Humane Action Pittsburgh | Plastics Collaborative

Executive Summary

Community Partner
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Background

Humane Action Pittsburgh (HAP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for animal rights and environmental sustainability in the greater Pittsburgh region. The student consulting team collaborated with the Plastics Collaborative, an initiative aimed at minimizing the detrimental environmental impacts of single-use plastics in Pittsburgh. Since assuming leadership of the Plastics Collaborative in 2023, HAP has spearheaded significant environmental reforms, including the successful implementation of Pittsburgh's plastic bag ban in October 2023. This initiative demonstrates HAP's commitment to reducing plastic pollution, aligning with their overarching mission to protect all creatures from suffering.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

The Plastics Collaborative aims to minimize the environmental impacts of single-use plastics and has recognized a critical gap in public understanding prior to implementing the plastic bag ban. This gap has resulted in unfavorable public sentiment to legislation. To bridge this gap, the project seeks to educate the public about the harms of plastics through targeted outreach initiatives, aiming to enhance community support, facilitate a smoother transition to sustainable practices, and enhance credibility with relevant stakeholders.

Project Vision

Our project vision for the Plastics Collaborative involves developing an educational website to establish the initiative's credibility and engage the community. This platform will not only enhance visibility for impactful dialogue with policymakers but also feature resources about the harmful effects of single-use plastics and details of the plastic bag ban. Additionally, the website will include a reporting system to monitor local business compliance and gather data to evaluate the ban's impact across Pittsburgh.

Project Outcomes

- Delivered a webpage that contained educational content, including the adverse effects of plastic pollution, links to relevant resources, and a reporting form for non-compliant businesses.

- Embedded a custom plastic waste calculator tool directly into the website, enhancing the user's education and experience.

- Integrated the webpage with our community partner's existing technology infrastructure to minimize required training for project transition.

- Created and user-tested multiple website design iterations to drive desired user behavior, meeting our community partner's goals.

Project Deliverables

The deliverables included a comprehensive website that provides detailed information on the impact of plastic pollution and the Pittsburgh plastic bag ban. The website features a reporting tool for the public to flag non-compliant businesses and integrates seamlessly with the existing tech setup of Humane Action Pittsburgh, requiring no additional training for their developers. Additionally, the website incorporates a custom calculator to help users gauge the effects of plastic use in their local communities. Finally, the website has undergone multiple design updates based on multiple user testing iterations to ensure it effectively engages and educates the community.

Recommendations

To raise awareness of Humane Action Pittsburgh's Plastics Collaborative's mission, the following strategic initiatives are recommended:

First, boost digital outreach to increase public engagement and awareness about the impact of single-use plastics.

Second, improve data collection and analysis to better assess the effectiveness of current initiatives and shape future strategies.

Third, establish strategic partnerships with local businesses and educational institutions to expand influence and resource sharing.

Future CMU consulting student teams could build on this groundwork by developing mobile applications, gathering more data on the plastic bag ban's effects, and maintaining detailed documentation to ensure continuity and responsiveness to ongoing and new initiatives.

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Student Consulting Team

Chloe Deng is a third-year student studying Information Systems with minors in Software Engineering and Creative Writing. Chloe served as QA manager and worked on website development for this project. She will be a Tech Consulting Intern at PwC this summer.

Jason Kwok is a third-year student studying Information Systems and Software Engineering. He focused on website development. He will be working on his stealth startup in the summer.

Jieun Lee is a senior studying Information Systems with a minor in Human-Computer Interaction. She served as project manager and led the website design process. She is looking towards a career in data engineering.