



Country or Region: United States

Industry: Not-for-profit

Customer Profile: Boston Center for Adult Education is the oldest, not-for-profit adult education center in New England. Since its founding in 1933, the Center has held to the vision of its founder, Dorothy Hewitt, offering a place where “small groups of men and women would meet together in living room settings to learn, discuss, and create for the sheer pleasure of doing so.”

Business Situation: Agency was struggling with an out-of-date registration software and projects that were not being completed.

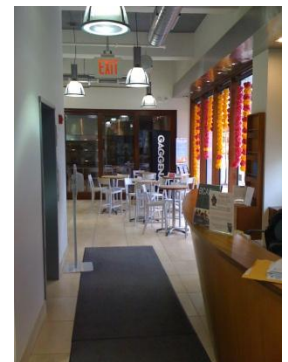
Solution: BCAE hired KDSA Consulting to maximize efficiencies and to act as the IT department to get projects back on track.

Benefits:

- * Work with a trusted advisor
- * Projects completed timely
- * Increased end user satisfaction
- * Easy to use registration software

KDSA REGISTERS MAJOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS FOR BOSTON CENTER FOR ADULT EDUCATION

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Susan Brown, Executive Director, BCAE

Overview

Some lessons can be taught in a classroom. Some have to be chalked up to experience. That's something the Boston Center for Adult Education (BCAE) knows very well, especially after its experience trying to fix its antiquated class registration system. It took months of working with the wrong people, exceeding budgets and seeing few positive results before BCAE administrators learned the error of their ways and turned to the expert hands-on project management team at KDSA Consulting.

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Throughout its history, BCAE has remained responsive to the changing needs of a diverse community, serving as: a site for volunteer wartime efforts in the

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1940’s; a haven for social policy debate in the 1960’s; and as a resource for personal and professional growth in today’s challenging economic climate. Today, BCAE offers literally hundreds of courses and programs that meet a wide range of needs: from Basic Cooking and Feature Story Writing to Modern Make-up Techniques and Web-based Marketing.

Situation: A lesson in frustration.

About three years ago, BCAE found itself at a crossroads with their existing registration system. They knew the registration system was antiquated, and they needed a new system that would be more user-friendly for both students and Center administrators. BCAE offered more classes than ever before, but registering for all these classes was becoming a lesson in frustration.

Susan Brown, Executive Director at the Boston Center for Adult Education, recognized the need for a change. “We saw a need for outside assistance,” she said. “Our entire registration system was tied into an outdated office management software package. E-mail was going down. Our phone system was untrustworthy. We knew we needed to bring our registration on-line, but we didn’t have the capabilities to do the job ourselves.”

Unfortunately, BCAE’s first step was a misstep. The organization had turned to a company that convinced them they needed to custom-write and build a new registration system.

“In retrospect, there were a lot of red flags with this company, such as requiring 90% of the payment up-front,” Brown recalled. “A few months into the project, it became clear that the normal project management methods weren’t being followed, questions weren’t being answered and certain markers weren’t being met. Six months into the project, they were going way over our budget, and not much had been accomplished. We realized we had to bite the bullet and start with a fresh approach.”

Solution

Fortunately, BCAE already had a familiarity with KDSA Consulting, LLC. Based in North Andover, MA, KDSA is one of the region’s leading and most

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experienced IT firms, dedicated to helping customers develop, implement and maintain systems that drive revenue, control costs, and reduce risk. The company has three divisions – Managed Services, Business Solutions, and Technology Solutions – and has supported companies in a wide variety of industries, including many not-for-profit organizations.

About a year earlier, KDSA had performed an assessment of BCAE’s IT network, including e-mail servers, data storage and back-up, and desktop interfaces. KDSA strategized with BCAE’s IT personnel and helped them to put a more robust system in place.

Brown now recognized the need to work with KDSA again -- this time to resolve their registration issues.

“We already had a tremendous comfort level with KDSA. We knew that they would take the time to meet with us and ask the pertinent questions,” she explained. “First they gained an understanding of how our registration process works; then they put together specs for a packaged registration system that would address our registration shortcomings. We worked with KDSA to create flowcharts for the way we needed information to move from students to administration to teachers to accounting. We wanted someone who could understand both sides: our business and theirs. That’s where the project manager from KDSA was so valuable.”

The email component of the old registration system had been completely entrenched in an out of date software package. KDSA was able to completely disengage the email component from the old system and transfer it to Microsoft Exchange®. They oversaw every aspect of the transition; no email was lost and it went smoothly.

Brown said, “KDSA helped us get our desktops up to speed, install proper security and spam filters, and upgrade all our capabilities so we now have a multi-functional email and secure site. KDSA didn’t just look at it from a computer tech perspective; they looked at it from a business perspective, taking all our needs and business functions into account.”

Addressing new needs

Any major business change can be traumatic. But when you're moving out of the location that's served as your business's home for over 67 years, there's going to be some tension in the air.

It was at the same time that the BCAE was converting its registration system that its historic Gamble Mansion address on Commonwealth Avenue was sold to a private buyer. The Center was soon renovating a second property at 122 Arlington Street in Boston, to become the new home for most of its classes and administrative offices.

KDSA, in an ever-expanding role at the Center, made this transition to the new address far less stressful by managing all IT aspects of the move. KDSA oversaw the installation of all the wiring, monitors and security cameras. The IT group also set up highly functional and attractive Apple Mac kiosks in the front lobby, making class registration extremely convenient. Plus, KDSA set up wireless routers in the building, transforming the new location's lounge into a comfortable place to go on-line and get work done.

Putting the IT in "Team"

What started as a consultation has turned into an on-going rewarding relationship between KDSA and BCAE. Today, a KDSA IT professional is on location at BCAE at least once a week. Remote help is always available through KDSA's Client Care Center which all employees can access through an on-line support ticketing system. Recent projects have included upgrading the Center's accounting software and possible deployment of Microsoft Office SharePoint® as a collaboration platform for board members via the intranet.

"We have used KDSA for many purposes with great success," Brown concluded. "Our association has been multi-faceted, to say the least. We really view them as our IT department. They are like a staff member - a staff member that's very passionate about their work."

For more information about KDSA Consulting, LLC, please contact us at 978.989.0790 or visit us at www.kdsaconsulting.com