

# Community project



## Community Project

### Organizational Behavior

#### Benefit Dinner for Girls Softball Dug-outs

#### The Wisdom Seekers

May 12, 2005

#### Introduction

The MBA Class at Averett University has been tasked with creating and implementing a community project for our Organizational Behavior class. Community projects refers to a service that a person performs for the benefit of his or her local community, or to solve particular problems related to the needs of their community.

The team decided to sponsor a Mother's Day spaghetti dinner for the athletic department at the United Christian Academy (UCA). The funds would be used exclusively to build dug-outs for the girls softball team. The United Christian Academy is a small private Christian school located in Stanardsville, Virginia. UCA serves the community through a preschool program for children 3 and 4. It also conducts school for K-5 through 12th grade.

The spaghetti dinner seemed perfect for our purpose of collecting money to build the girls softball team some dugouts. We wanted to engage in a community project that included certain characteristics such as an activity that would produce long-lasting benefits for the community. The team also wanted an uplifting and positive experience for all involved and a process

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that included a variety of challenges which would demonstrate our individual talents. As a team we all participated in the decision making for the entire project. Each participant showed leadership and demonstrated motivation to get the project underway and completed with a successful turnout.

We are the Wisdom Seekers and our team member are made up of 4 people.

The team began the decision making process by first exploring the parameters involved in a community project and the possibilities to work towards a worthy cause, while applying organizational behavior principles.

Once the team came up with a general consensus for the project, the decision making was shared at all levels. Sometimes, the team had to rethink certain approaches quickly, for example by becoming more persistent and persuasive with merchants. As the dead line for the dinner approached we needed to take into consideration all factors surrounding the cause and try and get as much as possible from each merchant. In most cases, there was reluctance about donating something to a group that was not very well known and in other cases there was resistance in general to donating at all. Many merchants wouldn't donate without first receiving a request in writing, so we created a letter designed to overcome this obstacle. We have included a copy of this letter at the end of this paper for your review.

The team had multiple different personality types and traits that would allow us to pull on multiple strengths from different team members. B has a very creative side so in creating posters and bulletins this came in extremely vital. We used these bulletins to send home to the students and to post <https://assignbuster.com/community-project/>

throughout local businesses to advertise the event. Her creative side allowed us to advertise in a way that caught the customer's eye and allowed us to have a higher profile. G has a very defined sense of purpose, he has the ability to remove himself from the emotions of the situation and make decisions. When quick decisions had to be made we relied heavily on Gene's opinion to forecast a positive outcome. P was the constant driving force that kept us all together, our peace maker. P's personality is one that allows her to make light of the situation and bring us all back into the circle without creating any further conflict but helping to resolve all the issues outstanding. T's personality is one of a driving force and this came in the handiest in getting donations from merchants. An A+ personality doesn't give up easy and would continue to request donations even after being told no repeatedly.

These personalities of the team made it possible for us to make quick decisions based on outcomes that we as a group thought would occur with each decision. Due to the time constraints many activities had to take place at the same time. One example of this would be when the dinner event had to be advertised while donations were still being solicited from merchants. Not knowing the number of people who would attend the event put added stress and pressure on the team because once the event had been advertised we were committed to having the dinner. We had to have the dinner regardless of the food or cash donations to support this function, we just had to find a way to make it happen. This put a great deal of stress on our team to ensure that we continued to visit and solicit donations from our

merchants to have enough stock on hand to feed everyone who showed up for dinner.

The stress led the team to experience conflict and the team found ourselves working down the path of the conflict process. At first we had some communication errors and then we had to realize what was the perceived conflict and outline a plan for resolution. Once we realized we had some real tough conflict we had to take action so we could handle the conflict. We all collaborated and compromised and in some cases avoided the problem until we couldn't bear it any longer. At this point we changed our behavior in order to increase the group's performance.

Once the team reorganized we realized we needed to get back to work, we also needed door prizes and silent auction items as this was also part of our advertising. The team found it most successful when we visited colleagues and co-workers for donations, networking seem to really work in this area. People who know you trust you more and therefore are more willing to give a donation when they firmly believe it is going to a good cause.

The team believed that an announcement for live music entertainment was also a great selling point, but we had no musician. We either had to take a chance in advertising it before we had a firm commitment from the musician or leave it out of the advertising. In this case, there had to be a level of trust in the person who was called upon to be a leader at this task. Gene had said that he could get the music and the team had made the decision to back Gene in getting music and laid the task in his hands. Gene knew that he had the total support from the rest of the team and we believed in him this trust

was a knowledge-based trust. The team knew from prior behavioral predictability that we had adequate experience and confident in Gene to accomplish this task without ever waivering from our stance that he would succeed and their would be music. In fact, he not only succeeded but accomplished this task wish great satisfaction to all of our guests, the music was fantastic!

Once the tasks had been assigned all members acted individually and collectively as needed to accomplish the tasks necessary to fulfill our goal. Sometimes leadership emerged spotaneously as each member saw the need to fill a gap or to fulfill a requirement. If we needed someone to run and pick something up or to head up a different area that was left behind that team member was always obliging and headed in the direction that was necessary.

The team wanted an uplifting and positive experience for all involved and a process that included a variety of challenges which would demonstrate our individual talents. As a team, we all participated in the decision making for the entire project. The spaghetti dinner seemed perfect for our purpose of donating the money to build the girl softball dugouts and fit our needs of class and to fill project with challenges. We wanted to engage in a community project that included certain characteristics such as an activity that would produce long-lasting benefits for the community. Each group member showed leadership and demonstrated motivation to ensure the success of the project. As the softball dug-outs go up at UCA each of us will know we played a vital part in helping these girls get what they needed in their sport of choice, softball.

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As we visited the local businesses, most merchants and organizations told us they were saturated with petitions for donations. Some merchants would overhear us asking the clerk and they would run to the back room. Some merchants wouldn't donate because the school was a christian school.

Merchants are constantly approached by schools, non-profit organizations, and charitable organizations for donations and it is tough for them to donate to all of them. Small merchants can make decisions about donations on the spot and therefore the process tends to be less bureaucratic. They are either in a position to donate something freely or they are not in a position to donate financially. Small businesses are usually free to identify with the cause without corporate restrictions and donate more freely. Corporate businesses on the other hand have a more complicated system for handling donations. Decisions are made at the corporate level through community development or public relations' offices and have meetings to discuss these matters. The team found these meetings are held either weekly, monthly, or yearly and never in a timely fashion to be of help if it is a short-term project.

Corporate businesses also have a set budget and restrictions in terms of the causes that the company can and cannot support. In these cases the people soliciting donations must adhere to their procedures by presenting the request in writing, letter, fax or by calling their central offices and waiting for an answer. The answer may or may not come quickly or at all in some cases, depending on the importance of the organization. If you are requesting the donation after the meeting has been held it may be another month before they meet again to consider your petition. This part of the project was very challenging, especially because merchants and organizations are constantly

bombarded with requests from different organizations. We visited local stores with a letter of presentation in hand explaining our background, project, and cause for the benefit dinner. Most of them were courteous and listened to our request and explained the processing system in order to get them to donate.

Solicitation is a time consuming process, especially when the merchant is part of a large corporation and donations are handled at headquarters as explained above. If an answer is received, it may already be too late even if it is a positive one. In terms of advertising, time is also a factor since the success of the outcome is based on how quick, efficient, and effective the turnaround time with the merchant is extended. Some companies have a policy of not supporting causes that benefit religious groups or organizations because they do not want the business to identify with one cause and antagonize others in the process.

The Wisdom Seekers have been working as a team for a year, therefore we have already evolved beyond certain stages of the group-forming functions. For the purpose of this community project they acted as a temporary entity with a specific deadline, following quite closely the norms for this model. There was urgency at the beginning to make a decision, a period of reflection to assimilate the scope of the project and to get mentally prepared, and a final flurry of activity to stay on target and meet the deadline.

The group originally met to discuss the different alternatives available for a worthy community project and brainstormed the possibilities. Each team



member presented his or her ideas to the group to encompass the entire groups input. It became obvious that certain causes were either too unrealistic, due to time constraints, or too bureacratic to make them feasible to complete within such a short time span.

The team selected a cause that was agreeable to everyone and set a direction for the project dividing activities among its four members. Personality types and work experience, in other words, the specializations of the project, were taken into consideration for the distribution of tasks. Some members were more convincing or persuasive at the time of soliciting donations of goods or cash, while others were more valuable working in the background with the logistics of the event. However, all members took part in all aspects of the project with suggestions and hands on participation. Tasks were grouped together according to the functions involved in completing that task. For example, those who were in charge of solicitation, presented, and mailed the introduction letters for donations, visited merchants, made phone calls, and followed up as needed. The ones in charge of making the event known to the public took care of the advertising, made flyers, posters, and solicited media ads. Overlapping functions, such as planning, setting up the location, food preparation, service, and entertainment, were done collectively.

This was a simple structure where each team member acted as an independent specialized entity in charge of a set of tasks. The team followed an organic model of structure where the information as well as the decision making process was freely shared, making it more productive to achieve the goal. There was enough communication in a group of this size that we didn't

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need a formalized structure, however a leader was needed, as a center of operations, to channel through all questions and to measure the progress of all the individual efforts.

However, continuous contact was maintained through phone conversations and on-line communication, as well as during the times when team members met weekly and during separate visits to merchants as well as posting flyers and collecting donations.

The ultimate success of the project was a great motivator and kept everyone energized throughout the process. A large part of the activities involved in this project consisted of convincing a community saturated with solicitation that our cause was worthy and they should donate. Since there was a lot of solicitation already in this area it was very difficult to pierce through the skepticism and suspicion of merchants. Our team found it hard to convince the area merchants to make a donation of goods or money. Every positive outcome was doubly appreciated because it was a success of our tactics and also brought us closer to our goal. We asked 38 merchants for donations and received 22 donations of money, food, or merchandise. Every yes we received caused enthusiasm to persevere and the momentum was used as a tool to convince others about the great cause.

The team broke the donations down into a yes or no vote. If the merchant agreed to donate time, money, goods, or food we solidified their response with a yes. The team broke it down into percentages to realize that most of our merchants approached said yes, in fact, 58% said yes.

The team realized during the solicitation stage this was also an area of expertise and those in the sales field did better than those not familiar with solicitation. In calculating out our strengths we noticed the sales personality had an A+ type personality and seem to be comfortable in asking for donations therefore getting a higher percentage of merchants in donating towards the cause.

The challenges in all stages offered by this project were a great motivator as well. Overcoming each one of these challenges was a measure of success and knowing that regardless of the outcome a battle had already been won, kept our team going forward.

The cause itself was a great motivator as we were helping others achieve something they didn't have and couldn't afford. Keeping that goal in the horizon was very important and knowing that somebody was counting on our team effort made us work harder because we did not want to dissappoint them.

As any group working together under strict resource and time constraints this team experienced some moments of great tension. Every negative outcome was seen by all at one time or another as a failure. Failure was translated into the notion that as a team we had perhaps made poor project decisions or that we had failed to predict all the things that could go wrong. The team made the commitment and shared it with others sealing our responsibility and soon the conflict got resolved by knowing that we could not break our commitment. The commitment we didn't want to break wasn't only to the school girls but also to each team member in our group. We

learned to cope through many different situations and we came out having a deeper understanding of each other, our strengths, our weaknesses and our personalities.

Having shared the decision making process from the beginning we only had ourselves to blame and we knew that there was no room for failure. Fulfilling the commitment and staying the course was in itself a success.

The United Christian Academy (UCA) very graciously let us use their cafeteria and facilities to serve the spaghetti and salad dinner as the major part of the fundraiser. The event also included dessert and drinks and took place on May 7, the Saturday before Mother's Day, from 5 to 8 PM.

Preparations started much earlier in the day when the team met to gather all the items and prepare the dining room and kitchen. Entertainment had also been planned for the evening with live music by a great local guitar player, and other exciting festivities like door prizes, and a silent auction.

Since the United Christian Academy is located in Stanardsville, Virginia, and participation was mostly expected from there, the advertising was mainly focused in that area. Flyers were distributed among school teachers and neighborhoods, and they were also sent home from school with the children in their take-home folders. Several colorful posters were placed in strategic areas around the school and in residential streets days before the event. A large truck parked near UCA was also used as a billboard to visibly advertise the dinner to those traveling by car on route 33. You will find a picture of this truck attached at the end of the paper for your review.

In terms of mass media, an ad was placed in a Greene County Record that covers the 17, 138 residents covering the county of Greene. Another ad was placed on television in the City of Charlottesville's Community Bulletin Board, served by Adelphia's Channel 10. The ad ran for a week at intervals of approximately one hour for a viewing time of 40 seconds. You will find a picture of this ad attached at the end of the paper for your review.

The team work on the day of the dinner was unbelievable to see in action. The team gathered at the school starting at 2 pm a full 3 hours prior to the dinner. Every team member brought in their designated items for the dinner and everyone went to work. The personality clashes that had been flogging our group from the project start point seemed to have melted away and a seamless team came together to complete one awesome project.

P started us out by decorating the room with tablecloths and flowers. B continued this pattern with more flowers and elegance being added to the room. Everyone came equipped to work and set the right pace straight from the beginning. G went to work making salads, B cooked hamburger, P ; T served the salads and dinners. We had enrolled volunteers to work the cash entry fee, the drinks stand and help clean up the trash. G helped in delivering the bread and spaghetti while boiling water for noodles on the stove. B started with the hamburger and ended by making all the sauce and completing the plates before they went out to the customers. P kept the volunteer help straight and T did the pictures, the door prizes and the silent auction. No one was assigned any parts during the night, no one gave direction, everyone just pitched in and found a niche and worked as a seamless unified team.

The wisdom seekers who from the start of this course had worked through all of the problems including personality conflicts consisting of “ A typical behavior, the environment, different personality traits, and emotions” had finally found solid common ground.

## Conclusion

This project was very challenging because there were so many components and personalities involved dealing with the group’s organization behavior dominated our set up and culture. We also set very ambitious goals and standards, and the outcome was not completely in our hands. In the beginning our success depended in great part on the generosity of other people, so more work, did not necessarily translate into more positive outcomes. What we later found out the success of the project really didn’t depend on the generosity of others by the cohesiveness and dynamics of the group.

The project gave us the opportunity to learn about the fundraising process, advertising, psychology of people and the politics involved within the fundraising realm. Most importantly it helped us learn about ourselves and the behavioral organization of our team. It taught us the impact that each of us had on the group and the impact we have on others and how to handle this situation in the future a little better