

North American NGOs at the IT Crossroads

Lessons Learned and Pathways for Success

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Overview of Talk

— [My Background

— [Environmental Context / Industry Trends

— [Agency Entrepreneurialism

— [Successful IT Strategies contribute to Successful
Communication Strategies and Better Service Delivery

— [Outcomes-Based Service Delivery

— [Lessons from Successful IT Strategies

My Background

— [Front-Line service with High-Risk Youth

— [Community Development planning and advocacy

— [Development of Community Health Centres

— [Fund-raising / Development Campaigns

— [Development of Outcomes Indicators

— [Software Development and Implementations

Challenges and Opportunities

— [First Stage - the “easy years” of ongoing government funding, minimal reporting requirements

— [Second Stage - year-to-year program-based grants with increased government reporting requirements

— [Third Stage - severe cutbacks in government funding, program contraction

— [Fourth Stage - consolidation, mergers and entrepreneurialism - “only the strong/ creative survive”

The Age of Entrepreneurialism

— [Doing “good work” isn’t enough anymore

— [Diversification of funding sources

— [Agencies that merged now have a broad range of disparate services and cover large dispersed geographic areas

The Age of Entrepreneurialism

— [Search for new funding streams - OW/ ODSP, Employment Support Services, EAP/ EFAP

— [Need for inter-agency collaboration

— [If resources are scarce, for goodness sake, invest them wisely! (eg. the 25 cent copay)

Sound IT Strategies = Growth

— [It's time to "prove your worth"

— [Need to do "more with less"

— [Bringing the whole agency under one IT roof -
standardization of data and processes

— [Streamlining administration costs through effective low-cost
IT tools and practices

— [Data collection and reporting isn't just for funders

— [Implementing outcomes evaluation strategies

Value of Outcomes Evaluation

- [Demonstrates the change that your agency is effecting in key areas of people's lives

- [Specific and measurable

- [Client satisfaction with service

- [Outcomes results inform:

- internal program planning and management

- quality assurance for stakeholders / trustees

- your story to share with the community

Sharing your Story

— [Good data = a complete and compelling story

— [Good data = coordinated, effective and efficient client service

— [Powerful tool in gaining new grants/ funding

— [Powerful tool for continuous improvement

— [Enables inter-agency benchmarking and development of best practices

Better IT = Better Service

— [Coordination of service - single / instant access point, consolidated service files

— [Agency ownership vs. worker/ program ownership

— [Easier to implement high privacy / security standards

— [Comprehensive auditing of case files is enabled

— [Easier to demonstrate the meeting of accreditation and legal standards

— [Better use of staff resources - eg. cancellations

Pathways to Success

— [Know your requirements - can't get what you want if you don't now what you want!

— [Know your processes - don't be tied to legacies of the past

— [If you don't use it, don't capture it!

— [Staff compliance is key

— [Don't get boxed in- data portability is vital

Attributes of IT Success

— [Security is paramount -

— Firewall

— Lock down workstations

— Think outside windows-world

— Firefox

— Auto-updating anti-virus and OS patches

— Password vigilance

— Watch the cache

— Email is not secure

— Deleting is not the last word

Attributes of CMS

— [Thin Requirements

- Platform independent
- Ease of maintenance
- Low hardware costs / requirements
- No version/ legacy issues
- Easy updates

Attributes of CMS

— [Ease of Use

— Models sound practices

— Easy to ramp up / add new users

— [Well-supported

— [Maximum Uptime

— [Secure

— [Access to data on a need to know basis

Conclusion

— [Even in the most cash-strapped and resource-poor environments, effective IT investments can yield powerful results:

- more coordinated, responsive client service
- more efficient reporting
- enabling an agency to be entrepreneurial
- contributes to a complete “picture” of agency operations and impact
- enables high standards around security, auditing and clinical practice
- enables you to “connect” workers in the field and in different locations

Conclusion

— [Even in the most cash-strapped and resource-poor environments, effective IT investments can yield powerful results:

- provides the basis for continuous quality improvement
- enables you to demonstrate the impact of service on client's lives
- enables you to standardize data-sets and processes across many programs
- enables you to serve **MORE** clients with the same resources
- enables you to spend more **DIRECT** time with clients
- enables you to powerfully **SHARE YOUR STORY!**