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ETEC 6223

Abstract

As part of the requirements for the Educational Technology program at the University of Arkansas, I select to take the Strategic Planning and IDT course. During the course, I had the opportunity to work with Cornerstone Free Will Baptist Church to develop and implement a strategic plan. The process involved working with the Cornerstone's steering committee to create a vision, evaluate current tools, determine the needs, how to meet the needs, and evaluate the improvements. The process was rewarding as it established a clear and forward plan that allows for future changes.

Description

In the fall of 2015, I took the course ETEC 6223: Strategic Planning and IDT Programs. The course objectives focused on developing a knowledge base of strategic planning by way of values, attitudes, and skills that would prove beneficial for future careers. Throughout the course, various stages and meetings occurred leading to the development of the final strategic plan for the organization of our choice related to technology. I selected to work again with Cornerstone Free Will Baptist Church. In preparing to start the planning process, it was important to meet the church representatives. This meeting involved learning about each individual's background with technology, church roles, and what they hope to accomplish with technology. In developing the strategic plan for Cornerstone, the goal was to examine technology found within the worship center and the reach it currently provides in addition to any improvements. Cornerstone has a membership of 75 members with an average weekly attendance of 55. The scope of membership ranges from young children to seniors and singles to families. After meeting with the team from Cornerstone, we started with discussing a technology vision statement that best reflects the ideas and goals moving forward as an organization. In the early meetings, I was able get a glimpse into the entire organization and the stakeholders.

Upon establishing a clear vision, the next step was to evaluate the technology being currently utilized inside the worship center. The evaluation included the technology items on hand at Cornerstone and how they were being used. To evaluate the technology, the committee provided insight by discussions and interviews. Cornerstone members and visitors were surveyed on their perspective and a worship service was observed. Upon the completion of the interviews and observations, the steering committee met to evaluate the findings. The ultimate conclusion

found that a vast majority approved of how various technology was being to enhance the worship center to meet member needs.

After evaluating the current technology, the process moved into examining the needs. I along with the committee members created needs questions to help continue guiding the strategic plan process. At the time of the needs interviews were conducted, 35 responses were received to which highlighted a need for continued assistive devices being added to the worship service. Issues that were mentioned during member issues with the current technology inventory determined the plan of action. This feedback received and discussed allowed the committee to hear directly from those who visit Cornerstone on a regular basis. During the creation of the action plan the following items were discussed: number of staff/volunteers, additional training, budget, timeline, and project evaluation. Since the committee included the church treasurer and pastor, a reasonable amount of support was found in way of developing the budget of $3620.00 to complete both projects. The final plan includes additional volunteers to assist in the weekly use of the technology. Cornerstone's technology team and steering committee will hold needed trainings and process the evaluations to conclude the plan.

Standard 4: Management

4.1 Demonstrate ability to utilize project management techniques during the creation and implementation of instructional technologies.

During the strategic planning process with the steering committee of Cornerstone, project management techniques played a critical role in the development of the final action plan. For example, at the start of the process, meetings were held with Mr. Crimm to discuss establishing a

time table and expectations from the church. Upon learning of the critical times, a working

calendar was created based upon the course itself. As a result, we were to know when to develop

outreach surveys, hold meetings, consider feedback and know when to present the final plan. In

addition, prior to meetings it was extremely critical to discuss with Mr. Crimm progress updates

and working with him to set meeting times and agendas. The meeting agendas allowed us to

manage time and topics important to the phase of the process being implemented. A majority of

the committee members worked full time jobs outside of their church work, managing meeting

and work time on the project was valuable. In addition to the meeting agendas, a communication

plan was outlined to which members would reach out to Mr. Crimm for issues regarding

information to which had to be provided directly from the church office. Members were asked to

contact myself directly for issues or concerns related to the development process. In assigning

most tasks on individual bases, this was the best way to handle communications in between

meetings. Finally, at the end of the process a plan of events to be completed and timeline was

developed for the strategic plan moving forward. This would allow Cornerstone's steering

committee to continue improving with technology incorporation.

4.2 Demonstrate ability to effectively manage projects with multiple components. This includes
the ability to budget, evaluate and further the project.

After exploring the needs and how to build upon the current technology, the committee

then turned to developing a budget and how to evaluate the success of projects. To create the

budget, insight on previous technology purchases from the church treasurer were considered. The

information focused upon confirming support for any improvements that would be suggested. A

budgeting table shows the amount to be set aside along with the equipment to complete the

projects. After the projects have been completed, overall evaluation of the project's success will critical. The evaluation will occur in one, three, and six month intervals. Cornerstone's committee will lead the evaluation process by utilizing the created observation forms and focus group interviews. The committee will then be able to create a comparison of the two levels of technology within the worship center. Committee members were able to utilize the created comparison to assist in future additions they may need down the road. However, during the process to these ensure the evaluation and project progress was on track project procedures were addressed from the beginning along with the project intervals. As the project proceeded forward, the ability to check in and reach out to committee members became important. The goal was to ensure that evaluations were moving forward along with the planning stages for various items such as the budget and technology evaluations. Regular and consistent meetings were held to ensure the project was moving at pace with the timetable and course requirements.

4.3 Demonstrate ability to manage multiple resources. This includes the ability to justify the allocation of funds, document cost effectiveness, and the utilization of the staff, time, supplies, and/or instructional resources.

In the created budget plan for the final strategic plan, resources were divided among the major portions of projects. This includes the purchase of additional television screens and assistive audio equipment. As Cornerstone is a smaller organization, it was important to prioritize the major needs, including focus points in the project and technology. In the plan, committee members noted the technology team volunteer their time weekly and will reduce any budgetary concerns. Also, during the entire development process, committee members were divided and assigned to complete tasks that fit within their comfort and ability zones. The created

budget allocates priorities with the needs found within the evaluations of current equipment and supports the needs of the organization. The success of the projects was depended upon making sure the budget was organized and the most valuable needs were funded.

4.4 Demonstrate ability to implement and manage various delivery systems of instructional technology. This includes the ability to attend to hardware and software requirements, technical support for both users and developers, and process issues such as guidelines for learners, instructors, and support personnel.

In developing the strategic plan for Cornerstone this standard was addressed in two ways. First, in understanding the software and technology hardware that was present at the start of the process. In working to advance the technology at Cornerstone, the steering committee had to first understand what the software present would or could do. This was done by stepping in and assisting with thinking outside of the normal routes in addition to creating the inventory list and technology evaluation charts. As the discussions and evaluations continued, it became evident that additional hardware would be needed. For example, within the discussion of assisting members and guests with better hearing, it was important to look at hardware present to see what it could and what it would requirement in additional items. Upon the committee's discussion of the technology and software, there were considerations made. First, ties in with the ability of staff members to use any new equipment and technology added. The assistive hearing devices were the center of the focus. This concern was addressed by reaching out to fellow technology directors at similar organizations in addition to companies from which the purchases would be made. Mr. Crimm and Mr. Sparks both were able to be reassured the devices and equipment would work with the current system. The company was also willing to assist in the installation of

the hardware and setup. Cornerstone has built an excellent level of rapport with the company in previous business transactions. Additionally, the consideration of device usage was discussed. Everyone on the committee agreed that change for some would not be easy; however, it was important to determine if those who needed the devices, would use them. As a result, Mr. Crimm and the Mr. Cook, the pastor, talked with individuals who could use the devices to better hear. A majority of those individuals agreed with the committee's determination to provide this equipment. Mr. Crimm and Mr. Cook both commented that talking directly with the individuals in question, relieved their concerns on the devices being used. The ability to build that connection and remove questions upon if they would be utilized if purchased. A final area of discussion, focused upon how the devices would be managed, for example, distributed and cleaned. Ms. Phelps and Mrs. Jarett mentioned cleaning after each use while assigning a volunteer to assist in their distribution and/or collection. In the process to help Cornerstone's technology team committee to better understand the technology and address their concerns, meets this standard.

Standard 5: Evaluation

5.3 Demonstrate ability to develop an assessment plan to show evidence of an instructional problem or opportunity for organizational growth.

The developed assessment plan provides opportunity for organizational growth at Cornerstone because of clear results found in the assessment of individuals within the services. At the end of the plan, a clear yearlong evaluation plan was added to ensure the projects would be evaluated effectively. The needs assessment was completed by the use of observation tools, progress charts, and survey ratings. These assessment tools were used by the committee in the

evaluation period to assess the needs. For example, survey results provided numerical averages which were reviewed and discussed. The determinations from those numbers were based upon the low and high end averages. Service observations provided a direct visual to what was taking place and what was being used. Observational data was connected in committee discussions to confirm survey results. As noted in the strategic plan, during the service to which interviews were conducted, it was noted that 18 out of 35 individuals made mention of the need for improved visual and audio in the worship center. A distant goal appeared during the committee meetings to which helped reinforce the need of additional television screens and assistive audio devices. In the end, the evaluation assess the main projects presented; however, following the yearlong evaluation period more expansions can occur after that time to address additional issues that might arise. Finally, according to the developed strategic plan, Cornerstone improves upon the currently technology with the support from the findings within the needs assessments conducted with members and guests.

5.4 Demonstrate ability to develop a long-range plan for the advancement of technology in an organization or instruction.

The strategic plan developed focuses on planning improvements to technology within Cornerstone Free Will Baptist Church. The final plan outlines steps taken to advance technology that is utilized within the worship center and the engagement of members or visitors. The plan includes organized meetings, discussions, budgets, and evaluation of the advancements. At the completion of the year long expansion and evaluation process, the plan allows for the continued improvements as needed. The suggested time table started in December 2015 with the assistive hearing devices. Ms. Phelps and Mrs. McKinney were tasked with the role of helping to

publicize the projects to individuals within the church. Mr. Crimm, as technology director, planned to continue the oversight of the project through the end of the set evaluation and project period, January 2017. Mr. Crimm would be the contact person for technology purchases and inquiries based upon his position. Mr. Sparks, as church treasurer, stated continued support will be included in the yearly budget to ensure the entire project is complete. Additional funding was made available for future projects as determined to support the needs and work of Cornerstone. Discussions following the final presentation to Cornerstone, it was noted about the addition of iPad technology with an expansion of the technology (sound) room. The ultimate goal is to have the ability and process in place for future movements forward. In having this mind set, no door forward will be closed.

Reflection

During strategic planning, I was able to learn more about the various parts to creating a full strategic plan for an organization. In moving forward, I hope to use these skills on assessing the needs and evaluating the success of the projects again. I will be able to use these skills even inside my classroom. For example, when it comes to assessing the needs inside the classroom I have the ability now to determine what technology items are need to meet the needs of students. As technology is added or even currently being used, by knowing how to conduct correct and accurate evaluations, I am able to evaluate the technology used in content lessons. Skills taken away also include project management. During the process, it was important to be organized with paperwork, time, and use of volunteers. This included the ability to use various tactics to ensure the project was moving forward. As an educator, good planning and leadership ability is critical to any successful classroom. I am confident this course and project has improved my

ability to determine a goal and work toward advancing that goal in partnership with colleagues or

organizations.