



project health

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— Lisa Schorr, Executive Director, Project HEALTH

Project HEALTH gains efficiencies with WebEx WebOffice across 4 metropolitan offices



INDUSTRY

Healthcare

SUMMARY

Project HEALTH — providing fitness and nutrition programs and health services advocacy for low-income families — uses WebEx WebOffice to facilitate operations and improve productivity among 4 regional offices.

ABOUT PROJECT HEALTH

Line of Business

Non-profit Healthcare

Headquarters

Boston, MA

Number of Employees

6 Full Time Staff and 300 Volunteers

WebEx WebOffice User
Since April 2004

Customer Business Profile

Project HEALTH — a nationwide volunteer organization providing fitness and nutrition programs and health services advocacy for low-income families - is using WebEx WebOffice to gain efficiencies in operations among its Boston, New York, Providence, R.I. and Washington D.C. offices.

Project HEALTH unites medical centers, community agencies, and undergraduate students at major universities to provide underserved families with a total package of services in an effort to interrupt the well-established link between poverty and poor health. “With six full time staff members, and 300 volunteers, Project HEALTH has provided over 75,000 hours of service in the past year alone -- yielding a substantial impact on the lives of 3,000 families in these four cities,” says Lisa Schorr, Executive Director of Project HEALTH.

The Situation

At Project HEALTH, it is crucial that work is shared among its 4 offices in 4 regions.

“Before we had WebEx WebOffice, the technology side of that was really hard for us,” says Schorr. “We couldn’t network. Each of our offices is based in a different hospital and we were doing an enormous amount of emailing. Essentially, if you wanted to know what was going on at all four sites, you’d have to phone someone

at each site. It was incredibly time consuming.”

“Beyond that, people were duplicating work, because they didn’t realize what had already been done. And, some of our best work was on the personal computers of student volunteers whose turnover rate was, naturally, 2 to 3 years.”

For all these reasons, Project HEALTH started looking for a web-based intranet solution to share files, assure continuity and achieve efficiencies for all of its sites.

The Solution

Project HEALTH narrowed its search for an intranet solution down to WebEx WebOffice and another company that would have cost at least \$30,000 per year — that was nearly 10% of Project HEALTH’s budget at that time. The organization chose WebEx WebOffice because it was cost effective, simple to use, and available to volunteers via a simple internet connection. This way, they could immediately begin sharing information from anywhere.

The Benefits

WebEx WebOffice makes a big economic difference for Project HEALTH. “When you rely on donated funds, you have to run a very streamlined organization,” says Schorr. “We have to generate a lot of activity for very little money. WebOffice’s price is affordable for

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us, but we don't look at it as a cut-rate solution. It's what we want and it also happens to be very inexpensive.”

WebOffice saves Project HEALTH a tremendous amount of money by the way the pricing is structured. “If one of our volunteers gets very active with it, then we create an account for him or her. If another volunteer is not very active and is just going to access a document now and then, we have that volunteer share an account with someone else,” says Schorr.

Today, the organization is using WebOffice most to share files between offices and volunteers.

The organization currently runs 21 different programs in 4 cities and is in the process of defining standards and best practices for all of its programs, with input from many stakeholders: volunteers, doctors, university contacts, families, and community organizations. “Our Student Advisory Board, with members from each site, is taking charge of getting input from the volunteers by publishing questionnaires and conducting focus groups. There is no way they could be working on this project together without the ability to post and share files on a folder in our WebOffice.”

“Before adopting WebOffice, we were sharing files on the password protected section of our public website. A volunteer without a technology background might accidentally disrupt a file, enter unwanted changes into other files, or even wipe out our entire site,” said Schorr. “WebOffice, with its permission-based access, gives us the ability to provide different privileges to different individuals.”

Also, before WebOffice, the organization had students put systems and databases together with fairly advanced technology, but it became a burden, because when the students moved on, others didn't

know how to work with the systems and couldn't retrieve the data.

But now, with WebOffice, somebody who is comfortable just in a basic way on a computer can sit down and design a database that somebody else can readily pick up, and if a field is out of date, eliminate it and add a new field. It's all very accessible.

“Most of our student volunteers are pretty savvy in terms of using the Internet and computers, but they don't necessarily have a technology background. The fact that they can sign up as a volunteer and immediately sit right down and access a file in the WebOffice Document Manager, or input to a database file, makes a huge difference to us.”

“We want all our volunteers to share their work, not just a few people who understand technology. We want volunteers to be able to work from home computers that don't necessarily all have the same version of Microsoft Access or even the same operating system. We don't have a situation where we're issuing people computers and we can set standards for them. WebOffice, with its web-based access frees us from all these concerns.”

For instance, Project HEALTH's new Contacts Database on WebOffice will include information on all volunteers, alumni, mentors, donors and other contacts and it will be accessible to everyone who needs it.

Altogether, WebOffice is making everything easier and more efficient. “It's saving us a lot of time, but the bigger gain is the increase in work quality; people's work benefits so much from collaboration with others in similar positions. WebOffice allows us to really leverage the fact that we are a multi-site program.”

Sharing Promotional Materials

Many of Project HEALTH's programs not only improve children's health but enable them to be active and have fun. The organization uses photos to communicate the energy of the programs to potential partners and funders, as well as to share the fun with volunteers, children in the programs, and families.

“Now, we post the photos on our WebOffice site, and that way everyone can access them. For instance, if our Washington, D.C. office is producing a flyer for their Asthma Swimming Program and they want a good picture of children in the pool, they can go into WebOffice and access photos from any of our four Asthma Swimming Programs in Boston, Providence, New York, or D.C. and use those.”

Training Programs

Now, when preparing for a training session on a particular topic, Project HEALTH executives can simply go into the WebOffice training folder and look at all the past training sessions on that topic, from national and all of its local sites, and pick and choose the training exercises they want.

“We're actually using WebOffice to try to encourage people to change the way they work and think about their work. For instance, what you are doing with your program for children with sickle cell disease in Washington D.C. may be more relevant to the sickle cell program in New York, than to a fitness and nutrition program in D.C. We are trying to encourage people to communicate across sites and work across boundaries on common issues and programs,” says Schorr.

Online Alumni Database

Project HEALTH is now 8 years old and has established a special database to track and stay in touch with alumni of the

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organization. “As the number of our alumni increases and our program gets more intensive, we’ll be able to expand our WebOffice and its uses without making any huge architectural changes. The flexibility of WebEx WebOffice — to use as much of it as we need or want and no more or no less — is very valuable to us.”

“WebOffice has proved helpful in so many ways. In a meeting recently, a new volunteer was asking many, many questions — sidetracking the agenda. Another volunteer responded by walking up to the whiteboard and writing the address of our WebOffice on it, telling the new volunteer to go there to get all the answers to his questions.”

Advantages for Fundraising

WebOffice has also been helpful in documenting what Project HEALTH is accomplishing, and communicating that information to the people and institutions that provide its funding.

HIGHLIGHTS

- WebOffice allows Project HEALTH to leverage work performed in different programs across multiple areas. It saves time and increases work quality, as people’s work benefits from collaboration with others in similar positions.
- The WebOffice Database Manager allows Project HEALTH to aggregate statistics from its hospital-based programs, such as the Family Help Desk, where hundreds of families come in for help. These statistics provide Project HEALTH with the data foundation needed to justify requests for funding from institutions and individuals.
- The WebOffice Document Manager facilitates training programs across multiple sites.
- WebOffice provides the flexibility in pricing that allows Project HEALTH to ramp up, as needed, on the amount of storage it purchases beyond the basic service — saving Project HEALTH a tremendous amount of money.



The WebOffice Database Manager allows the organization to aggregate statistics from hospital-based programs, such as the Family Help Desk, where it has hundreds of families coming in for help. WebOffice allows Project HEALTH to keep track of people coming to the Family Help Desk for assistance with health-related issues such as food stamps, housing, and immigration status.

“Keeping track of how many families come in, what issues they ask about, and what kinds of help and resources the program provides helps us to keep the program focused and know what types of additional resources we need. It’s powerful to be able to update the hospitals we work with about the needs of the patient population, and it gives us the data foundation we need to justify requests for funding from the institutions and individuals that support us,” says Schorr.

Staffing Advantages

Project HEALTH currently has about 50 WebEx WebOffice users. “I really appreciate that WebOffice comes with its own tech support, and our volunteers can go to live support at WebOffice — because otherwise those questions would be coming to me. Not that they’ve needed to use live support that much, because WebOffice is so straightforward.”

“As we looked around to find a suite of online collaboration tools, we wanted to have our technology mirror the way we worked. There weren’t too many options that didn’t require a full time IT person on staff. And, when you only have 6 full time staff people on 4 sites, that’s not an option.”

Indeed, Project HEALTH’s small staff, with their 300 volunteers, manages a very impressive range of programs and WebOffice is an integral part that management.

“We’re trying to accomplish many things — working to promote health and well being through programs ranging beyond medical services advocacy to nutrition and fitness, to lifestyle changes, to disease prevention.”

“WebOffice is a mission critical tool that helps us attain across the board efficiencies in all of these programs,” Schorr said. Project HEALTH is now entering a growth phase and expects to launch five more sites by 2008. “WebOffice will be a vital piece of our expansion process.”