BEST PRACTICES OF WEB-BASED HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENTS IN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis was a content analysis study of five not-for-profit websites analyzing their human resource development components. After analyzing these sites a list of best practices was defined for other not-for-profit organizations to follow.

Each organization was selected based on a methodology of a technique called snowballing. Thirteen organizations were originally contacted. From the 13 organizations, five organizations were chosen to represent good quality organizations with HRD resource sites. Each of the sites was evaluated and conceptualized with common categories for later review. Each of the concept maps created were evaluated based on common themes and whether those themes matched with the literature that was reviewed.

After this process took place an idealized model for a small and large organization was made. Each model was supported by both the literature and the organizations that were reviewed that contained the specific components in the model.

After each idealized model was created, recommendations for further research were given.
Dedicated to my parents for all their support, care and love throughout the years and to Dr. Hatch, who has always been there for me.
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

Like many other areas of the economy, not-for-profit organizations have seen changes. These organizations have realized that some of these changes involve the marriage of technology and their human resource services. They have always contended with various issues in training employees. Constraints to this have been money, costs, keeping the volunteer motivated, and providing proper support for the employee. Different not-for-profit organizations have been using web-based training to combat these constraints and streamline their efforts in providing services to employees.

Web-based training started out by serving various purposes in the educational sectors and over time has become useful in the corporate and not-for-profit sectors in human resources for various reasons. For instance, an employee may not be able to commute to a specific location for training due to distance or a heavy schedule. The employee may have specific physical disabilities that would not allow him or her to participate in the classroom. The employee may need a more flexible schedule and web-based training would allow that. Moreover, a company may need to train employees quickly and the only means for doing so would be to involve the use of web-based training. Any job market that one goes into would require training on corporate policy, common issues, and health risk, as well as training specific to that job.

For example, one not-for-profit organization that has considered such a site is Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC). CCC is an international Christian organization headquartered in Orlando, Florida. With ten regional offices all over the country and over 5,000 staff members, they have had many reasons to benefit from a web-based
training website (CCC). A site of this nature allows them to collaborate more effectively with staff members all over the globe. Many of the staff come from different backgrounds, are at different places in life, and from different ethnicities. A web-based training site would allow them to connect and learn at their own pace, specifically when working with volunteer staff that may only be able to conduct training at certain times. Lastly, CCC is a growing organization. The ability to train employees rapidly is nearly impossible with traditional approaches.

The first step in creating a website of this nature has been to understand the concept. In order for CCC or any other not-for-profit organization to develop a site of this nature they should know and understand the idea of a web-based training website. Currently, awards have been given from places such as Web Awards for outstanding not-for-profit websites. They have not been ranked based on their HRD components. Not-for-profit organizations such as CCC who desire to create human resource development (HRD) components to be placed on the web have no best practices to follow.

**Problem of the Study**

The problem of the study was to describe exemplary human resource development HRD websites in not-for-profit organizations and analyze the best practices from these sites.

**Significance of the Study**

HRD resource websites have had many advantages to not-for-profit employees. They have been able to learn at their own convenience. Organizations have reduced
existing expenses usually incurred with going to classes and employees have been able to learn at a bite-sized digestible manner. Cohen and Jaffee (1982) wrote that a website of this nature has allowed students to learn instantly. Organizations have been able to update these websites easily so as to get the newest content available for employees to view and learn from.

For example, the benefits for CCC to have a website would allow their employees to train at their own pace, test themselves, and receive instant feedback. They would receive access to organization policy instantly and have a means of communication between employees. Instead of multiple training sessions being conducted around the region or country on a specific topic, new and existing employees could learn instantly, collaborate, and reference policies as needed.

The current cost of traditional training has been high. “Without sponsorship from a grant maker, a one to two-day computer literacy course has run several hundred dollars per student, and the travel, lodging, and fees required to attend an out-of-town professional conference has easily cost more than $1,000 per attendee” (Quotah, 2003, p. 2). Currently some for-profit organizations have sponsored training for not-for-profit organizations. Citibank is one of these companies that sponsored not-for-profit training day events spending approximately $100,000 per year (Quotah, 2003). Even in for-profit organizations, the cost has been extreme. Research has shown however, that the return-on-investment (ROI) for web-based training has been significant. Price Waterhouse conducted a ROI analysis over a five-year period and found the traditional cost per learner was $800 compared to web-based training where the cost was around $106 cost
per learner (Hall B., 1997). That was a cost savings of 86 percent (see Figure 1.1, Figure 1.2, Figure 1.3).

*Figure 1.1.* Comparison by Price Waterhouse of cost-per-learner over five years for traditional instructor-led training versus multimedia training

*Figure 1.2.* Total training costs lecture/lab training versus multimedia training
Figure 1.3. Comparison of costs for instructor-led training (lecture/lab) versus media training over three years of Storage Technology

Another study was conducted in March of 1997 (Hall B., 1997). One real estate company needed to conduct training on the new Microsoft Office suite. The company considered outsourcing the training to an off-site training provider. In the end the company decided on an e-learning approach. Once the training was implemented, 150 courses were completed in full within the first eight months. After one year an ROI analysis was conducted. The results were a 22 percent ROI over traditional training. Some key benefits they noticed were a greater employee speed-to-competency, higher employee satisfaction, greater employee productivity, and higher employee retention. A similar study was done with an energy company with approximately 3,000 courses completed over a 12-month period. They found an overall ROI of 192 percent increase with key benefits of higher employee retention and reduced-rework (Salois, 2003). It is clear from this and other studies that web-based training has offered a clear ROI over traditional training.

With the benefits mentioned above, it has been clear that a not-for-profit could benefit from a web-based training site, especially with the restricted operating budgets.
The first step in planning any website has been to include an explanation of best practices. A study of this nature was not conducted before this to provide as a tool for not-for-profit organizations. With not-for-profit organizations facing issues such as growing constraints and overhead, a website can provide a better means for services to their employees. This study has evaluated how to most effectively provide these services via HRD components on a website.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify five exemplary not-for-profit organizations with web-based training/HRD resource sites.
2. Develop a list of the components and characteristics of each of the five websites.

**Assumptions**

The following assumptions were inherent in this study:

1. The five not-for-profit organizations identified offered HRD and training support for their employees.
2. The information provided by the five not-for-profit organizations were accurate.
3. Each of the award-winning websites that provide not-for-profit organizations had integrity in their selections.
4. Each of the award-winning not-for-profit webmasters was in a position to be aware of exemplary not-for-profit HRD components for websites.

Limitations

The following limitations are applied to this study:

The five not-for-profit organizations being analyzed were nominated by existing not-for-profit organizations. The study was, therefore, based on nominations by these organizations. The relationship between the nominating organizations and the nominees influenced the nominations. Two of the HRD resource websites had restricted access and thus were only allowed for review within the offices in which the organization was housed.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were defined for this study:

1. Only not-for-profit organizations that were written in the English language will be evaluated.
Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study. All definitions given were taken from TechWeb with the exception of those cited otherwise (TechWeb, 2005).

Accessibility refers to hardware and software technologies that help visually or physically impaired people to use the computer. For example, the Accessibility Options control panel in Windows provides keyboard, mouse and screen options for people who have difficulty typing or seeing the screen.

Asynchronous refers to events that are not synchronized, or coordinated, in time. The following are considered asynchronous operations. The interval between transmitting A and B is not the same as between B and C. The ability to initiate a transmission at either end. The ability to store and forward messages. Starting the next operation before the current one is completed.

Authentication is verifying the identity of a user logging onto a network. Passwords, digital certificates, smart cards, and biometrics can be used to prove the identity of the client to the network. Passwords and digital certificates can also be used to identify the network to the client. The latter is important in wireless networks to ensure that the desired network is being accessed.

Baud is the signaling rate of a line, which is the number of transitions (voltage or frequency changes) that are made per second. The term has often been erroneously used to specify bits per second. However, only at very low speeds is baud equal to bps; for example, 300 baud is the same as 300 bps. Beyond that, one baud can be made to represent more than one bit. For example, a V.22bis modem generates 1,200 bps at 600 baud.
**Bandwidth** is the transmission capacity of an electronic pathway such as a communications line, computer bus, or computer channel. In a digital line, it is measured in bits per second or bytes per second. In an analog channel or in a digital channel that is wrapped in a carrier frequency, bandwidth is the difference between the highest and lowest frequencies and is measured in Hertz (kHz, MHz, GHz).

**Broadband** is high-speed transmission. The term is commonly used to refer to Internet access via cable modems or DSL, which is faster than dial-up. Broadband has always referred to a higher-speed connection, but the actual speed threshold has varied. While T1 (1.5 Mbps) has been widely used as the starting point for broadband speed, slower rates and higher rates have also been used.

**Closed Portal** is a private portal that can only be accessed by name and password (see Portal).

**Discussion Forums** is an interactive, online discussion (by keyboard) about a specific topic that is hosted on the Internet. On the Internet, chat rooms are available from major services such as AOL, individual Web sites, and the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) system, the Net's traditional computer conferencing.

**Download** is to receive a file transmitted over a network. In any communications session, "download" means receive, and "upload" means send. The time it takes to download data depends on the size of the file and network speed. Via the standard V.92 analog dial-up modem, small Web pages take a few seconds if everything is running smoothly, but a 10MB video file can take a half hour. Downloading over DSL or cable modem can be up to 100 times faster. Downloading from a file
server on a local network (LAN) can be faster yet.

**Graphical User Interface (GUI)** is graphics-based user interface that incorporates movable windows, icons and a mouse. The ability to resize application windows and change style and size of fonts are the significant advantages of a GUI vs. a character-based interface. GUIs have become the standard way users interact with a computer, and the major GUIs are the Windows and Mac interfaces along with Motif for Unix and the GNOME and KDE interfaces for Linux.

**Human Resources Development (HRD)** is the integrated use of training and development, career development, and organization development to improve individual effectiveness (Gervis.net, 2005).

**HRD Resource Site** is an online site which contains different areas of resource development to aid a particular user, employee, and/or volunteer in completing a job.

**MPEG (Moving Pictures Experts Group)** is a ISO/ITU standard for compressing video, pronounced "em-peg." MPEG was designed for playback and is thus asymmetrical, which means it takes considerably longer to compress the video in the studio than it does to decompress it in the DVD player, PC, set-top box or digital TV set. MPEG uses lossy compression very similar to JPEG within each frame as well as interframe coding, which further compresses the data by encoding only the differences between periodic key frames.

**Narrowband** in communications, transmission rates up to T1 speeds (1.544 Mbps). The upper limit is a moving target. At one time, narrowband meant 150 bps (that is
150 bits per second). Then, the upper limit became 2,400 bps. Later, it moved to 64 Kbps.

Not-for-profit Organization are organizations that have committed legally not to distribute any net earnings (profit) to individuals with control over it such as members, officers, directors, or trustees. It may pay them for services rendered and goods provided (about.com, 2005).

Open Source refers to software that is created by a development community rather than a single vendor. Typically programmed by volunteers from many organizations, the source code of open source software is free and available to anyone who would like to use it or modify it for their own purposes. This allows an organization to add a feature itself rather than hope that the vendor of a proprietary product will implement its suggestion in a subsequent release.

PDF (Portable Document Format) is the file format in Adobe's Acrobat document exchange technology. Acrobat/PDF has become the de facto standard for document exchange as well as for publishing documents on the Web that are downloaded and read independently of the HTML pages. Millions of brochures, data sheets, white papers, and technical manuals are on the Web in PDF format.

Proprietary means private. With regard to hardware and software, it implies that it was developed by and is currently owned by one organization or individual.

Portal is web "supersite" that provides a variety of services including Web search, news, free e-mail, discussion groups, shopping and links to other sites.

Snowballing is a technique applied through the various networks that have been made contact with, to identify further respondents who fit the characteristics of the
research focus or situation (Bromley, Dockery, Nhlema, Orton, Smith, Theobald and Tolhurst 2003).

**Streaming** refers to the continuous transmission of data, typically audio or video.

**Synchronous** refers to events that are synchronized, or coordinated, in time. For example, the interval between transmitting A and B is the same as between B and C, and completing the current operation before the next one is started are considered synchronous operations. Contrast with asynchronous.

**Web-based Training** is instruction that is delivered over the Internet or over a company’s intranet. The training is accessed using a Web browser (Hall, B., 1997).

**Webinars** is a workshop or lecture delivered over the Web. Rather than just a one-way video presentation, a webinar implies a two-way interaction between the audience and the presenters.

**Usability** is how easy something is to use. Both software and Web sites can be tested for usability. Considering how difficult applications are to use and Web sites are to navigate, one would wish that more designers took this seriously.
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review was conducted on current theories and best practices for both web-based training in the corporate sector and education sector, as well as general training in not-for-profit organizations. This chapter examined web-based training within a historical context and then summarized the literature on the following topics: (a) the purpose for a training website, (b) best practices in developing a training site, (c) qualitative research on website evaluation, (d) organizations evaluating websites, (e) case studies on web-based training. (f) advantages of web-based training (g) disadvantages of web-based training, and (h) best practices for not-for-profit organization training.

Historical Context

Not-for-profit organizations have faced challenges in supporting and training their employees. Three challenges that many of these organizations faced have been training executives, staff, and volunteers in management principles; training paid staff on how to work with volunteers; and training volunteers on skill development and leadership development (Wilson, 1984). Many changes in the makeup of the volunteer force have been a cause for more training in not-for-profit organizations. “Traditionally, the bulk of volunteers were married women who did not work outside the home. Today, more than two-thirds of the women between 25 and 44 are employed. Fifty-seven percent of married women with children work outside the home. So there are far fewer traditional volunteers available” (Wilson, 1984, p. 1). With the lack of volunteers available organizations have been finding more effective ways for volunteers to receive organization information through the use of human resource and training websites.
One would think that training over distance started when the computer and Internet became mainstream, but it started before that. More than 100 years ago, training was conducted via the U.S. Postal Service. Moore (2003) wrote “the invention of the Rural Free Delivery system led to the development of the first programs of education for adults by correspondence instruction at both the university level and by for-profit providers” (p. 1).

The first generation of distance education was that of the textual generation, which existed till the 1960s. This generation of distance education was primarily based on the issuing of text from a university or private business. The learner would receive it by post and submit responses in a mailed text form. One example of this was when the Post Office was used in 1883 by the Chautauqua College of Liberal Arts to offer collegiate instruction by correspondence (Joia, 2000). “In 1889, William Rainey Harper, the first president and founder of the University of Chicago, offered a course in Hebrew by post” (Joia, 2000). This was called the Extension Department and was considered successful. Later that year Queen’s College in Canada launched a set of distance learning courses, which were considered successful due to their low cost and the large distance separating the rural communication in the country.

The second generation was the “analogic” generation, which spanned from the 1960s to the 1980s. This was based on self-learning supported by text and the inclusion of multimedia resources (sounds and video) in the curriculum. The third generation was that of the digital generation. It started in the 1980s. Joai (2000) wrote that this generation used many technological resources such as CD-ROMS. The content from these CD-ROMS was later transferred to web pages. This generation also included high-
end video conferencing where universities and companies would invest millions in top of the line equipment for video conferencing between the instructor and student, mostly via satellite (Kilby, 2001).

We are currently in the fourth generation. This is called the “computer-supported collaborative learning generation” (Kilby, 2001, p. 2). Currently, training over a distance is taught by using all different mediums, such as video, remote PowerPoint and the web. Since the early 1990s, the Internet has improved and expanded and has become a primary medium for training. “We will likely see higher quality online courseware in the near future that meets the ever-broadening needs of the learners and organizations” (Kilby, 2001, p. 2). Kilby found that new technologies would dramatically alter the adult learning experience in future decades. Eventually we will see wide adoption of media standards, and courseware that adapts to the individual’s needs. We have already begun to see streaming media in training and will continue to see more, as well as 3-D virtual worlds, speech recognition, tactile feedback, and digital scents. Whittam, Dwyer, and Leeming (2004) also thought that we would see a more global perspective in courseware design, which includes multilingual and multicultural content and an international collaborative community.

The Purpose of a Training Website

The purpose of training via the web in the not-for-profit sector has been to educate an employee from a distance or at the pace of the employee. Employees have not sat in a classroom to be trained. They have logged on to a website where they may watch educational videos, read outlined instructions or policies, or have live interaction with an
internal employee. Not-for-profit organizations that use these technologies have
developed systems. The goal of creating a system is to establish training websites. Joia
(2000) wrote:

Systems are engines developed so that anyone using both a corporate intranet
infrastructure and the Internet can, on a distance learning basis, attend courses that
are deployed on the Web, in an interactive and hyper textual way. The user needs
only an Internet browser on his/her desktop. The system and its contents are
stored either in the corporate intranet server or in a general Internet server. (p. 2)
These online courses have housed corporate or organizational policies, or
procedures and instructions on activities to be performed. Companies have housed these
training sites either on their own intranet or on the internet to be accessed by the
employee.

**Best Practices In Developing A Training Website**

Before creating a training website, a trainer or developer has gone through a
process. This has taken multiple steps to complete. These steps have included assessing
the needs of the intended learning audience and organization, research and collection of
training modules to fit that need, decisions on what modules should be presented, and
then system creation (Hall R., 1999). Jolliffe, Ritter, and Stevens (2001) believed that
instructors needed to identify what the student needs were and from those needs then
develop objectives.

Once learners have been assessed, instructional strategies are decided on. Only
then are modules for instruction developed. Hall R. (1999) wrote that one needs to create
a clear and systematic organization scheme for the learning site. If no organizational system or map is created, individual pages have not been placed properly, the training modules have not been placed in the proper context, and the end user has not been considered in terms of usability.

The usual/prototypical path through the pages should be obvious and the information should be in a modular fashion within a well-structured hierarchy . . . communication activities among learners on the web also constitute one of the most powerful tools that web-based instructors have at their disposal. (p. 3)

Communication tools were then considered as an option when creating the learning hierarchy for the site. Another thing that was considered is that students need to have freedom to be self-paced. Minotti & Giguere (2003) wrote “Students need to be self-disciplined individuals if willing to take a purely online course, with no face-to-face interaction because there is no checkpoint for the student” (p. 2).

Once the learning modules were created, assessment tools were then created to evaluate the employee. A variety of testing and performance options were considered to evaluate the students’ performance. These included self-testing throughout the entire course, which were either instructor-controlled or student-controlled. This testing took several forms, such as matching, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false. The goal of testing was to evaluate whether students learned the materials they were taught.

Once a training site has been implemented, certain objectives would then be met. A human resources and training website should follow strategic alignment. It should help the user and also support the goals of the organization. The site should support the user with relevant information and data, answering any questions the employee may have and
also inspire new insights for how to better do the job. The site should also provide more efficiency and effectiveness for the human resources personnel, allowing higher value work to be performed (Walker, 2001).

The employee directly becomes involved with their learning process, allowing them to access their employee records or set up an event. A possible set of applications may be at the front end of the site, allowing for managers to rate their employees and also enroll their employees in courses. Many of the tasks that human resources personnel would do would be the responsibility of the employee, such as making changes to their own benefit programs, participating in benefit enrollments, selecting training programs, investigating job postings, and altering information such as address or marital status (Walker, 2001).

**Qualitative Research On Website Evaluation**

Training websites have been evaluated using many different methods. In order for an evaluation to be valid an effective qualitative study must be conducted. This is a study that has included the quality of content as well as design and usability.

An Electronic Instructional Design Specialist conducted one example of a qualitative study. “The researcher conducted a qualitative research study to examine the experiences of faculty, distance learners, instructional designers/developers, and distance program administrators in Web course design and delivery” (Xiaoshi, 2000, pg. 3). The areas the researcher investigated were instructional design, course development, course delivery, and administrative support. The study was conducted by collecting data from people, website materials both online and in print, interaction within these sites, and the
multimedia technologies used to deliver content. The data was then analyzed. The researcher contacted faculty, instructional designers, and administrators and then chose some of them as interviewees. Out of the three universities chosen, ten faculty members participated. The faculty recommended 32 students to interview. The researcher then analyzed three sites and examined instructional materials such as the course syllabus, online study guides, quizzes/tests, links to other sites, and other media. The researcher also analyzed the opportunities for interaction between students and faculty. The researcher also probed the course layout and the use of multimedia technology. The model used for analysis was triangulation. The three areas analyzed were the website, the instructional materials, and the insight of professors, learners, instructional designers, and online course administrators (Xiaoshi, 2000).

A theory used for selecting and evaluating websites has been content analysis. Content analysis is a step-by-step process of selecting what will be evaluated and then analyzing the written communication. This has been especially helpful when evaluating a website. Different techniques have been used such as snowballing to select the sites being evaluated and triangulation to assess the actual content. Details on content analysis were discussed further in Chapter 3, as was the methodology that was chosen for this study.

**Organizations Evaluating Websites**

With more not-for-profit organizations developing websites, certain organizations have developed awards programs for those they consider to be exemplary. One of the websites considered was *Web Awards*. Yearly this site awards not-for-profit
organizations top honors for websites based on individual achievement based on
effectiveness for the user. Individual judges have reviewed the mission statement and
prospective audience for the site and then evaluated the site. They then scored and
recorded their observations.

Two other sites that evaluated and offered awards for sites are the Webby Awards
and CIO.com. The Webby Awards reviewed sites based on content, structure and
navigation, visual design, functionality, interactivity, and overall experience. CIO.com
offered the 50/50 Awards for not-for-profit organizations that have since been
discontinued. The last awards given were in July of 2000.

Case Studies

Case studies have been done in the private and the public sector on web-based
training. One example was industrial employee training. It has been a $72 billion dollar
industry. This industry has increasingly used technology to increase employee
knowledge and skills and to alter attitudes. Even though 82% of training in 2003 was still
face-to-face, more training has been done online. Whittam, Dwyer, and Leeming (2004)
found that companies have realized they have had the ability to give instruction any time
and anywhere; having complete control over course content. They thought that through
this study, web-based training was being used remarkably in industrial training settings. It
was surprising that they adopted the concept so deeply, even though they thought very
little empirical research had been conducted in the industrial setting to guide the
development of web-based training.
One example of web-based training in industry was on diversity training. Whittam, Dwyer, and Leeming (2004) developed a study, which had two main topics for testing. One was the behavior displayed on the job and the other was the historical and legal issues related to fair employment. Whittam, Dwyer, and Leeming wrote:

“Participants were 64 floor supervisors in a large steel fabrication factory located in the mid-South. Sixty-four percent of these had knowledge in some area of the subject” (p. 3). The materials for the course were in question and answer format and included images of actual company employees working on the job. Students could go forward or backward and review any previously viewed pages. They also had 24 multiple choice questions based on the content of the module, which assessed their factual knowledge of the subject. Three forms of the course were developed. Each of these were identical, with the exception of the 24 quiz questions. Students did not receive feedback after the quizzes were finished. The results were positive in the study in the overall mean post-course Task Value score was 29.1 out of 30. The two focus groups that took the course felt that they liked the format and recommended its continued use.

**Advantages**

The benefits of web-based training have shown good results for the learner. Whittam, Dwyer and Leeming found that web-based training offered two domains in which knowledge enhancement takes place. The first domain focus was how the information was presented in the individual frames of the training module. The information became easier to understand because it was in smaller chunks and easier to digest. Variables to consider included how information was grouped/organized, how
various media components were combined to deliver information, and how the learner interacted with the information presented. Training modules needed to be grouped together for easy access and provide a user-friendly environment.

The second domain involved the way in which the web-based training program allowed the learner to test him or herself on the information and obtain feedback on his or her test performance instantly. Technology has been effective at enabling group learning by collaboration and web conferencing. Cohen and Jaffee (1982) found that traditional means of education were not entirely adequate to meet the needs of the life-long learner. Students taking web-based training courses have had the ability to learn instantly. Web-based training has had the ability to support feed-forward and backward processes, where notes could be linked to particular pieces of information in the web-based training and a forum. Along with the benefits of web-based training, there have been weaknesses.

**Disadvantages**

The downfall of web-based training has been that there is clearly no standard for accreditation, implementation, management, and feedback process of web-based instruction. Whittam, Dwyer, and Leeming (2004) wrote: “Multimedia has been developed on the basis of its technological capacity, and rarely is it used according to research-based principles … instructional design of multimedia is still mostly based on the intuitive beliefs of designers rather than on empirical evidence” (p. 3). Another weakness has been that too many training sites have been mere tutorials or online books. Many time lapses have taken place in waiting for responses from instructors or from other peers. Expenses have often been hard to estimate when creating online instruction
for the first time and a break-even point for return-of-investment has been even harder to calculate. Minotti & Giguere (2003) also found that sometimes the cost could exceed the traditional classroom instruction when including the cost of special equipment, software, instructional designers, and the adaptation to the web.

**Best Practices In Not-For-Profit Training**

Not-for-profit organizations have needed to provide training that allows for organizational change and bringing new skill requirements to the employee. Training has been conducted that provides creativity and innovation for their employees, to give them new approaches to how they deliver their services (Wilson, 1984). The not-for-profit organization has included components involving culture, reaction, and social interaction. They have provided health, education, and social services. Training management has been essential through persuasion rather than coercion. Incentives and rewards have had to come from some place other than a paycheck, when working with volunteers. Too often volunteers have tended to be doers instead of delegators and thus have ended up burning out, thus having a turnover. Certain skills such as planning, job design, delegation, accountability, and decision-making have been taught. Standards should never be lowered simply because the employee is considered a volunteer. By keeping high standards a spirit of teamwork and trust is cultivated. (Wilson, 1984)

**Conclusion**

The previous chapter discussed the history of web-based training as it has related to not-for-profit organizations. The purpose of web-based training was given along with
the qualitative research that has been conducted on these sites. Methods were presented and a theory provided for how research has been conducted. Organizations that have given awards to those not-for-profit sites were discussed. Advantages and disadvantages of web-based training were given along with the best practices of sites of this nature.

Not-for-profit organizations have seen rapid economic change, and a lack of volunteers becoming available. Many educators and for-profit human resource departments have begun to implement the concept of web-based training. Not-for-profit organizations have also seen this idea as a way to train their employees and volunteer the much-needed skills of motivation and management. Very little has been done in the way of researching the best practices for not-for-profit organization training websites.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

This chapter presented the methods to be utilized to achieve the research objectives. The following headings include: (a) restatement of the problem, (b) restatement of the objectives, (c) research design, (d) snowballing: a process for identifying sites, (e) content analysis, (f) budget, and (g) calendar of events.

Restatement of the Problem

The problem of the study was to describe exemplary human resource development (HRD) websites in not-for-profit organizations and analyze the best practices from these sites.

Restatement of the Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify five exemplary not-for-profit organizations with web-based training/HRD resource sites.
2. Develop a list of the components and characteristics of each of the five websites.

Research Design

The study was a descriptive research study of the characteristics of five not-for-profit human resource and training websites using content analysis (Frankel & Wallen, 2000).
Snowballing: A process for identifying sites

The population for this study was defined as not-for-profit organizations with the exception of educational institutions. From this population, a sample of five not-for-profit organization human resource development websites was selected for further observation and analysis. In order to select these, a technique was used called snowballing. The sample selection was made through an eight-stage process involving snowballing. The sample selection procedure was explained in the following sections.

1. The researcher contacted Web Awards; an online marketing firm that awards not-for-profit organizations that has exceptional websites.

2. The top ten award-winners from Web Awards were each contacted.

3. From each of the ten organizations contacted, three responded.

4. From the three organizations contacted, two more organizations were recommended.

5. From those five organizations that were contacted, each was evaluated based on whether they had a HRD resource website. Each organization was also asked for references to other not-for-profit organizations that may have HRD resource sites. From the five organizations, a total of 13 organizations were evaluated.

6. From the 13 organizations evaluated, five were selected based on the type of HRD resource sites they instituted.

7. The five organization HRD websites were then reviewed and analyzed for best practices based on content.
8. Content Analysis was conducted on the five websites selected by the researcher and the practitioners.

**Content Analysis**

The type of methodology used to evaluate each website was content analysis using triangulation (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). Content analysis is a technique that researchers use to study human behavior in an indirect way. The analysis is of the written content of communication. Certain steps were followed when using content analysis (see Figure 3.1).

The first step was to determine certain objectives. Within this study the objective was to obtain descriptive information about the topic of not-for-profit HRD websites. After deciding on objectives, terms were needed to be defined and certain units were specified. In this study, the units being analyzed met the following criteria:

- Each of the websites was an English-based website.
- Each of the websites identified was created for staff members or volunteers for not-for-profit organizations or practitioners in a particular field pertaining to the organization.
- Each of the organizations identified was not an educational institutions.
- Each of the organizations had HRD online components.

Each of the thirteen organizations selected were then to be analyzed quantitatively. Content was to be checked to see if certain categories were present within each site. An example would be to see if a certain site had a finance HRD component rather than how many had that component.
To help determine if a website was considered of quality in regards to its HRD components, methodological triangulation was used. LeBlanc (1995) wrote “methodological triangulation as employing various complementary symmetrical or parallel assumptive systems, or perspectives, in order to get alternate views of the phenomena in question” (pg. 3). This involved the use of various methods in order to obtain the best possible observation of the data. The researcher inductively observed the HRD components as well as one other expert in not-for-profit organizations.

Lastly, each of the website HRD components was analyzed. Commonalities between each of the five websites were reviewed. The components were then analyzed to determine best practices (Frankel & Wallen, 2000).
Figure 3.1. Chart of Methodology for finding best practices of not-for-profit websites
Calendar Of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>January 2005</th>
<th>February 2006</th>
<th>March 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Award-Winning Not-For-Profit Sites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominations &amp; Selections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Permissions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine Best Practices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Table explaining the calendar of events for carrying out the methodology.*

**Summary**

The previous section restated the problem statement as well as the objectives of the study. The chapter also discusses the specific methodology that would be used to conduct the study. The methodology technique that was used was snowballing. In order to follow snowballing correctly, individual steps were documented.

Specific criteria was given for the sample that would be studied, as well as the criteria for each website that would be evaluated. The process by which making sure that
the sites were evaluated properly is known as triangulation. Triangulation was defined and explained specifically for this study.

A chart of the methodology was given as a visual representation of how the study was carried out. Following the chart, a table was given with the specific timeline the study was to be conducted.
CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

This chapter described the results obtained from the study. It included sections addressing (a) exemplary not-for-profit websites, (b) characteristics of exemplary not-for-profit organizations, (c) best practices of each organization and commonalities observed, (d) results for the second objective, (e) restatement of the third objective, (f) results for the third objective, and (g) summary.

Exemplary Not-For-Profit Websites

Objective 1 stated to identify five exemplary not-for-profit organizations with web-based training/HRD resource websites. Each of the organizations listed in Table 2 were nominated by other not-for-profit organizations. The Non-Profit Coordinating Committee in New York nominated NPower Incorporated, which then nominated the Foundation Center. The American Association nominated United Way.

Each of the organizations originally nominated were reviewed based on the online services they offered, specifically online training modules, HRD online components for volunteers and employees, and also communication services. Table 2 lists each not-for-profit that was identified as having a potential component of online training. The organizations were listed in alphabetical order.
Nominated Not-For-Profit Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Cancer Society - Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Heart Association - Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Lung Association - Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross - Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASTD – Human Resources Development Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy Scouts of America – Education and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ - Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity Universe – Foundation for Not-For-Profit Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Day Canada - Environmental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foundation Center - Foundation for Not-For-Profit Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit Coordinating Committee - Foundation for Not-For-Profit Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N-Power - Foundation for Not-For-Profit Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way – Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycliff Bible Translators – Religious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Not-For-Profit Organizations Nominated For Review*

From each of the organizations that were selected the five not-for-profit organizations that were reviewed were done so based on the online services that they carried. Each one of these organizations was contacted by either phone or email and some of them were visited multiple times. The goal in contacting these organizations was to obtain permission for access to certain areas, obtain a better understanding of the organization and how it functions, and also obtain a full scope of the services offered by
each. Table 3 listed the not-for-profit organizations that were selected for further analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominated Not-For-Profit Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Heart Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus Crusade for Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Foundation Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3. Not-For-Profit Organizations Selected For Review*

The HRD resource components from each of these organizations were then evaluated to see what each of them offered. Based on the evaluations, each one of these services was then categorized under common themes that were noticed based on each of the organization services reviewed.

**Characteristics of Exemplary Not-For-Profit Organizations**

The second objective was to develop a list of the components and characteristics of each of the five websites. This section describes the results obtained for the second objective. Each one of the organizations reviewed was selected based on the following criteria.
- Each of the websites was an English-based website.
- Each of the websites identified was created for staff members or volunteers for not-for-profit organizations or practitioners in a particular field pertaining to the organization.
- Each of the organizations identified was not an educational institutions.
- Each of the organizations had HRD online components.

American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency. The goal of the organization is to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

A small association originally formed in 1915 in New York, New York, by a group of physicians and social workers which was originally called the Prevention and Relief of Heart Disease. These physicians conducted studies to see if those suffering with heart disease could safely resume working. Starting in the 1920s, similar organizations began to form in other cities. In 1924, the American Heart Association was founded based on the smaller organizations that were forming in the cities.

The American Heart Association became publicly recognized in 1948. It was after this that millions sent contributions into the organization and in 1949 an effort was made to organize divisions across the country.

Since that time, the association has grown at a rapid pace. In the mid-1990s the associations scientific findings moved from laboratories and clinics to physicians’ offices and households. The association took strong positions on issues and made statements
about controlling risk factors.

The start of the most recent major change began in March of 1995 when volunteers and staff moved the association from a scientific society into a voluntary health agency. This is still true as of today. A layout of the site is given as a concept map in Figure 4.1.

![Concept map of American Heart Association site](image)

**Figure 4.1.** Concept map outlining American Heart Association site

**American Red Cross**

Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross in 1881. Since that time the organization has been an emergency response organization that provides humanitarian care to the victims of war. They also provide services to victims of national disasters.

In recent times, the American Red Cross has begun to provide compassionate services in five other areas. These areas are community service to help the needy,
support and comfort for those in the military and their families, collection and distribution of lifesaving blood and blood products, education programs that teach health and safety, and international relief and development programs.

Each year, victims of approximately 70,000 disasters call upon nearly one million volunteers and 35,000 employees of the Red Cross. The Red Cross has approximately 900 locally supported chapters where more than 15 million people gain skills they need to prepare and respond to emergencies. Approximately four million people give blood each year through the Red Cross, making it the largest supplier of blood in the United States.

The Red Cross is not a government agency and relies on donations of time, money, and blood to function. The organization is headquartered in Washington, D.C. A layout of the site is given as a concept map in Figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2. Concept map outlining American Red Cross site](image-url)
Campus Crusade for Christ

Campus Crusade for Christ’s main goal has been “to win the campus today and change the world tomorrow”. The organization is a network of 1,029 individual campus ministries. The organization discusses life with college students from a Christian perspective. The parent organization currently has 24,000 full time staff members and more than 500,000 trained volunteers working in 191 countries.

The organization began in 1951 at UCLA by Bill and Vonette Bright. One year from the organizations inception, Bill Bright wrote The Four Spiritual laws, which became the most widely distributed religious booklet in history, with approximately 2.5 billion printed to date.

Within nine years, Campus Crusade became established on 40 campuses in the United States and also in two other countries. It was during this time that the organization began to conduct annual conferences and summer mission trips around the world.

This organization was particularly chosen based on the desire by the organization to obtain more HRD resource components in the area of communication and education. This study was originally conducted to benefit this particular organization and to eventually have those components developed for their closed portal. A layout of the site is given as a concept map in Figure 4.3.
Figure 4.3. Concept map outlining Campus Crusade for Christ site

The Foundation Center

The Foundation Center looks to effectively allocate philanthropic resources and broaden the understanding of the contributions by not-for-profit organizations to society. The primary goal of the Foundation Center is to advance the knowledge of U.S. philanthropy.

The organization collects, organizes, and communicates information on U.S. philanthropy along with conducting and facilitating research on trends in the field. The organization also provides education and training on the grantseeking process to not-for-profit organizations and allows for public access to information and services.

The Center was founded in 1956 and is the nation’s leading authority on
philanthropy and services such as grantseeking, grantmaking, research, and policymaking. A layout of the site is given as a concept map in Figure 4.4.

![Concept Map of The Foundation Center Site](image)

*Figure 4.4. Concept map outlining The Foundation Center site*

United Way

The United Way’s goal is to improve the lives of people by mobilizing the caring power of communities. They do this by crafting human care agendas, building coalitions around these agendas, increasing investments in these agendas, and reflecting the diversity of the communities that are served.

A Denver priest, two ministers, and a rabbi founded the United Way in 1887. These men recognized the need for cooperative action to address their cities welfare. They planned the first united campaign for 10 health and welfare agencies and created an
organization to serve as the agent to collect funds for local charities, coordinate relief services, counsel and refer clients to cooperating agencies, and make emergency assistance grants. That year they raised $21,700 and created a movement that would later be called the United Way. The United Way includes approximately 1,350 community-based organizations. Each is independent of the other and is governed by local volunteers. A layout of the site is given as a concept map in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.4. Concept map outlining United Way site
Best Practices of Each Organization and Commonalities Observed

This section described the best practices observed from each of the organization HRD resource websites. After each HRD resource website was observed, commonalities were defined and were explained in this section.

Each one of the organizations reviewed had specific online services that provided training or HRD to their volunteers and/or employees. The services offered are different from organization to organization depending on the type of organization it is, the specific needs of the organization, budgetary constraints, and structure.

American Heart Association

The American Heart Association attempts to maintain relationships with practitioners in the field who care to know more about heart disease and find better practices for treatment of the disease. To meet this goal, the association needs to find ways to communicate news, best practices, and training to doctors and nurses from different backgrounds and different locations.

The American Heart Association currently has an online portal, which is a main communication between doctors and nurses. Users connect to this site and register for the service, stating their specific professionalism and field. Once registered, they then can gain access to different areas that would best suit their needs. The site contains resources, which can aid the user by helping them find other practitioners using the database, as well as a library of materials of best practices in the field.
Communication is established between the users and association by news updates on the front page of the portal, allowing each user to see the most up-to-date information in the field, as well as the mission and goals of the organization.

The main focus of the site is education. A course listing allows the user to see the various courses they may take. Each course offers step-by-step instructions with a guide at the beginning of the course. Users navigate through each course using a back and forth button system. At the end of each course section the user takes a quiz to see if the information they read was retained.

Along with the courses offered, users can see guides on certain issues and also review individualized transcripts. In order to obtain any credit for a course, the user has access to these transcripts to keep track of the courses that have been taken.

American Red Cross

The American Red Cross has approximately 35,000 employees. In order to maintain contact with each of these employees they need a means of communication and dissemination. Employees are located at local branches, in the field, and also at regional and national headquarters. In order to help these employees give up-to-date training, receive the newest in policy information, and obtain paperwork, the Red Cross has a closed online portal specifically for employees.

The closed portal contains different areas specific to the information that is being requested. Resources that are included on the site include benefits for the employee, manuals for instruction and proper usage of certain materials, directories of local Red
Cross branches, job opportunities that are currently available for existing employees, and local regional office pages.

The tools are online forms for filling out and also printing. The American Red Cross has many forms of paperwork that need to be filled out on a consistent basis. This area allows for that to be done electronically.

The education area includes areas for finance and how to raise money for a local branch. This area gives ideas on how to more effectively gain funding. One area of education content is on how to initiate volunteers. The major labor force of the Red Cross is that of volunteers and employees. The goal of this content area is direction on how to gain more. One other area of education is a help area for how to use specific components of technology.

The Red Cross also has another area of education called “Blended Learning”. The goal of blended learning is to train volunteers both online and in the classroom, offering in-class components to a course and then specific reading assignments online to complement the course. Not all branches have adopted this methodology as of yet, due to the technological infrastructure not being in place.

To maintain communication between employees and offices, a discussion forum exists to share ideas specifically on training methodology, ideas for training, and best practices. A daily news log is on the front of the page that gives the newest information on what is happening nationwide in terms of national relief efforts and the organization as a whole.
Campus Crusade

The goal of Campus Crusade for Christ is to change the college campus. This is done through interacting with students on a one-on-one and group basis. The staff members and employees on each of the campuses have access to a closed portal with different HRD resource components. These components serve in the area of tools, communication, resources, and education.

One of the main components of the website is tools with specific functionality in the area of finance. Each staff member and volunteer can have access to a credit card and the website serves as the area to obtain information on that card. Financial services are available in the area of support raising.

The resources on the portal are scarce. Users have the ability to access the website for Office Depot, receiving products at a discounted rate. Forms to aid in raising of funds are available and also a help section on how to operate the site.

Users can communicate with each other through the use of email. A directory is also available for finding other staff members. Users can also receive news on what is happening in a particular area of the world with the organization.

Foundation Center

The goal of the Foundation Center is to further the awareness of U.S. philanthropy. They do this by assisting other not-for-profit organizations with different areas such as grants, aid, and training. In order to connect with these organizations they
have an online portal specifically for not-for-profit organizations to access. Each organization needs to register and then may access areas that may interest them.

The portal contains resources such as (1) Frequently Asked Questions, (2) Internet links to other resources, (3) aides for the use of the site, as well as (4) an online bookshelf which helps them find other information on philanthropy and funding. Users have the opportunity to find funding opportunities and grants and also obtain grant applications for which they may apply.

Users have the opportunity to see a list of courses that are offered online. Each course gives a table of contents and is navigated using a back and forth method. Along with each page, the user has the opportunity to take notes on a “digital pad” and may provide feedback at any point. At the end of each course section a quiz is taken to assess retainment of information. A glossary of terms is also given to help in the users understanding.

To maintain communication with users, the portal offers a newsletter, which gives the latest information as well as specific bulletins. A discussion board also exists to offer collaboration between users and organizations.

United Way

The United Way is a grass roots organization that is run locally while some policies are routed from headquarters. The best practices that are given are based on local branches collaborating and providing information. This is done through a closed online portal that is specifically designed for employees of United Way. The portal contains many different tools, news, and resources for use.
Different resources that are available to employees are a job search, a directory of users, an IRS Agency directory, and branding resources. The purpose of the job search is to allow employees to see other opportunities within the organization. Branding resources are specifically designed to maintain guidelines for logo usage and design.

Tools that exist on the site are a calendar to help employees collaborate on scheduling meetings, forums and surveys for employees, and a help area for usage of the site. They also have IT Management links for help with technology at a local branch.

Education and training of employees is maintained through a training center, which offers some online courses and access to a list of instructors for use. “Webinars” are the main means of instruction, where those with a fast computer can watch live slide show presentations with voice-over. If the computer is not equipped, users may watch the slide show while dialing into a phone number to hear the “voice-over”.

Communication is maintained through news on the main page of the portal. E-Newsletters are sent out on a periodic basis. Discussion forums allow for collaboration between employees as well as various listservs depending on the topic. A morning email called Breakfast with United Way is disseminated daily, which offers up-to-date news, best practices in funding, and also what is currently happening politically.

Commonalities Observed

After reviewing each of the individual HRD resource websites, commonalities were observed between each of the sites. The commonalities are given in Table 4. The items listed by a star are those that were found on multiple sites.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>American Heart Association</th>
<th>American Red Cross</th>
<th>Campus Crusade</th>
<th>Foundation Center</th>
<th>United Way</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Credit Card</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Finding Funds*</td>
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<td>- Funding Calculators</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Resources</td>
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<td>- Job Opportunities</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Procedures &amp; Policies</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Benefits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Database of Info</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Mission and Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Course Listing*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quizzes*</td>
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Table 4. Chart showing commonalities between each organization site

Table 4 indicates the commonly used HRD resource components. Based on this information and the information presented by the literature review, a best practices model can be developed.

Summary

The previous chapter reviewed each organization that was contacted and the five organizations that were selected as exemplary not-for-profit organizations that met the criteria given. Each of the organizations that were selected as the final sample was then introduced with characteristics of each organization given.

Each of the sites that were reviewed had a specific tool that is beneficial to it’s own organization. One site may have a specific strength over another while another site
may be weak in a specific area. Some organizations have recently started the process of using online components while other organizations began the process a few years ago.

The American Heart Association has a site, which mostly focuses on education. This is due to the type of user that they cater too. Most of the users are practitioners in the field and desire to have a better understanding of heart disease. The site offers areas for improvement of their current skills and guides for procedures. One weakness of the site is that of communication. Practitioners have very little opportunity for collaboration with other practitioners.

The American Red Cross has strengths in education and resources. The organization is large with many branches spanning the world. The need for directory services and localized regional office sites help the organization as a whole stay more connected. The organization that has many offices also has many opportunities for other jobs and promotions. This is why the site has an area specifically for job opportunities that are available for current employees. The organization also tends to focus heavily on the area of education, specifically blended learning. This is due to the synchronous and asynchronous learning that they offer. Volunteers can take classes that use both classroom and online components and this site supports that. One area of weakness for the site is the area of tools. The organization does have forms for use but they tend to have very little other tools, specifically in the financial area.

Campus Crusade for Christ has strengths in finance and tools. The employees and volunteers of Campus Crusade each have the ability to look at their own financial status and also their credit card information. One of the tools that is helpful is a directory of staff members which allow for an exchange of contact information. The organization
also has an exemplary news area, which allows the user to become more motivated in their work ethic, due to the success stories that are features.

The Foundation Center caters specifically to other not-for-profit organizations. The goal of the site is to help these organizations increase in knowledge about philanthropy and funding. The primary areas on which the site focuses is funding and education. Areas that users need help with are how to find funding and obtain grants. Through the use of education, each one of these organizations can get a better understanding of funding and philanthropy. One area of weakness for the site is that of communication between organizations. They do have a discussion board but it does not seem to be emphasized. The need for these users to collaborate seems to be crucial and more emphasis needs to be placed on how other organizations are doing.

The United Way is an organization that works mostly from the bottom up. They are a grassroots movement with many of the decisions being made at the local level with a local board, and then collaborated with at a regional level. The areas of strength are communication and resources. Collaboration is important with these organizations so they tend to share ideas through listserves and discussion forums. Each branch does have national information through the use of email and news on the site. Each branch is connected with each other branch through these different modules. The other area of resources allows each branch to keep a uniform identity with the other branches. This is through the use of branding resources and a directory of users. The greatest area of weakness is education. While the site does offer access to classes that can be taken which are synchronous, they do not have class offerings that are available online at any time. The use of Webinars takes place on a specific schedule.
After each organization HRD resource website was reviewed, individual components from these sites were shown to be more prominent. A review of each site showed commonalities between the sites. These commonalities products identified as to which HRD components should be within a specific HRD resource website.
CHAPTER 5 – BEST PRACTICES, PROPOSED GENERAL MODELS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter describes the conclusions reached by the researcher in light of the literature review conducted and the research findings. The chapter includes the following sections: (a) best practices, (b) proposed general model, (c) implications, (d) topics for future research, and (e) final considerations.

Best Practices

The following suggestions for best practices flow from the literature review and the information gathered from reviewing five exemplary not-for-profit HRD resource websites.

Strategic Alignment

Walker (2001) wrote that the overall site should follow a strategic alignment with a clear and systematic organization scheme. All five websites showed some form of strategic alignment. United Way very closely followed their strategic alignment for their organization by gearing the content on their website towards the local chapters, which is reflective of a grassroots organization.

Appropriate Methods

Online training sites should have an appropriate method for instruction. This includes various means for delivering instruction such as videos, outlined instructions, policies, and procedures. Appropriate methods should also be used for areas of
communication. These may include things such as live chat, video and discussion boards, as well as activities to be performed. A good example of this was through the United Way, which had multiple ways of communication for their employees such as discussion boards, daily e-mails and e-newsletters.

Well-Designed Segmentation

HRD resource websites should have well-designed segmentation. When planning a site of this nature it is important to realize that smaller chunks are easier to digest for the user and information should be grouped with a user-friendly environment. Information should be in a modular fashion. An example of a site that showed good segmentation was that of the American Heart Association. The site is created for practitioners and has very specific courses to aid in the development of executives, depending on what they need at that time.

Personalization

HRD resource websites should allow for personalization. A site that caters to employees of an organization should have the ability to be involved with the process. This can be done through the user being allowed to access their own records and set up events. Managers should have the ability to rate their employees and enroll their employees in courses. Users can make changes to their own benefit programs, participate in benefit enrollment, and select training programs to further education. Users can also have the ability to investigate job postings and alter information such as an address or marital status. The overall goal of the site should be to help the user support the goals of
the organization.

An example of a site that has personalization is Campus Crusade for Christ. One of the primary resources on their site is to allow the user to access their financial status and also their credit card information. The site is specifically catered to the user.

**Proposed General Models**

No one ideal model exists for any not-for-profit organization that wishes to deploy any type of online training and/or HRD site. Each organization is unique and thus has to have a site that fits within that specific organization’s goals and needs. Based on the sites that have been reviewed and the literature provided, some basic principles can be understood about what should go into a site. Based on my findings, two proposed models were created for a small and large organization.

**Small Organization**

Based on the findings, a model for a HRD resource website was created for a smaller organization. Smaller organizations have much less resources to draw from. They will have a smaller website to start from but may have the resources eventually to build more models off their site. One area of focus is finances. Modules like financial reimbursement and benefits may be limited but could be considered necessary. Whether the organization is small or large, financial reimbursement is needed.

Based on the findings, another area that is considered to be more prominent is that of education. A small organization’s users may benefit from an education area where they can gain greater knowledge in their positions. Education should be focused on that
course training in areas such as software and empowering the volunteer. Employees of a small organization should gain training in areas such as recruiting the volunteer, training the volunteer, obtaining funds, organizing philanthropies, and making connections.

Resources would focus on procedures, policies, and the mission and goals of the organization. Any organization that is smaller needs to set standards to start from and making these clear is crucial. The mission of the organization should be clear to all users and in an easily accessible area.

Communication would then piggyback off of this with discussion forums that would pertain specifically to these topics. This will help for collaboration of ideas. News would also be included at the forefront of the site to help current users understand the larger picture of the organization.

Some tools that may be included would be forms for easy distribution and completion and also a specific help area to help users navigate the site. A concept map of this is given below as Figure 5.1
Large Organization

Based on the findings, a model for a HRD resource website was created for a larger organization. Larger organizations have many more resources. An organization of a larger size may start with a smaller site but then may build off of that site with more components.

The need for communication is even more crucial. A site should include a discussion forum and news but may expand beyond that. This may include things such as daily emails for communication and e-newsletters. Another forum for communication may be that of listserves, which are tailored to a specific topic. Collaboration could be done from branch to branch and user-to-user based on discussion forums and also listservs. This would allow for specific communication on a topic.

Figure 5.1. Concept Map of a small not-for-profit organization site
Education would be done through multiple venues. A course listing would give access to courses that model those of a smaller organization but would include many more options. Examples of this would be how to recruit volunteers, empowering the volunteer, proper design for synchronous training, asynchronous training or blended learning. Quizzes would be used at the end of each module and possibly each section to aid in the retention of knowledge for the user. Special live classes could be conducted using chatrooms, live video, and webinars. A list of guidelines would help showcase common procedures. Transcripts would be given to help the user track their own progress through the different courses.

Resources could be increased, with a search functionality and branding resources. As an organization expands, the need for a uniform look may be more crucial. Branding resources would allow for that uniformity. Resources may also include job opportunities for promotion or parallel moves. Benefits would be listed with how to change those benefits. A database of all the information listed on the site would allow for quick navigation. The mission and goals of the organization as well as procedures and policies would help all users understand at the same level. Some organizations may need specific branding resources to help every branch keep a uniform look.

Tools that could be included on the site would be a calendar for planning events, a help area for navigation of the site, and also surveys. Forms would exist to aid in quick completion out of paperwork and easy access to forms. See Figure 5.2.
Figure 5.2. Concept Map of larger organization site

Both the small and the large organization would share many of the same components but the larger organization would build off the modules of the small. This could be a natural progression as an organization grows. Each organization does have to pick and choose which modules to use based on the user of the site as well as the mission and goals of the organization. For example, the American Red Cross may choose not to include information on finding funds due to the fact that each user is a practitioner in their own entity. Each organization has a different type of user. Some are employees while others may be volunteers. Others may not have any direct affiliation with the organization.
Implications

The previous models proposed have implications. One implication for these models is that the models can be used as a starting point for an organization that does not have any type of HRD resource website. Many not-for-profit organizations have little or no online training for their employees and/or volunteers. This model could be used as a launching pad to conduct a feasibility study on a particular organization. From the feasibility study, an organization could then discuss what modules they would want to include from the model given.

Existing organizations can use the previous proposed model to build on their current HRD resource websites. Organizations may have some components developed but could glean ideas for other components that could be built upon. One organization may have a heavy focus in communication but have no modules in the area of education. The previous models could give the student ideas on what they could add to their site that might be beneficial to the organization.

Existing organizations may also use the previous proposed models to aid in the remodeling of their current HRD resource websites. The organization may find their current site is considered to be outdated, inappropriately designed, or lacking features. The previous models could be used in aiding the redesigning of their site. From the previous model, the organization could conduct a new feasibility study to then determine what models they would like on an their organization site.
**Topics for Future Research**

Topics for future research could be to conduct a specific needs analysis of an organization. Each organization is unique and thus has to choose which modules to include. This would include an evaluation of the user and the mission and goals of the organization. Other topics may be to study specific learning styles to find which type may work best for online learning. One way to build on that would be to evaluate the users learning style with the best learning style used. Then match the two to give the best learning and navigation for the user of a specific organization.

The sites that were reviewed gave little information on handicapped accessibility. Further study could be conducted on how to create or improve a site of this nature for handicapped accessibility. Specific features might be the ability for the site to read text to the user, zooming capabilities or keyboard strokes for those that have maneuverability issues with the mouse.

Different options for delivery could be investigated such as content management systems, discussion forums and survey wizards. Companies exist which offer particular services for websites, such as Campus Crusade for Christ offering credit card services through another company. These could each be investigated to find out the positives and negatives of each.

Other areas for future research would be an extended study of the technology that is being used as each year passes. Each of these websites is increasing in size and components. Another study could be to investigate for-profit organizations and develop a
best practices from those sites, specifically the components that could benefit not-for-profit organizations.

Technologies such as podcasting and video chat are increasing with new formats being introduced monthly. These forms of communication and collaboration could be investigated to see the pros and cons of each. Other forms of collaboration that could be investigated could be that of file transfer programs, and server access to share files and resources.
References


