

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

The Community Economic Development

Alumni Resource Book

MICHAEL SWACK
CED/PROJECT ADVISOR

JEAN JACKSON
1996 PROJECT GROUP

Jackson, Jean

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Background

Thirteen years ago, the first students entered the halls of New Hampshire College to further their education in their chosen vocation of Community Economic Development (CED). Since the graduation of the class of 1982, students have followed the same path to New Hampshire from all over North America. The New Hampshire College CED Program also lit a beacon with an international CED program that attracts students from around the world.

An intensive database has always been kept on all students. This includes those students who successfully complete their training and those who, for whatever reason, make the decision to return at a later time to finish. Those students that have earned their Masters Degree in the field of Community Economic Development have gone on to become nationally recognized and noted experts in the areas of community loan funds, credit unions, micro-enterprise development programs, peer lending groups, land trust, co-op housing project and much more. Alumni are also recognized as lobbyists in state and federal government to effectively promote equitable promote equitable political change in serving the interest of all communities.

Although an intensive database is maintained by the CED Program's administration, the ever present challenge of updating the constantly evolving alumni practitioners mailing list is crying out for HELP. That cry has been heard and I am responding to it.

Problem Statement

If no solution is found within two years the New Hampshire College CED Program's approximately 400 Alumni will continue to be unable to access the expertise of the existing Alumni resource pool, hindering their purpose and commitment to help communities nationwide and internationally implement effective change in the area of CED.

Goal Statement

The purpose of this project is to develop an alumni directory. Once developed, it will be distributed to as wide an audience as possible. The directory is intended to be used by community groups as a resource for technical assistance. It will allow alumni to network with each other. And the directory can be used by the College as a marketing and recruitment tool.

Methods

Develop a core working group to assist with the project

The core group was one strategy selected to solicit input into the process of developing the resource book. A core group was identified through a process that included organizing planning session to engage classmates, and alumni in strengthening communications. Held Alumni Meeting Re: Capital Campaign at EC/HCW Hartford, CT, 13 alumni attended. Held brainstorming session group Topic: History of CED as it relates to communities, session entitled "The Gathering" Held at Days Inn. Excellent historical overview of CED by C. Turner, good interaction with participants, session ended with a candlelight testimony on mission & vision of CED. Total in first session 60. Attendance represented classes 95, 96 & 97.. Alumni in the core group were selected primarily from the class of 1994, 1995, and 1996.

Develop a good working relationship with the CED staff

Contact Administrator and CED Campaign staffperson to discuss project.

Develop a survey to canvas alumni on their current status

The strategy of the survey was partly to determine interest in the project. The drafting of the survey was not as cumbersome. After creating a survey, it was prepared for mailing. Letter and survey sent to entire alumni body, approximately 400 including international students.

Format database and design for book set-up

I would get database information from CED to use so that we won't reinvent the wheel.

To determine level of interest in the project

The Resource Book's first listing would be free to alumni. The

2nd listing would cost \$35 per listing. Alumni will be charged to help cover the cost of the publication. The 2nd edition of the resource book will be put on-line. The 3rd edition will include journal contributions by practitioners willing to share their experience in the field.

To publish/produce and distribute an alumni resource book

I retained the aide of a fellow classmate and we negotiated a deal to get the resource book format, printed and published.

Results

Develop a core working group to assist with the project

I discovered the core group to be rather top heavy when the project was first designed Spring 1995. After I modified the core group, there were thirteen people including myself. The majority of the group were members of the class of 1995. With the exception of two of the core group members, which the creator had a different plan for their life, they were unable to participate. Because of geographic locations it was impossible to meet. We did a considerable amount of telephone conferencing. Communicating on-line would have possibly made this project flow easier.

Develop a good working relationship with the CED staff

I contacted the CED staff and Capital Campaign staff to discuss mutual activities. They agreed to a shared interest.

Develop a survey to canvas alumni on their current status

The preparation of mailing the surveys was somewhat time intensive. However, they were mailed and the initial response rate was encouraging. Surveys initially were returned to CED administrator averaged two daily. Follow-up survey information was done by

telephone. The results are minimum from phone follow-up. M. Coonan plans to continue phone follow-up: Capital Campaign. M. Coonan agreed to keep Administrator apprised of updates.

Format database and design for book set-up

Obtained Q & A program. Input and updated database.

To determine level of interest in the project

From conversations I created by calling and personally meeting, I was able to determine there was interest. The rate of return by surveys, almost 25%, also was an indicator of positive interest.

To publish/produce and distribute an alumni resource book

To be quite honest I was grouped out, meeting and sub committee meeting out, and it was a pleasure to work one on one with certain people you could/can count on to assist in getting the job done. The forementioned validates, the problem of reliable human resources. I reviewed first draft of Resource Book. Draft of the resource book available with nintey two respondents.

Conclusions/Recommendations

In retrospect the reason I believe, now was that my project allowed people to feel attached to the process of CED. Actually having people not wanting to cut the ambition of CED.

This project was very time consuming and labor intensive. Although there is a vast CED alumni Network, there are certainly a modest percentage that continues to stay in touch, on line, on a consistent bases. If called upon would gladly assist wherever needed. Especially if called upon by Michael Swack. Yet there is a percentage of alumni need to be "nudged" to get involved.

To date I consider the project a success given the original goals. Sessions were created, organized, planned and implemented for alumni. People who attended were motivated to stay involved at least at the moment. The learning curve provided amazement in how much is accomplished with the right team of people, no matter the size of the team "smaller is better". I've resolved to set more realistic goals. Also I recognized the alumni really do want to be involved with a "Call to CED Action".

Lessons Learned: The power of human resources when working towards the same mission is phenomonal. The administration staff of the CED program and what they do with the resources they have is commendable. It was validation for me to share with the staff, especially with the CED alumni office my frustration with the project and receiving another way to progress.

The alumni project is a job unto itself. The creativity for workshops and conferences is "endless". It is vital that practitioners rejuvenate and stay updated to the changes occurring in communities nationally and internationally. Sustainability is key to the CED practitioner if he/she is to maintain progress in community development. The next steps and recommendations for this project: to raise the percentage of participation we will need to continue the process of reaching out to alumni - most likely on-line and the use of e-mail, at least for six months. And another printing and distribution for sale a year from now, after receiving feedback from the first printing. The cost with the exception of postage and envelops, were absorbed by the publishers.

In segments of the CED Alumni community there is an attitude of "so what's in it for me" Excuse me for assuming, I thought every one lives the CED mission. Major adjustments were dealing with the time schedules of other people. It is my intent to continue with the project for another year, or its (the CED Resource Book) 2nd printing with recommendations in keeping the project "alive". Dying

on the vine is not an option here. This resource book is a natural
sequel to the scholar/practitioner exchange program, as stated in
the campaign for CED 1995-2000 another example for the use of the
"BOOK". If the politics allows.

* Although my project advisor - highly suggested "just get the book
out there and don't worry about it being perfect" However, there
are two things that are a constant in my life - I'm a
"perfectionist" image is everything, especially if it has my name
attached to it. - Never say die...

Thank you Michael Swack for not giving up on me! You were correct
a year ago "I didn't strike you as a quitter" I'm NOT!! you also
said you have to earn this degree I certainly feel I've
successfully done that too...