept on one computer is not in sync with the ones kept on other machines which result to inconsistent reports generated.

2. METHODOLOGY

The team chose Rapid Application Development (RAD) as the methodology in developing the project since according to research, RAD methodology was developed to respond to the need to deliver systems very fast but still in good quality. The team has roughly eight months to develop the proposed system and they see that RAD is the most appropriate methodology since the group does not have enough time to develop the system.

RAD methodology helps produce a good-quality system given a very limited time as long as the user requirements are well-defined. Moreover, the team chose RAD because they are not dealing with crucial information unlike in developing hospital related systems. Given a short period of time in developing and implementing their project, RAD will help the team finish the system not only on time but also in good quality.

Currently, the team's project is undergoing the user design and construction phases of RAD. Every change in the design is immediately translated to codes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After undergoing through interviews with the partner organization, consultation with the group's adviser, and further research about the focused topic, the conducted study resulted to the group to propose a volunteer management system for its partner organization COSCA. The proposed system is seen to be a feasible solution for the organization in tackling the identified problems that it is facing. Moreover, the system does not only solve the problems but also improve the partner organization's volunteering and events management process.

After several interviews with COSCA, the group was able to identify a number of problems in their volunteer management operations. First, the group identified that the volunteering events does not gain enough visibility, there was redundancy and inconsistency in the data stored in the machines of the different heads of COSCA, these stored data were also prone to loss, and lastly, the

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group found COSCA's reports to have an ineffective format which limited the organization's decision making capability.

With the identified problems, the group came up with the solution of proposing a volunteer management system to help in the management of volunteers and volunteering events of COSCA. The system proposed is to be used by the Lasallian Community and COSCA employees. The system developed was web-based for easy access to anyone with a computer.

Fig. 1 Website Homepage

The proposed system ended up with modules and features such as accounts management wherein the volunteers will have their own accounts to be able to login and use the system's features.

Fig. 2 Volunteer Account

The system will also handle the events proposal, approval and scheduling in the website's public events calendar for volunteers to join.

Fig. 3 Public Events Calendar

The system will also handle the volunteer interviews during the recruitment stage and will allow volunteers to join events that will match their skills or interests that they provided in the application process to maximize and further develop their skills and abilities.

The system will also have a training module wherein it will allow training of volunteers to be done within the system through instructional videos. After trainings, the volunteers are assessed through an examination regarding the training taken.

Fig. 4 Volunteer Training Module

After undertaking orientation and training sessions, the volunteer will then be already allowed to join the volunteering event applied for. Once the event is done, the volunteer is required to evaluate the volunteers in order to know their insights regarding it and to help COSCA to improve existing events and come up with better ones in the future.

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Fig. 5 Event Evaluation

The system also has an analytics feature that will help COSCA in certain decision making situations. It also has features such as notifications; social network integration for sharing events to increase publicity and volunteer ranking wherein more experienced volunteers will have access to features not readily accessible to newly registered volunteers such as becoming a committee head for events.

4. CONCLUSION

The proposed system based on the conducted study is seen to be a feasible project to help in tackling the identified problems of COSCA. The proposed system will be beneficial for the organization once it is implemented. The system can still be improved on many different aspects but it is already able to fulfill its purpose and objectives.

After being evaluated by the panelists in the group's defense of the project, an SMS notification feature was suggested by the panelists to be added into the system in order to further improve it. Also, the panelists suggested to the group to further improve the reports through providing more helpful and useful data for COSCA to come up with better reports to be used in decision making situations.

Also, the group considers the inclusion of Community Partners or outside partner organizations of COSCA in the system as one potential area that can be researched on in the future. As the team sees it, it's possible that the partners can also submit their evaluations thru the system. They can also submit requests or any other

transactions that can be done using an information system.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LCCS-I-004