PT Makeover: New Website Rollout

The Initiative

The growth of its membership prompted a nonprofit organization to rollout a new website to ease the workload of the Webmaster and keep content current. The new site, based on the weblog system, allowed each Committee to update its own web content and the members to edit their own profiles. A few weeks later, members were complaining about their inability to add information to their profiles and reported outdated pages. The Committees were still relying on the Webmaster to edit contents. I came on board after the rollout and all I could do was tend to rising member complaints. Eventually, the system was pulled out and replaced.

The Effort

The weblog system was approved by the Board because it was recommended by the President. No examination of best practices or similar systems was done. The only data gathering effort was members voting on the design of the new site and a survey of the Committees regarding information they needed updated.

Their solution system was an online training given by the Webmaster to members of the Committees only and was conducted often because committee members change all the time.

The Make-over

Given a second chance, I would apply Rossett's *First Things Fast* analysis approach to find out the drivers and potential obstacles to a successful rollout. Some questions I would ask:

- Benefits to the organization? To the members? What will make it a success?
- Who else used this system? Their successes? Failures?
- Who in the organization will be using it? How will they use it? Do they have the skills?
- How will it be supported?

The analysis would show the following as key success factors:
- ability to easily update content by the users
- reliable support
And identify the following barriers:
- lack of member skills to use the new system
- resistance to new technology
- the need for constant retraining due to turnover of Committee members

Raquel Nilson
EDTEC 685 Fall 2007

Solution Systems

For this to work, it will need to involve more than training:

A. <u>Change Management</u>
A new system requires a change management strategy to encourage desired results:
1. Use a focus group to provide valuable input and build support
2. Clear and continuous communication of the change (why and how)
3. Reiteration of the benefits

B. <u>Training and Performance Aids</u>
Create a training plan that includes members. Focus on tasks they do frequently. These can be implemented as job aids or online help to provide instruction at time of need and reduce (if not replace) some training.

C. <u>New Job Roles</u>
Train a select group (Committee Directors) to train Committee members. Not only will this take workload off the Webmaster, it also shows leadership getting involved and embracing the new system. It will motivate members.

D. <u>System Support</u>
Have a user assistance plan and team in place to immediately address system glitches and challenges.

Had the above been in place, the project would have had different results.

References

Rossett, A. (1999). *First things fast.* San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

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