

Positioning service pilot application

Columbus State Community College, Business and Industry Training Department
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February 28, 2002

1. *Considering the many goals you might have with respect to further developing corporate, government and other external markets in your area, which of the following are most important to you and why?*

We have identified four goals that are currently most important to us:

- a. *Identify the fastest growing and emerging program opportunities appropriate to my delivery capabilities*
- b. *Identify markets in which current products can be adapted to meet new needs*
- c. *Secure estimates of potential enrollments in specified program areas*
- d. *Determine if the market that I would like to develop sees my institution as a credible vendor*

We have selected these four goals as most important based on data researched as part of our strategic planning process as well as additional information on market trends and our service history in the Greater Columbus market.

Strategic Plan Development

Columbus State's Business and Industry Department began a strategic planning process in May of 2001. Our goal was to create a 3-year plan that would guide business development, help us to develop and better utilize our internal resources, and confirm that we were working effectively within the context of the entire college to serve our community.

We developed objectives for the plan by researching in a number of ways:

- Performed an internal scan of Columbus State stakeholders including the president, provost, and key departmental chairs and directors
- Surveyed peer institutions
- Reviewed historical data
- Analyzed current processes and procedures
- Integrated information from conferences and workshops such as the LERN Contract Training Institute

After prioritizing the information gleaned through the research process, we prioritized our objectives and narrowed them to four for the first year:

- Prepare a written marketing and communication strategy that reflects customer needs for information
- Position B&I to become more visible and accessible to customers on campus
- Identify the process, systems and methods that maximize the quality of services to customers
- Develop and/or improve skill levels of B&I team members to achieve our mission and goals

We are currently finalizing details of the first year's plan, but execution of critical components of the plan is already underway. We feel that a relationship with InterEd will help us tremendously in carrying out the plan, particularly the first objective: to prepare a written marketing and communication strategy.

Internal scan results

The first step of our planning process was to survey key individuals, including the Columbus State president, provost, and key departmental chairs and directors. Our goal was to uncover, based on these stakeholders' opinions, where Business and Industry could improve service and better work with the rest of the campus to serve the community.

The internal scan revealed the following areas of focus to improve service to the community:

- Reach a broader base of businesses, especially banking, finance, insurance, and healthcare
- Attract new customers
- Do a greater volume of business in the community
- Identify ways to help companies "in trouble" with regard to operations, staffing, and training
- Be more proactive in working with business
- Develop new programs for internal and external customers
- Be more strategic
- Develop and leverage business intelligence and available sources of market data
- Assess community and business needs

The administration felt that Business and Industry's greatest challenges are:

- Keeping pace with changes in business and the community
- Being known as an innovative service organization for Columbus State customers.

Based on the internal scan, the college as a whole feels there are two primary ways that Business and Industry can improve its service to the community. The first is quantitative improvement: serve more businesses and a greater variety of businesses. The second is qualitative improvement in developing our services: become more proactive in assessing community needs, seek out market data, and develop initiatives and programs around this intelligence to better serve the community.

These qualitative improvements will also drive quantitative improvement. **By becoming more strategic and innovative in assessing and responding to the community's needs, Business and Industry will provide more service to a larger and broader segment of the business community.** We cannot afford to wait for customers to identify their own needs and seek our services. We need to lead the community by actively seeking out these needs and proactively developing programs to meet them. Utilizing InterEd's services to research the four areas cited would be invaluable in meeting these objectives.

Market trends and historical data

Although we are involved in a more comprehensive analysis of our historical data, we have become painfully aware of downward trends in our two major customer segments. In the past, Business and Industry has provided the majority of our service to state government and manufacturing. Both segments have experienced particularly hard times in the last year.

- The state has struggled in the last year to balance its budget, resulting in cutbacks in many functional areas. Anticipated state-funded projects such as the TOPS educational program have repeatedly been held up pending release of funds.
- Many of our key manufacturing customers have experienced setbacks that have negatively, and in some cases permanently, impacted the training we provide to them. Lucent Technologies sold its local plant to Celestica and terminated their ongoing ETOP training contract with Columbus State. Worthington Industries announced in January that they plan to cut 500 jobs nationwide. Metatec is currently \$18 million dollars in debt. Timkin closed its Columbus plant. Delphi Automotive cut back significantly on its third shift production.

These business trends indicate that Business and Industry needs to pursue new markets and services in order to maintain our current level of business and revenue. We can no longer depend on past customers in government and industry to provide the bulk of our business.

Taken together, both the internal scan and business trends indicate that Business and Industry needs to focus on **identifying and developing new markets and developing new capabilities to serve those markets.** We intend to do so by pursuing the four goals listed above: identifying growing and emerging opportunities, identifying new markets where we can leverage our existing training products and services, assessing interest and potential enrollment to prioritize program development and marketing, and finally addressing credibility gaps in selected markets to ensure that Business and Industry is perceived as a viable provider for these training products and services.

2. *For which of the above goals that you have identified as important would you most benefit from professional services? If you have a specific initiative in mind, please describe it here. Define the target content area, the probable client base, how far along you are in your planning or execution and what mission intelligence is in your critical path of success.*

Columbus State Business and Industry would most benefit from InterEd's assistance in goals 1a and 1b, but would also benefit significantly from their services in goals 1c and 1d.

Our first strategic planning objective aligns very well with the research services offered through InterEd. We have included below a summary of this objective, status of each action item, and how InterEd's services can further our efforts.

Strategic Objective: Prepare a written marketing and communication strategy that reflects customer needs for information

Action item	Status
Identify star customers and products based on sales and revenue history	In progress. Segmenting customers and products based on revenues and margins for a 3-year history using a BCG (Boston Consulting Group) matrix, which segments customers and products into 4 categories: Stars (strongest), Cash Cows, Problem Children, and Dogs (weakest). Anticipated completion by 3/15/02.
Identify all customer information and service needs	This is where we could best utilize InterEd's services. We had planned a lengthy in-house research process including development of surveys, administration of surveys, and tabulation/analysis of data. This step would be difficult to perform using in-house resources and we had already begun to investigate outsourcing these research functions. InterEd's services would be extremely valuable in this step.
Develop appropriate communication and marketing mechanisms	In progress. We are working with a third-party advertising agency to re-brand our services and develop marketing collateral. Our efforts will be further guided by the results of research on customer information and service needs.
Execute new communication mechanisms based on customer feedback and needs	Pending development of communication/marketing mechanisms.

Based on research from Business First magazine and other sources, we have tentatively identified potential target industries as (in order of priority/potential):

1. Finance and banking
2. Distribution and logistics
3. Construction
4. Medical research and manufacturing (pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device manufacturing)

These are all industries where Business and Industry historically has not had a strong presence.

3. *What kind of services would be most helpful (i.e. guidance and feedback in planning and execution (consultation) or empirical research to inform the goals)?*

Based on our strategic plan, empirical research is the top priority at this point. It is in the critical path and will inform our efforts in developing communication mechanisms and executing these mechanisms. It is also crucial in developing our capabilities in response to the internal survey and the market factors noted in the first section. Also, while we have already identified resources to assist in developing and deploying our communication and marketing materials; we do *not* currently have additional resources to assist in research.

However, we would definitely benefit from guidance and feedback in planning and execution later in the process, particularly when we begin the fourth activity (Execute new communication mechanisms based on customer feedback and needs). We would be interested in seeking further guidance and assistance from InterEd as we progress in executing our plan.

Summary

In summary, we feel that InterEd's services will greatly assist us to carry out our strategic plan, respond to the issues raised in our internal scan, and ensure our continued viability as a resource to the Greater Columbus business community. By helping us to identify new program opportunities, locate new markets, predict enrollment and business potential, and assess our credibility in new markets, InterEd will provide valuable information that will guide our efforts in this crucial time of transition. Armed with this intelligence, we will be able to move beyond reacting to customer requests to actively anticipate the needs of a growing business community and develop programs to drive that growth. We appreciate your consideration for this opportunity and hope that we are able to participate in the pilot program with EnterpriseOhio and InterEd.