side by side Kids encouraging hearts and inspiring minds

Side by Side Kids is a faith-based, afterschool and mentoring program anchored in one of Austin's undeserved neighborhoods. The organization is so-named because it journeys side-by-side with kids from kindergarten to high school, encouraging and equipping them to reach their potential as the leaders of tomorrow.

The life-blood of the organization is the large group of committed volunteers from different organizations who contribute their time, talents and knowledge to help kids reach their full potential. For example, with the instrumental support from the University of Texas professors, Side by Side Kids developed an effective afterschool curriculum for upwards of 150 students.

THE CHALLENGE

Amidst the economic crisis, Side by Side Kids found itself lost in the chaos. Due to a variety of reasons, including the loss of funding and a weakening economy, the new Executive Director, Silvestre "Sly" Guzman, realized that a renewed focus on rebuilding the organization's support needed to be priority number one. The organization, however, did not have the right software tools needed in order to help the rebuilding effort.

Side by Side Kids was using an installed version of Blackbaud's Raiser's Edge to track donations and constituents, but its clear weakness was outreach. In addition, the system had been newly acquired and therefore staff turnover occurred in the interim, causing confusion and frustration with organization inability to use it effectively. Current staff had not received the sufficient training and the complexity of the software interface meant that, in Sly's words, "It was just gathering dust in the corner."

SIDE BY SIDE KIDS RESULTS

Highly intuitive user experience requiring minimal training for non-technical staff

Internet based software gained huge efficiency for the organization allowing staff to focus on their mission and not managing an IT data center

Side by Side Kids now offers self-service features to volunteers allowing them to update their information directly on the web

Not only was staff unable to use the software due to inadequate training and product complexity, but the cost of maintenance to receive ongoing product support was prohibitive for an organization of their size. An additional distress was the difficulty of running the software in-house with all the IT headaches that entails. Side by Side Kids struggled to apply the patches and upgrades required to keep the software current.

THE SOLUTION

Side by Side Kids had been looking around for a solution that would propel the organization to success, but was unsuccessful finding anything that matched the needs of their organization perfectly. Eventually, a board member suggested that they take a look at Convio Common Ground as an option. After Sly looked into Convio, he soon became a believer.

"I was so impressed by what I saw of Common Ground, that I instantly knew my search was over."

— Silvestre Guzman, Executive Director

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CHOOSING CONVIO COMMON GROUND

Among the biggest selling points was a highly intuitive user experience which would mean minimal training requirements for the non-technical staff. The Convio Common Ground platform was modern with a clean web-like design which staffers were intuitively comfortable using.

Another big selling point was that Common Ground was delivered over the Internet and did not have to be installed and managed in-house. This represented a huge gain in efficiency for the organization, as staff would be able to focus on building support for the organization instead of trying to manage an IT data center. The benefit of anyone being able to access the system at any time and from any location was huge. Now Side by Side Kids staff would be able to access the system from the road or from home; only Internet connection and a browser were required. And one of the most important deciding factors to nonprofits is cost. Not only is Common Ground considerably cheaper than Raiser's Edge and other competitors, but the costs over time are very predictable which makes it easy to budget for.

RESULTS

The organization has been using the product for over two years now, and has seen continued success from choosing Convio Common Ground. The excellent customer service has made some of the most impactful and personal results.

"Convio's customer service is the best I have ever seen from a software company. Whenever I talk to other organizations looking at Common Ground, I always mention the great customer support".

— Silvestre Guzman, Executive Director

In addition, the product is constantly evolving keeping the organization in tune with today's technology and keeping them relatable with their constituents. "We have recently upgraded to CGF which has some great built-in fundraising tools like super easy-to-create web forms for capturing online donations and publishing events". The organization now has the ability to offer self-service features to volunteers so that they can update their information directly on the web and has created a large advantage for them. "Best of all is the integration with Vertical Response for email campaigns to build our base of support. And everything is automatically integrated with the database!"

And finally, another major advantage of Common Ground, that Side by Side Kids had not really banked on originally, is the fact that they can use it for much more than storing donor data. "Now we can store all kinds of mission-related data like information on volunteers and project data, along with our donor data," explained Sly. "Everything is now in the same place. For example, we use CG to track the demographics of all the kids in our afterschool programs, and we can easily provide data on the number of kid's tutored, academic improvement, and other metrics on outcomes. This is crucial when talking do donors about program efficacy".

ABOUT CONVIO

Convio is a leading provider of on-demand constituent engagement solutions that enable nonprofit organizations to maximize the value of every relationship. With Convio constituent engagement solutions, nonprofits can more effectively raise funds, advocate for change and cultivate relationships with donors, activists, volunteers, event participants, alumni and other constituents. Convio offers two open, cloud-based constituent engagement solutions: Convio Common Ground CRM™ for small- and mid-sized nonprofits and Convio Luminate™ for enterprise nonprofits. Headquartered in Austin, Texas with offices across the United States and United Kingdom, Convio serves more than 1,500 nonprofit organizations globally. Convio is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol CNVO. For more information visit www.convio.com.

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