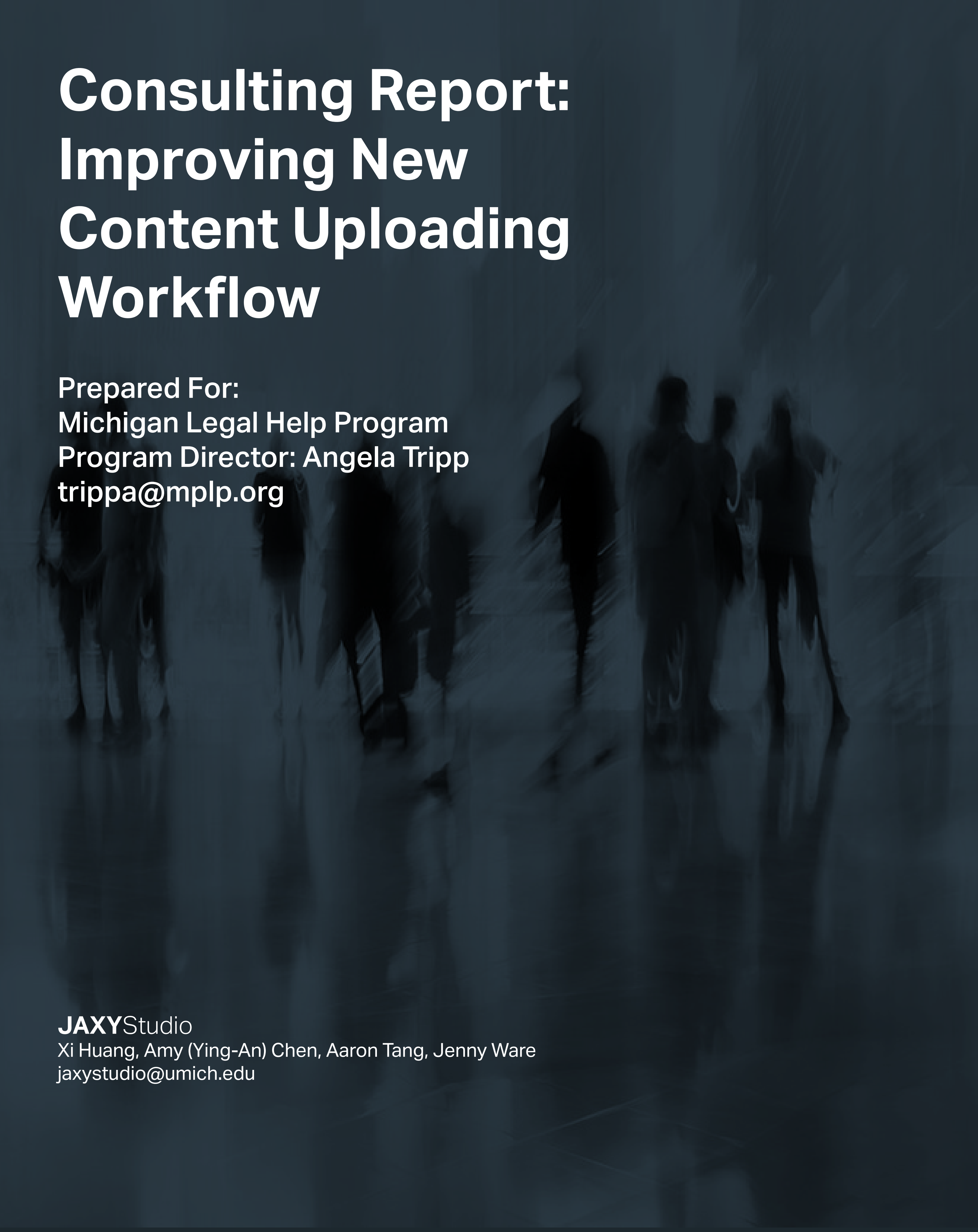

Consulting Report: Improving New Content Uploading Workflow

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Michigan Legal Help Program is a non-profit organization that works to provide information and assistance to michigan residents who are involved in civil cases. The website was launched in August of 2012. Since its launch, the site has been growing at a rapid pace increasing the amount of content and number of visitors that visit it every day. However, as the website has grown, several issues have begun to surface in their new content uploading workflow. To acquire a clear image of the current situation and thorough understanding of client's concerns, we conducted contextual inquiry interviews with five member of the office staff including the director of the program, three attorneys and one administrative assistant. We also attended a office wide meeting to observe how tasks were assigned and discussed.

This report outlines the methodologies used, findings found, and suggested solutions in relation to improving the new content uploading process. Our findings indicated that the employees were quite happy with the current uploading system, especially the use of physical folders as a tracking system. While this is the case the current physical tracking sheets also do not accurately reflect the reality of the steps taken during and after the content uploading process. Most importantly, we discovered that the program director appears to have an outsized amount of work. This could be one of the causes of document pile ups and presents the clearest opportunity for improvement. This uneven work distribution is further aggravated by a lack of unified communication protocol and methods.

To combat these issues we suggest that the Michigan Legal Help Program considers using a visual task management system in the form of a kanban. Either a digital or physical kanban could be used to improve organization of their workflow, create a more unified and centralized means of communication, and ensure that each employee is assigned a manageable amount of work. Michigan Legal Help could also deputize another employee to take on some of the program director's responsibilities such as review initial article drafts. Lastly the team should update the current physical tracking sheets to accurately reflect the current workflow.

Our suggestions in improving the content uploading workflow can be combined to target three different scenarios:
1. if the team at MLHP are interested in keeping the toolkit and content output steady
2. if they hope to increase speed of output and retain the level of quality
3. if they are planning on increasing the amount of content released and want to retain a higher speed and level of quality.

If choosing scenario 1, we suggest MLHP implement a physical kanban system, if scenario 3 a deputy and digital kanban would best solve the problem, and finally if scenario 3 MLHP should utilize a digital kanban, deputize an employee, and hire a grant writer. In all scenarios MLHP should revisit their tracking sheets and update them as they see fit.

INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Legal Help Website

The Michigan Legal Help website is a self-help site that offers legal resources for Michigan residents. "The Program works with judges, courts, lawyers, bar associations, nonprofit legal aid agencies, legal self-help centers, libraries and many others to promote coordinated and quality assistance for persons representing themselves in civil legal matters in Michigan" (Michigan Legal Help, "About Us", 2016). Those who are using the website are not only people who need general legal advice and assistance, but also people who are preparing to represent themselves in court. In the past few years, Michigan Legal Help has helped numerous self represented litigants successfully complete their cases (Nevin, "Legal self-help", 2015).

Figure 1. Homepage of Michigan Legal Help showing the introduction and the various tools they provide (MLHP, 2016)

Website Content

The basic content structure of the Michigan Legal Help website consists of:

- Forms to be completed that ask about simple questions
- Articles and explanations for handling common legal problems
- Answers to common legal questions, more commonly known as FAQS ("Michigan Legal Help", 2013).

The Michigan Legal Help Website has extensive resources, including "30 toolkits, 74 articles, 312 common questions (with answers), 19 automated interviews that populate a total of 50 different forms, and referral information for over 212 organizations. The legal information content available includes Family Law, Protection from Abuse, Consumer Law, Housing Law, Expungement, Income Tax, and Public Benefits. More content is added regularly" , as mentioned in the article "Michigan legal help assists 200,000 in first year online" ("Michigan legal help" Par.7).

Popular topics on website include:

- "Interactive interviews" which use visitors' answers to questions to fill out state-approved forms necessary to process a legal matter from start to finish" (Nevin, "Legal self-help", 2015)
- "Live Help", where web visitors get assistance in navigating the website and getting answers to legal matters through a chat-based feature (Nevin, "Legal self-help", 2015).
- "Family Law, with Divorce Toolkits, and the Automated Divorce Form Interview pages" (Nevin, "Legal self-help", 2015).

Since launched in August, 2012, the website has attracted a large amount of visitors, and this number has been growing through years. By the time of 2013, there were about 3,000 visits per week to the website. "According to MLH Project Manager, 'This estimate proved too conservative. Starting in January, there were over 5,000 visits per week, and that grew to over 6,000 per week by July. We are very gratified that so many people have turned to the website for help'" ("Michigan Legal Help" Par.1). While after three years, based on the factsheet from SimilarWeb.com, the recent data shows that there are approximately 130,000 visits in July, 2016, which is five times as the number three years ago.

Website Content Management Process

The current physical tracking system is very robust, and the office has been using this system for years. Employees follow the steps that are outlined on each tracking sheet, dating and signing each line upon completion of the various steps. The content uploaded by the staff are of great quality, and very few mistakes are made. While there are many positives to the use of a physical tracking system it prevents the whole office from having an understanding of the status of individual projects. It is particularly hard for the director to keep updated of the development of new content unless she seeks out the actual files or constantly asks for updates from her team. Currently, each toolkit has its own binder containing forms and other relevant documents. However, managing binders has also become difficult as the number toolkits increase with time.

Figure 2. Example of an article assisting users with divorce with minor children (MLHP, 2016)

We speculate that there might be several reasons that lead to the inefficient workflow. First, the smaller staff size has a large impact on the workflow in website content management. Only five people in the office are dealing with website management tasks, which means managing more than 30 toolkits, writing articles, updating website content, live chat and other relevant tasks (Figure 1). That leaves attorneys with a heavy burden to handle such workloads, considering they are also occupied by other legal work. The office's strategy is to have one attorney in charge of 3 or 4 toolkits, which would potentially lead to the situation where attorneys cannot get each toolkit updated in a timely manner. The other area that causes the low efficiency is task distribution, currently each member of team is in charge of various steps in the process from creating to content to uploading it and reviewing content. The need for constant collaboration and the passing on of various tool kits at their different stages is difficult to manage and is not completely supported by the current tracking system. The use of only one tracking sheet per document exacerbates this issue as it is hard for employees to know the progress of a given toolkit unless they have the tracking sheet in hand.

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

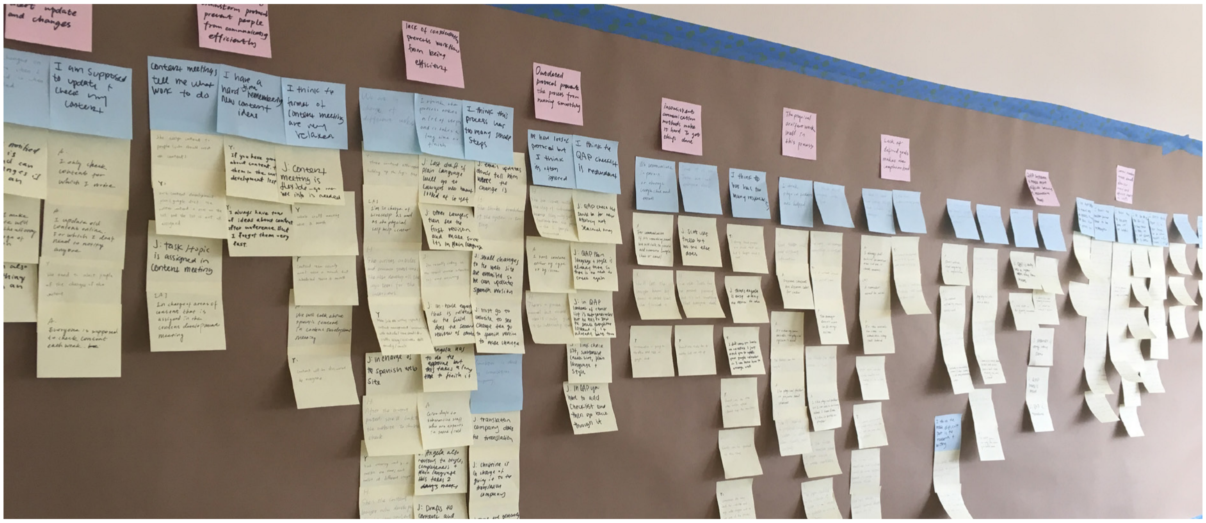


Figure 3. Affinity wall showing different levels and categories of notes

Our team conducted our research using the methodology of contextual inquiry. Contextual inquiry is an interview method for people to obtain information in real context. In contextual inquiry, the interviewer will first ask users a set of standard questions and then observe users complete their normal work and task in their own environments. This process ensures that we can understand the real practice and daily activities of the client. In the beginning, we conducted an initial meeting with our client and got a basic idea of the problem that we were going to solve. Then we chose five interviewees from Michigan Legal Help Program, they were one administrative assistant, one director, and three attorneys. After that we started to conduct some background research into other non-profit legal organizations and solutions as well as drafted our interview protocol. We divided our interview protocol into different parts based on three different work roles. The interview protocol was used as a guideline for our interviews but we would accommodate our questions based on specific situation in real interviews.

The actual interviews took place in the office workplace of Michigan Legal Help Program and we conducted each of them within an hour and a half. During each interview, two of our group members were present, one was the interviewer and another was the note taker. Audio recording was taken for the accuracy and completeness of our data. Following each interview, all the team members would hold a meeting to conduct an interpretation session, two members who were present in the interview would share their observations and findings of the interview to the other members and the other two would write down their affinity notes.

After finishing all five interviews and interpretation sessions, we transcribed each of our affinity notes onto a post-it note and we used these to build our affinity wall. There were four levels of labels for the affinity wall, which were green, pink, blue and yellow labels. Labels for the higher level were the further summary and abstraction of the lower one. By building the affinity wall, we discovered the key problems and corresponding reasons, identified the fundamental issues and then constructed our recommendations.

FINDINGS

The first finding we discovered from the interviews is that the physical files work well at Michigan Legal Help. A content attorney mentioned that the physical folders provide easy access to the past documentation and help a lot for tracking the progress because physical files are hard to be ignored. Most people are satisfied with the current workflow and did not request an urgent change that must be made for the current process. However, physical artifacts can also become messy. Some employees think that files should be discarded after a specific amount of time as they are currently taking up a significant amount of space in the office.

The second finding is the lack of content brainstorm and completion protocol. This prevents people from efficient communication. Though they do have a content meeting before starting to draft a new article, the follow-up communication is crucial and necessary for content development and completion. The team currently uses multiple different communication methods based on their own personal preference, this causes the efficiency of developing the content to decrease. Though it is a 6-people team, there are 4 communication channels in total, including face-to-face discussion, google chat, emails, and Trello. The inconsistency of communication methods prevents people from being on the same page and does not create a clear archive of conversations to revisit. Sharing information and tracking the progress becomes hard in this case, especially when the deadline of the task is not set and communicated well among the members of the team. One of the interviewees mentioned that it is hard to get things done because it is "hard to organize things" when there are no clear deadlines.

Our research also revealed the centralization of tasks and decision making with the director. This current system of having a single individual be in charge of many separate areas, from grant writing to new content revision, seemed to unvoidably slow down the process of posting new content to the website. As the director herself revealed she is in charge of far more projects, which are often larger in size and scope, than other employees. Specifically, she must write and submit grant applications, write grant reports, assign work to others, coordinate with partners, evaluate employees, approve timesheets, approve check requests, field questions from staff, review all new content article drafts, alter or update the master toolkit list, review content before it is posted, add the new content to surveys, and add information to the live help page when new content is posted. Other employees are responsible for at most 11 different tasks, 4 fewer than the director. This lack of more evenly distributed work places a larger burden on a single individual and often means she has too much work to accomplish. In one case she mentioned that it had taken her 3 months to revise the first draft of an article because she had too many other items to take care of.

In our interviews employees themselves suggested that the director had too much on her plate stating, “that initial revision takes a long time to complete because the director is too busy and has too much to complete.” While the director herself did not indicate that she felt over worked, there were some activities she felt would best be taken over by other employees. For example, she often found herself updating the master toolkit list before the administrative assistant posted the final drafts and felt that this is something the attorneys can help with. She also is currently in charge of updating the information page of live help and feels that it might be better for attorneys to accomplish this, as they are more familiar with the content as well as the interface.

Figure 4. Current work distribution chart depicting uneven assignments

Angela	Christine	Mike	Amy	Martha
Grant Reporting	Post content	Research and write new content	Research and write new content	Research and write new content
Grant Applications	One year QA review organizations and courts	Revise content	Revise content	Revise content
Assign work to others	LiveHelp administra-tive assistant	Check content after Christine posts it	Check content after Christine posts it	Check content after Christine posts it
Coordinate with outside partners	Contact translation company	Write questions of interviews	Write common questions for website	Do quality assurance of the content
Coordinate with courts	Log message Revision (per attorney request)	Create triage system for website	Create logic trees and questions for interviews	Outreach and coordinate for LiveHelp
Evaluate employees	Administrative work for Angela	Do quality assurance of the content	Create triage system for website	Train navigators for self-help centers
Work on special projects	Monthly and quarterly report	Review Spanish content	Do quality assurance of the content	Send monthly update content to self-help centers
Approve timesheets		Make changes on Spanish website	Test interview	Do marketing material
Approve check requests		Test interview		Maintain social media
Field in person/online questions from staff				Test interview
Review all article drafts				Network, plan and coordinate the opening of new self-help centers
Rewrite master toolkit info before Christine posts it				
Review all content before it is posted				
Check Interviews				
Add content to the surveys				
Update information on Legal Help Interactive (survey link, link to article on MLHP, and national subject matter index codes)				

The concentrated decision making power also means that big picture goals, hierarchy of tasks, and the general program's road map live in the director's head. There is currently no location for other employees to be able to view these overarching ideas and thus they often have a hard time prioritizing work, as there is a lack of defined program wide goals. As one attorney explained "I have a hard time knowing what to work on when there are no deadlines or other priorities." By centralizing the workload as well as the yearly project goals with the director the general workflow for other employees can seem mysterious and unsystematic.

Another finding uncovered by our research was the feeling that the tracking system was outdated and did not reflect the current workflow. One employee said that "this process has too many small steps" and a lack of consolidation in the tracking sheets prevented the workflow from being efficient as possible. Specifically, while the tracking sheets show if a new article has been reviewed there is no way to know who has it at what time. There is also a one week comment period that employees do not use and do not know what it is for. Beyond this employees also have issues with the sub-committee step as they rarely get feedback from all or even half of the individuals on the committees. There is currently no step to indicate how many responses that have been received or if an employee has followed up with those who have yet to give feedback. Employees suggested that it would be helpful to go over the current steps in the tracking sheet and revise when necessary.

The tracking sheets also pose issues as they do not currently show all the steps that are considered part of uploading new content that occur once the articles are on the website. As one employee noted, "There are a bunch of things that need to take place [after a toolkit is uploaded] and that is all haphazard". These steps include: sending the information to the Spanish translator, emailing the information to the navigator, adding the relevant information to live help, updating social media, adding it to the content list handouts, updating coming soon links, adding new content to surveys, and updating all other channels that are not on the website. Currently the director and the administrative assistant do these tasks with no formal tracking system, meaning things are often forgotten or take much longer to complete. Some employees have devised their own systems in the absence of one, such as highlighting articles that must be revisited and properly linked at a later date. This finding indicates that not only do existing tracking sheets need to pared down to relevant steps, but new ones should be created to account for tasks that are currently taking place outside of the current tracking system.

SUGGESTIONS: KANBAN

Kanban

Kanban is a scheduling system originally created by an industrial engineer at Toyota to help improve manufacturing efficiency (Wikipedia, 2016). Today it is a methodology used in all industries to help streamline and improve workflows. The original system was inspired by the way supermarkets restock based upon the demand of customer, rather than ordering in anticipation(Wikipedia, 2016). This means that supermarkets were only stocking what was needed at a given time, in Kanban this is translated to mean that inventory levels or work orders are aligned with actual levels on consumption. A Kanban system tracks this through every step of the process assigning roles to different peoples and marking when each step is completed.

In non-manufacturing industries such as software production or non-profits Kanban is used as a visual management system. Workers use a visual signal, often times cards, to signal steps in their process and levels of completion (Leankit, “What is Kanban?”, 2016). Using visual cues rather than the written word to communicate allow teams to process information more quickly as “the brain processes visual information 60,000 times faster than text” (Leankit, “What is Kanban?”, 2016). Kanban as a system allows you to harness the brain’s preference for visual information by using sticky notes on a whiteboard or on the computer to create a clear image of the work that is being done.

This visual depiction clearly shows a workflow within an organization and allows team members to ensure that everyone has a reasonable workload. Kanban specifically focuses on visualizing the work that needs to be done, both at individual and group level and asks users to limit work in process as one can see when a workload is too high (Leankit, “What is Kanban?”, 2016).

In the case of MLHP the new content uploading process is essentially a pipeline with new content entering one end and a finished post emerging from the other (Kanban Blog Atom, 2016). When there are congestions in the workflow, often times they are not detected by other individuals on the team. This is when work begins to pile up and the workflow is accidentally brought to a halt. Kanban assists in this process as it can reveal where the bottlenecks are occurring as they visually depict work that needs to be accomplished. Kanban is also useful in solving the issue of bottlenecks, it is often used to restrict the number of tasks that can appear in a given development phase (Kanban Blog Atom, 2016). For example in the initial revision portion one could limit the number of articles to 4 at a time for the director to go over, this would ensure that there would not be a backlog and thus fix the issue of a bottleneck.

Not only does Kanban help relieve bottlenecks in a workflow by initially setting up restrictions for the number of tasks a given process can handle, it also allows clear and easy assignment of tasks and the whole team can see an overarching visual representation projects. This allows for everyone to be on the same page answering many questions that might have resulted in unnecessary meetings or emails. Furthermore this visual depiction helps people see if an individual might be overworked at the moment, preventing them for adding on more work and keeping the workflow moving. Kanban also has clear deadlines and easy means to represent project priority which would help many employees understand what to work on and when.

There are many ways to implement Kanban in the workplace. Some teams prefer to use physical kanbans while others prefer to use digital versions as they can be accesses from anywhere and often come with additional bells and whistles. Trello, a solution that is currently used in the office is also based off of kanban and would be a great option to begin using more in the service of improving your workflow and eliminating bottlenecks. If Trello is currently not being utilized because of its design the following digital options are a selection of what else is currently available in the kanban project management space and might be a better fit for the program.

Digital Kanban

Smartsheet is a downloadable software solution that costs $25 a month. It follows a Kanban philosophy but shows multiple projects on one screens, each with subprojects. Beyond this each team member is assigned ownership of a project and they are able to make updates to the master chart as they progress in their work. Green, yellow, and red is used to visually depict how far along a project is to completion and what tasks have been done. Tasks can be shared between multiple employees so collaboration can more easily take place. Smartsheet also allows user to share entire sheets or individual rows with the whole team so certain projects can remain private. The program allows for notes, comments, files, and documents to be uploaded directly into the sheet allowing for all work to take place one this single platform. Personal alerts can be set as reminders and update alerts are also sent to all relevant parties when changes are made to shared projects. Finally projects can also be imported to personal Google Calendars or iCals (Smartsheet, "Collaboration", 2016).

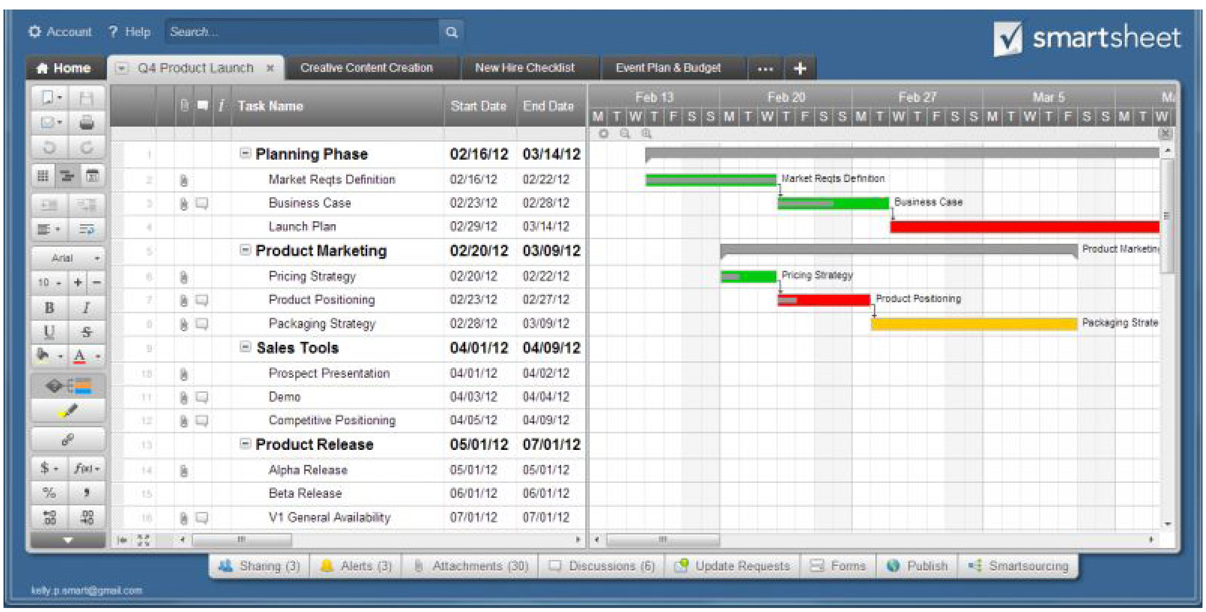


Figure 5. Home Screen of Smartsheet software depicting a Gannt Chart of project at various stages (Smartsheet, 2016)

Projectplace, at $49 a month, is very similar to Smartsheet as it also depicts projects in a nested horizontal format and utilizes green, yellow, and red to indicate the progress of various projects. It allows uses to flip between a kanban view (vertical cards) or the Gantt Chart view (shown below). Like Smartsheet schedules, files, in document feedback, notes, and conversations can all take place on the web-based platform allowing for all most all work to take place within the application. Alerts are also sent to individuals via the app and email. Projectplace also allows users to list both personal and group tasks separately and shows users individual to do lists based on the priority of each project (Projectplace, “the place to get things done together”, 2016).

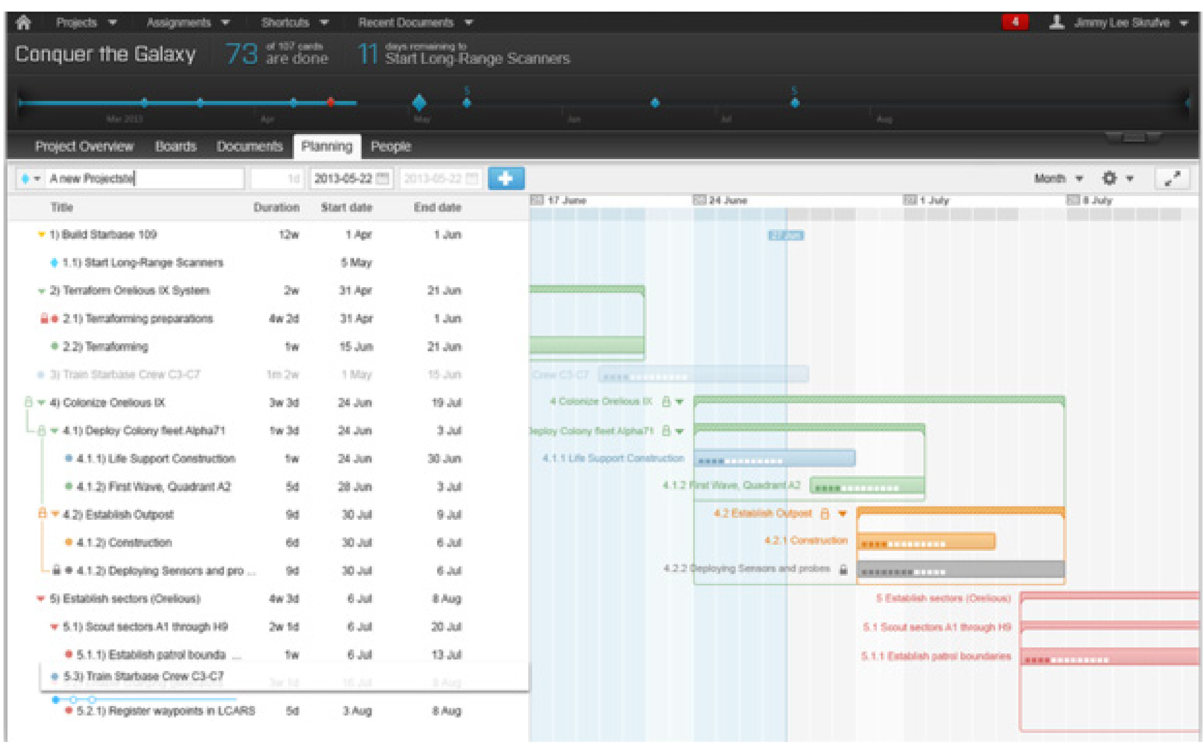


Figure 6. Work-flow chart showing schedule of projects and their due dates both on a timeline and menu (Project Place, 2016)

Lastly **Dapulse**, which is $24 a month, differentiates itself from its competitors with a simple and clean interface that still supplies all the functionality of the others. Dapulse allows users to access the application from any device, including mobile, view projects from a high level overview, weekly, or daily view. These different views make it easier for users to keep track of both larger and smaller tasks. Like the other interfaces users can complete their work via uploading documents, notes into the program, chat with coworkers and track their work. Users can create both public and private boards ensuring that only those working on a given project can access it. Dapulse also provides full integration with other applications such as dropbox and the entire Google suite. Lastly Dapulse is completely alterable, a user can either choose to use preset templates or create their own based on their workflow needs, users can also access support in setting things up or debugging the application via 24/7 technical support (Dapulse, "Motivate your team and take projects from start to finish", 2016).

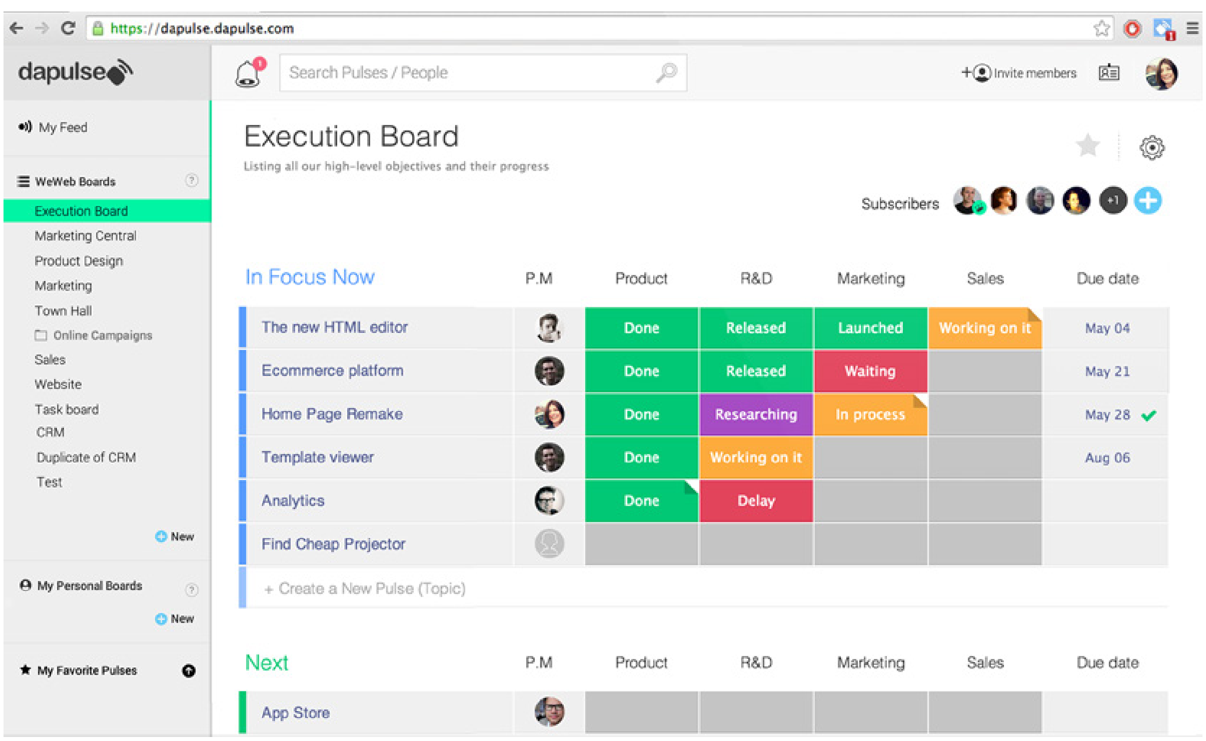


Figure 7. Kanban interface depicting employees assigned projects and level of completion grouped by month (Dapulse, 2016)

Physical Kanban
According to the interviews, which we have conducted, our team understands that the physical documentation is preferable in the office. Therefore a physical kanban will be considered useful and easy to adapt to.

Physical kanban boards "typically use sticky notes on a whiteboard to communicate status, progress, and issues." (LeanKit, "What is a Kanban board?", 2016) It is tangible and thus is tactile, flexible, and intuitive (Siddharta, 2011). Most importantly, the physical kanban is easy to learn. While users may have to spend that much time struggling with the new virtual tool in an unfriendly environment (Wied, 2014), there is no technical barrier and no need to train people on how to use sticky notes, markers, and white boards. Users can easily modify the board. For instance, users can add the column by drawing several new lines on the whiteboard, or change the workflow or track the process of the projects by using different colors of notes or markers and moving things around. The form of physical kanban boards can be customized depending on the types of the tasks and the needs of the participants of the project. As Wied (2014) said, personalization of the kanban board makes people feel great and thus are more willing to use it; the physical movement motivates users to get things done and creates a stronger connection to the tasks.

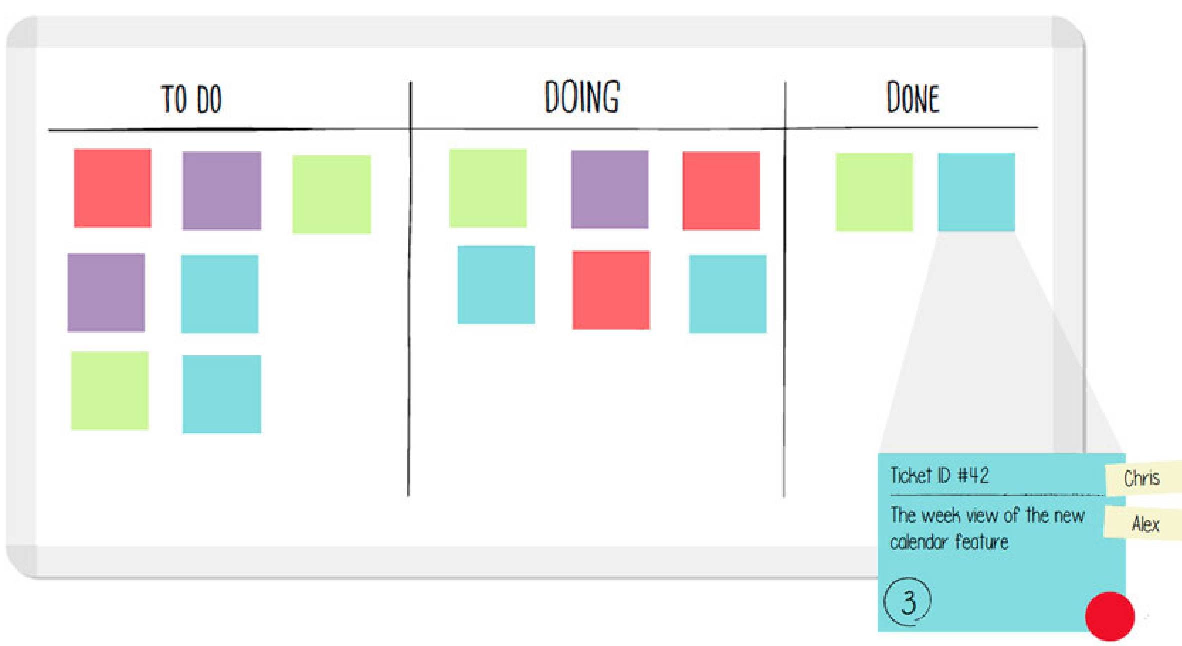
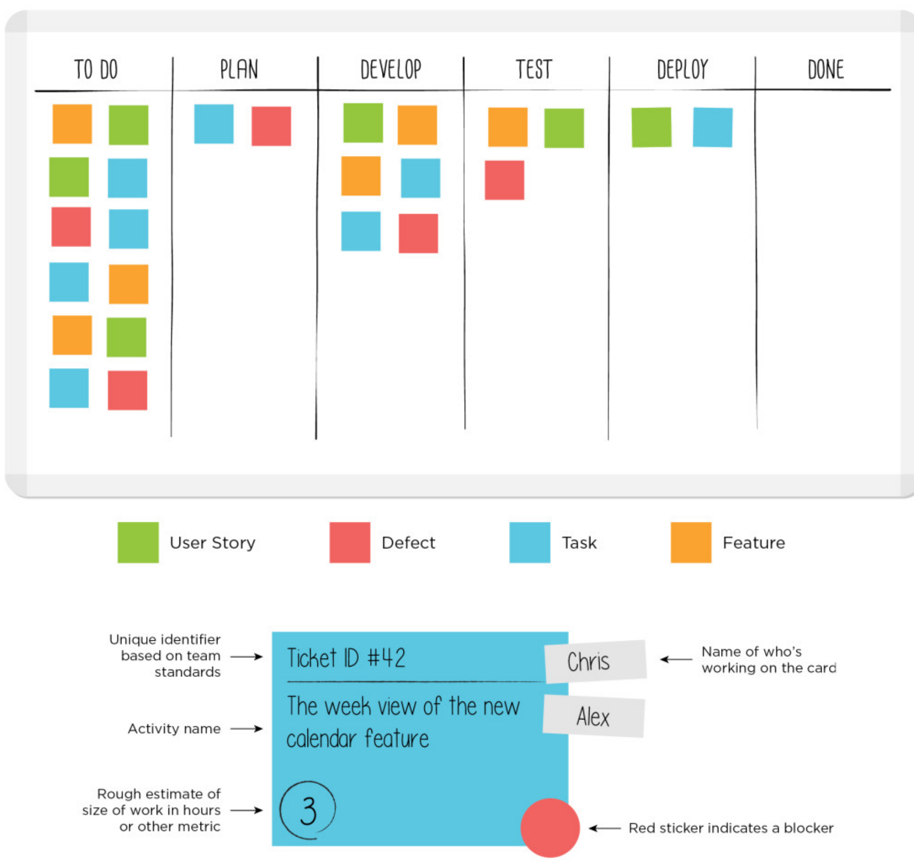


Figure 8. A basic physical Kanban board with three-step workflow (Leankit, 2016)

Moreover, physical kanban can improve the workflow by helping the team to spot the workflow congestion when one column is filling is filling up fast. (Cheryl Hammond, 2013) It also helps with communication because any team member can immediately know the stage of the development of the project by simply glancing at the kanban board (Cheryl Hammond, 2013). No extra meetings are needed for updating the progress of each member of the team. Furthermore, a physical kanban board "works as an information radiator, making all employees aware of the project status" (Kanban Tool, 2016). It creates a good focus on the progress and the task itself because the information on the physical kanban is "unavoidable," which is "always available without the team having to intentionally open it" (Cheryl Hammond, 2013). We recommend the physical kanban as one of the solutions because it is easy, cheap, and effective for an onsite team.

Figure 9. Physical Kanban is flexible that users can define the meaning of the colors of the sticky notes and number of columns based on the project (Leankit, 2016)



SUGGESTIONS: TRACKING

Currently the office is using tracking forms to monitor the status of work in progress. Although the current format of physical tracking sheets are still working properly, we identified several areas that might cause potential problems as the workload increases. If the office is interested in maintaining the physical tracking forms, we offer several suggestions in terms of updating the content of these sheets. These updates include deleting redundant steps as well as adding new steps.

Components to be integrated into the tracking system include:

1. Spanish translation status
2. Email to the navigator
3. Live help
4. Social media
5. Add it to the list of content that is handed out
6. Updating or connecting coming soon links
7. Add new content to the survey
8. Updating all channels that aren't the website

Components to be removed from the form for Automatic Interviews:

1. Substantive Staff Approval
Based on our findings from interview, this step doesn't happen.
2. Revisions sent to programmer.
Attorney send articles continuously, following this step would impact the overall efficiency.
3. Final draft sent to content sub-committee.
Attorneys usually do not conduct this step because the sub-committee doesn't review the interview script.
4. One week comment period.
This step is not necessary because sub-committee doesn't review the interview script.

Components to be removed from the tracker for New Web Content form:

1. Research to determine number of versions needed.
This step is Irrelevant for most of the toolkits.
2. Reviewed/approved by Court staff for those jurisdictions that can use stock version.
This step was only done for divorce toolkits. Attorneys didn't get feedback from most of the court staff.

SUGGESTIONS: GRANT WRITERS

Our next suggestion in improving the new content uploading work flow is the addition of a grant writer. There are multiple benefits for hiring a grant writer. Above all, it can relieve the director from such time-consuming work to put together a grant proposal and finish an application. Currently the director for Michigan Legal Help Program is taking on too much work and it still includes writing grant report and doing grant applications. By hiring a grant writer her heavy workload can be largely reduced. Besides, the skills and experience of a professional grant writer can make the whole application process more effective and efficient. The insight and ability of a grant writer can lead to more funds and money for the organization. Moreover, a good grant writer has the ability to fit an organization's needs at a lower cost because a professional grant writer will clearly know where the help is most needed. They can judge where their assistance is most needed, whether it's about the management of the entire proposal process or just one proposal section or just doing some review before submission, the organization can receive personalized help by hiring a grant writer, thus, they don't have to pay for redundant costs (Katie Adams, 2012).

Based on the current situation, we think our client has three choice, the first one is to use another existing staff other than the director to write grants, while the second one is to hire a grant writer as an employee, and the third one is to pay for a freelance grant writer when needed. We also recommend that the director could find a "deputy" from the existing staff in the program to assist her in doing some work, such as reviewing some of the articles for her. A "deputy" can also help reduce the burden of the director's work and make the whole workflow more efficient and effective.

SCENARIOS

While these solutions may be combined and selected at the client's own discretion we suggest the use of the above mentioned solutions under the following scenarios.

Scenario A
If MLHP is interested in retaining the current speed of output and quality level we suggest the use of a physical kanban. We believe that because Trello has not been adapted and the staff feel that the current use of physical artifacts aid in the workflow, a physical kanban will allow the office to more easily keep track of all toolkits at their various stages of completion.

Scenario B
If MLHP would prefer to increase the efficiency of the workflow we suggest that a digital kanban is implemented along with the deputization of another employee to handle the workload of reviewing new content.
A digital kanban is conducive to a faster paced workflow as it can be more easily accessed and allows work to take place on a single platform, increasing ability for quick collaboration. The addition of a deputy will minimize the director's workload and increase the speed at which the revision process takes place.

Scenario C
Lastly if the program is inclined to increase the number of toolkits produced as the size of the office grows we suggest the use of a digital kanban, a deputy as well as freelance or full time grant writer. The reasoning behind the use of a digital kanban as well as a deputy follows the logic outlined above while the use of a grant writer, either freelance, full time, or another employee would further decrease the workload for the director, allowing her to focus more on the new contention creation and uploading process. In all of these three scenarios we suggest rewriting the tracking sheets to remove redundant information and include steps which currently occur after the uploading process and are omitted from the sheets.

CONCLUSION

Since August of 2012 the Michigan Legal Help website has provided hundreds of thousands of Michigan residents with crucial information to assist in civil litigation through the myriad of toolkits. While toolkits and the articles, common questions, and other resources that they provide are likely the most important content Michigan Legal Help provides, the process that surrounds their posting is complicated and somewhat inefficient.

Our goal in this project was to the analyze the current workflow and pinpoint problematic areas. To do so we interviewed five employees at the Michigan Legal Help Program including the director, attorneys, and administrative assistants. We then took these findings and analyzed them through the use of an affinity wall, this process allowed us to categorize findings and draw larger conclusions. These findings emphasized the need to reassess the current task assignment process as employees had uneven workloads and inconsistent communication methods.

We suggested that Michigan Legal Help uses a new project management system like kanban, either in digital or physical form, to equalize workloads and allow employees to see a visual representation of current projects. We also suggested the deputization of another employee to take over some of the directors responsibilities and the possible hiring of a grant writer, both of these solutions would decrease the large amount of work the director currently does and increase the efficiency and competition rate of the new content uploading process. We believe that any combination of these suggestions will improve the content uploading workflow making it less stressful and easier to navigate.

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