Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh

Executive Summary

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Background

Founded in 1981, the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh (HCP) was created as a living memorial to honor Holocaust survivors and WII soldiers who helped liberate concentration camps living in Pittsburgh. Rather than build a statue or monument, community members wanted a comprehensive resource center that would help people learn about the Holocaust and fight intolerance and hate in all its forms. HCP's mission statement is "We are committed to educating about the Holocaust, commemorating those who suffered and triumphed, and documenting the stories of survivors, liberators, and protectors." Their goal is to battle anti-semitism and xenophobia through education so that history won't repeat itself. They achieve this by sharing the lost voices of women, the Roma, and many other groups typically overlooked in the historical context of the Holocaust in a way that not only teaches the sensitive content but also ensures that the information has a direct impact on visitors.

Project Description

Project Opportunity

Currently, HCP has no formal methodology for tracking visitor engagement. Thus, the opportunity exists with HCP to collect, track, and analyze data related to the impact of the educational outreach programs that they regularly operate. Primarily, these programs are taught to middle and high schools on field trips. With the use of pre- and post-visit surveys, HCP can collect feedback and evaluate if the desired learning outcomes are being achieved. By creating a tool that assists with this workflow, our project, Teaching Impact Evaluation System (TIES) can help HCP increase the quality and quantity of this feedback from limited, anecdotal evidence to quantifiable data points. Eventually, this project could be made open source and provided to other Holocaust education centers to help them maximize the efficacy of their programming as well as deepen the impact of their mission.

Project Vision

The vision for this project was to create a system that allows HCP visitors to provide feedback on their experience and learning via pre- and post-visit assessments. This feedback on programming and exhibit data will be stored in a format that HCP staff can easily retrieve and is compliant to all applicable privacy policies. With this data, HCP can analyze learning outcomes however they would like. In addition to using the feedback to update educational

programs and exhibits, the director will also be able to use this data to demonstrate HCP's value to current and potential stakeholders. The goal of the project is to create an efficient, centralized workflow that will meet our client's needs and better support their mission - to prevent the repetition of past atrocities by teaching Holocaust history and inspire compassion for others.

Project Outcomes

The web application the team built provides HCP staff with a way of sending pre- and post-visit evaluations to visitors who participate in large group trips at the center. The responsive application allows administrators to send surveys to visitors via an email that contains a custom SurveyMonkey link after a group leader has uploaded a roster file. While the web application is geared primarily towards school trips, the largest sub-group of scheduled visitors, it can be used for any hosted event at HCP as long as a roster of visitors and their information is provided. This gives HCP the lasting capacity to collect visitor feedback and use the collected data to support their ongoing educational and developmental goals.

Project Deliverables

Our project deliverables include a link to our web application hosted on Heroku, a link to the GitHub code repository (developed with the intention of the project being carried forward by a future student team and eventually being made open-source), and a range of documentation (usage tutorials for HCP staff members, user testing results for future user experience designers, and in-line code comments for future developers).

Recommendations

TIES focuses on the data collection to support future HCP efforts. Envisioned as a two-year effort, TIES represents the data-collection portion of a complete analytics tool. Once a sufficient number of responses have been received, we anticipate that TIES will be extended to include a data visualization feature, which might utilize the responses collected from the SurveyMonkey API. With this kind of future development, HCP staff could use these analyses and real-time visualizations to present to key stakeholders or support funding applications.

Student Consulting Team

Ryan Fitzpatrick served as the lead programmer and is a double major in Information Systems and Statistics. He will graduate in May 2020 and is interning at ExxonMobil this summer.

Abbey Mui served as the lead user experience / user interface designer and studies Information Systems. She will graduate in May 2020 and will be interning at PayPal in San Jose, California this summer. She is interested in the intersection between sustainability, businesses, and technology.

Conlon Novak worked as the project manager and is a double major in Information Systems and Human-Computer Interaction. He will graduate in May 2020 and will be interning at Accenture as a technology analyst this summer.