NCJW Center for Women

Executive Summary

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Background

The National Council of Jewish Women is a volunteer organization that promotes progressive values through grassroots activism. The Pittsburgh section identifies and works to address the needs of vulnerable members of the community. One of their projects is the Center for Women. The Center for Women's goal is to help women achieve financial independence, often while navigating life transitions such as divorce or returning to paid work. To that end, the Center offers a number of programs including cover letter and resume reviews, job shadowing opportunities, woman-to-woman mentoring, and financial coaching.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

The previous system used by the Center to match mentors with mentees for their mentoring program was tedious and allowed biased, unnecessary information to be collected and considered in the matching process. The former system required the Center's employees to manually sift through paragraphs of information stored in their database about each client and make matches based on their perspective of the information. Because the Center is only run by two staff members, it is very ineffective to have one staff member spend so much time entering the required information about mentors and mentees, sift through it and create a match.

Project Vision

Our solution aims to create a standardized process for collecting information about mentors and mentees and a system to streamline the mentor-mentee matching process. The users of the system, the staff at the Center for Women, will have more time to spend on other tasks and programs by removing the tedious task of combing through unorganized information in the database to create mentor-mentee matches. The staff will also reduce the bias in the information collecting and matching process by having standard procedures, which will improve the quality of the matches, ensuring better outcomes for mentees and more fulfillment for mentors. Additionally, the staff will have a consistent method of storing information concerning their mentors and mentees, which can be used in the future to further improve the client's experiences at the Center.

The solution will further the NCJW's mission of assisting women in need, by improving an important tool the Center uses to help its clients. The mentors and mentees will receive a match that fits well with their needs, goals, experiences, location, as well as other factors. This will allow

both parties to have a more rewarding experience. As a result, clients and volunteers will be more likely to recommend the Center to people they know, allowing the community of clients and volunteers to expand.

Project Outcomes

The main outcome of our project is a comprehensive new process for matching mentors and mentees. The main components of the project include the mentor and mentees intake forms we created in Google Forms and the mentor-matching system we created in Excel. Our project speeds up and automates many tasks throughout the matching process and reduces the input of bias into the information collecting and matching procedures. We used free, intuitive, online applications to develop our solution, taking advantage of many special features offered in Excel.

Project Deliverables

Our project has two major deliverables, new intake forms for the mentoring program, and an Excel file used for matching mentors and mentees. The new intake forms were designed to efficiently collect unbiased, standardized information about the mentors and mentees. The Excel file allows the employees at the Center to more easily compare information between mentors and mentees and determine the best match. We have also created extensive documentation for the entire solution.

Recommendations

We recommend that in the future if the budget for the mentoring program increases, the Center should consider using SmartMatch App to collect their client's information and determine mentor-mentee matches. SmartMatch App is a third-party software that provides all of the functionality needed by the Center, has a clean interface and is very intuitive. Overtime, it would be more sustainable because it can easily adapt to changes in the forms and any issues can be resolved with customer support.

Student Consulting Team

Melina Driscoll served as project manager, risk manager and documentation manager. She is a junior majoring in Information Systems with a minor in Human-Computer Interaction. She will be interning at PwC this summer and is looking towards a career in consulting.

Kimberly Zhang served as the technical lead and quality assurance manager for this project. She is a junior double majoring in Information Systems and Statistics and Machine Learning, with a minor in Computational Finance. She will intern as a Trader at J.P. Morgan this summer.

Abigail McManus served as the client relationship manager, design lead, and transition liaison. She is a senior in Information Systems.