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**Technology in Nonprofit
Organizations: High Tech meets
High Touch**

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The Database Revolution

- The creation and widespread application of database tools has been one of the major uses of computer technology, revolutionizing our ability to dynamically analyze large amounts of data. The information revolution (really a database revolution) has greatly affected business and commerce, recreation, education, security, and social interaction.

Health Care

- Although the rate at which information technology has been incorporated into the health care system has been less rapid than predicted 10 or 20 years ago, it is now clear that it will be an increasingly important part of this system at all levels.

Human Services

- By contrast, when most people think of community-based social and human services, they think of youth intervention programs, senior centers, homeless shelters and the like. There are a wide variety of missions, operations, and sizes of these types of organizations. Despite their differences, like the health care system, community-based agencies all share a common need: information.

The Literature

- Appropriate implementation of information technology (IT) can help create a more efficient, less costly, and higher quality service delivery environment for community service organizations. While the literature on technology adoption in community services organizations is very limited, relevant studies and reports on embracement of technology in the healthcare industry can be compared and applied to other types of services.

Recent Studies

- Bates et. al. (1998)
- Klein, et al. (1999)
- Evans, et al. (1998)
- WSJ June 2002
- Forbes September 2002

Present Study

We attempted to evaluate the following major questions:

- Although the technology exists to enhance service provision in community based agencies are most organizational staff either untrained or under trained to utilize client management and networking software efficiently and effectively?
- Are most organizational staff in Community Based Social Service Nonprofits reluctant to embrace technological solutions?

Methods

Data was evaluated from a random sample of 11 social services agencies that are part of a unique County program called FACT. FACT is a partnership between over 60 community-based organizations and the County Social Services Agency. Since 1994, FACT has provided support services to children and families through community-based collaboratives operating Family Resource Centers (FRC's). There are 27 FRC's in the County. Each FRC resembles a hub through which community based services are coordinated.

Results

- Preliminary results indicated that a majority (73%) of the Coordinators stated that each person in the organization (who needs it) had adequate access to a computer. FRC's varied considerably in terms of physical size, number of staff, resources and training.

Quantitative

- Only 64% of those surveyed said that their computer equipment was in working order. Only 28% had a standard workstation configuration. In fact, a majority of the FRCs relied on donated computers, printers and software. One Coordinator stated that in terms of technology, “it is catch-as-catch can”. Sixty-four percent of the FRCs had either Ethernet, DSL or Cable connections to the Internet. But for the remainder, dial-up modems proved slow, difficult to use and had limited access. In fact, only 45% of staff that needed email accounts had them.

Quantitative

- While 100% of the Centers kept “critical and/or confidential” data on the computers, only 64% had a backup strategy. Less than half (45%) believed that their staff members were using technology effectively. Finally, a majority (73%) stated they needed better/updated systems to increase efficiency in their organization and better communicate with staff, clients and affiliate organizations.

Qualitative

- **Question:** What is the staff's interest in technology, and their interest in expanding their knowledge base in this area?
- Pretty open and interested in learning new things.
- Might be resistant at first, but most could be excited by an opportunity to learn.
- Most are open to technology & training, especially younger staff.
- One or two are.
- Time is a problem.
- If presented properly, basic computer classes would be great.

Qualitative

- **Question:** Would better computer technology allow your organization to grow and have more opportunities to fulfill your service mission?
- Data sharing could reduce staff data tracking time. Also, volunteers do not currently receive training, accuracy of computer usage and data input is sometimes an issue.
- Training
- Absolutely, efficiency, marketing materials, printing is big we need better printing.
- Less job frustration. Communication.
- Less time spent writing reports/more time for clients and people.
- Yes, more of knowledge base, Internet. Jobs for clients, Training for clients. All found on Internet. So much info on Internet is helpful. Access to info would be tremendously helpful.

Conclusions

- **Training**
- **Grants**
- **Academic Programs**
- **Questions?**