**Project Overview**

Team Mexico’s SLP consisted of efforts using social media, specifically blog posts and Facebook, and a fundraiser event sponsored by Qdoba Mexican Grill Restaurant to raise money for and awareness about clean water issues and the solution created by Life Straw. Our goals were to raise “As much awareness as possible,” and to raise $800 between the four of us, a revised goal increased from $400 by suggestion from the instructor.

Social media efforts were primarily intended to raise awareness, using the Facebook page to showcase our blogging efforts. Facebook was also used to solicit donations from those who would be unable to donate in person using the provided Paypal link. Our efforts were combined with 1 other group, to hopefully compound our influence.

The Qdoba fundraiser took place on Friday evening, April 13th 2012. Qdoba agreed that anyone who came to purchase a meal and presented on of the flyers (for which they provided the design, but we were responsible for printing and distributing). The group also planned to have a presence at the event, setting up a table with a fact poster and demonstrating use of the life straw. The life straw demonstration included a variety of items that are generally unsafe to drink: cow feces, scummy pond water, and other miscellaneous substances.

**Project Outcomes**

I hope that this project did a good job of raising awareness about clean water issues and solutions. It seemed to me that it is generally known that outside of the US clean drinking water is not readily available, nor were the consequences of drinking non-potable water a surprise to anyone. I do think we were able to raise awareness about solutions to this problem. I think few people had ever thought to do more than build wells or pumps. I believe our efforts were able to let people know about some of the limitations of those kind of solutions, and consider filtration as an alternative solution.

If we want to quantify how much awareness was raised, as of 4/26, “Insights” from the Facebook page indicate that our peak “reach” was 573 people, with 23 “Talking About This.” This leads me to estimate that about 500 people probably even noticed that we were making an effort, and 15 of those looked more closely at what we were saying and doing. Approximately 12 people who didn’t already know what I was doing at the Qdoba event stopped long enough for me to talk to them about issues and solutions.

As far as money raised to purchase life straws for those in need, to my knowledge only about $50 was raised; enough for 10 life straws, far short of our goal. All of this money came from our Qdoba fundraiser, which garnered about $24 in donations and $24 in money donated by Qdoba from 14 flyer bearing customers. This was a surprisingly low turnout considering that I had 800 flyers printed out.

**Lessons Learned**

The first lesson I learned was that it is hard to get people to help a good cause unless they get something out of it, be it a good feeling or a product, even if it is as simple as an alternative choice in their dinner plans. I had thought that Qdoba was inexpensive and popular enough that people would be glad to help, simply by eating there. Apparently I was unable to offer enough to influence their decision.

I learned that people also don’t like to see someone consuming gross things in front of a restaurant. It turned out “Hey! Wanna see me drink dirty water?!” was a poor hook line to interest people in hearing what I had to say or demonstrate the life straw.

Finally, I learned that it is incredibly difficult to achieve success without group cohesion. My group did not seem as interested in earning their grade as I was, some saying they would falsify their timesheets if need be. I suspect they were not even invested enough to pass out their share of the flyers, as all the people who did come to the event had one of the flyers that came from the portion I distributed. The poster, which I had hoped if I planned, they would create, was not of the quality I would expect from college students who were assigned a 20 hour service requirement. One member seemed to have no interest in checking her e-mail regularly or participating in group activities. She even flaked out on the Qdoba fundraiser, using homework (including assignments from this class) as an excuse., This member, who quickly volunteered to handle all of our blog posts, still is relatively unaware of what a blog even is, and has not asked for help in completing the assignment. Because of this, the rest of the group has had to pick up the slack in a reactionary fashion, rather than a planned one.

I have never enjoyed group projects, and this one was certainly no exception. They say failures are a great way to learn, so this service learning project should hopefully have been a good learning experience.

Planning this project as a group seemed to be impossible. I’ll admit, it was hard to know what we should do; it’s difficult to raise money in the name of an organization with little to no official material to back you up. It’s also hard when you are in small, competing groups. But my group seemed to be unable to do much more than say, “Maybe we could do a booth?” I ended up doing a lot of planning on my own, and then telling my group what would then be done.

I have to admit though, it appears a tremendous amount of planning and activity was undertaken individually by my least motivated and responsive group member in the last 3 days or so before this project was supposed to be complete. This member made many excuses to avoid helping with the activities I did plan, and flaked out on the night of our only real event, even using assignments from this class as an excuse not to help.

An obvious start was to use social media. I created a Facebook page to advertise and highlight our efforts, as well as offer an easy way for people to donate: via Paypal. I had hoped that the whole class would be willing to combine efforts and use the same Facebook page to compound our influence, but only one other group decided to follow through with it. I feel this weakened our chances for success overall.

As far as what personal efforts we should engage in, my group remained at a loss. When I found out that the Qdoba restaurant chain offers fundraising opportunities, I jumped on it. I contacted the Qdoba representative, planned a date for our event, and the flyers necessary for the fundraiser printed. When I contacted my group via e-mail, only 1 was ready to meet up with me ASAP to get his portion of flyers to pass out. The other was unable to meet up for the remainder of the week, and the third had not bothered to even check her e-mail, and as a result only collected her share a week before the event.