

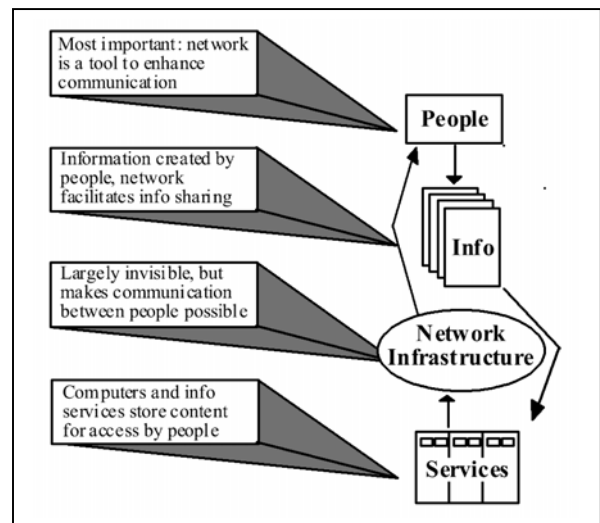


Community Information Networks

Why – Help communities compete. The world is moving into the “Information Technology Age.” This “Age” transition will impact all segments of our society, similar to the “Industrial Age.” Communities that develop a plan to help its citizens, organizations and institutions adopt and use tools of the “Information Technology Age” will be positioned to compete on even footing with communities throughout the world.

This New Age is driven and defined by digital tools. All information will be digitally converted, processed, communicated and stored. This information will be more readily and broadly available to people. Geographic location and distance will become irrelevant. Human interaction with information appliances will become more natural. The power of the tools will benefit small businesses and individuals relatively more than large businesses. Low cost, high power communications will benefit communities and families. The resulting transition in jobs and the economy will place a premium on lifelong learning.

Communities can use a process to develop community information networks that are sustainable and enhance quality of life. The community networks provide access to the critical information and communications technologies underlying the transition to the Information Age. All community residents will have free or nearly free access to facilities and equipment to learn to use personal computers, the Internet and other information technology equipment as tools to obtain information and support life-long learning.



How – Develop a community network with full community involvement including:

- Families
- Local government
- Libraries
- Local media
- Business
- Schools
- Not for profits
 - agencies
 - religious organizations
 - service clubs

The network will provide a common, virtual space for all parts of the community to share activities and information about themselves and their organizations to enhance the feeling and function of community.

A community’s information network will:

- Allow and encourage all segments of the community to learn to use the tools of the Information Age.
- Integrate the learning process into the daily life of individuals, families and organizations.
- Put people first. Show how technology tools support people and community organizations.
- Maximize the involvement of community members in planning, implementing and maintaining the network.
- Minimize project costs to the community.

Benefits – A successful community information network benefits all segments of a community. Listed below are potential benefits to parts of any community. Additional benefits will likely be identified as a community develops and implements its “Technology Plan”.

Local Government

- Improve communication with public
- Expand hours of service
- Reduce work by making commonly requested information available online
- Advertise services
- Reports/minutes/ordinances on line
- Accept payments electronically
 - court - tax
 - permits -fees
- Expanded access to information from other levels of government
- Reduced information technology costs by sharing resources with other community organizations

Individuals and Families

- Increase opportunities to develop self and family
- Increase education and job opportunities for adults and children
- Broader range of entertainment, work and education and job training opportunities
- Increase involvement in the community
- Opportunity to volunteer IT skills

Not For Profits

- Marketing – Getting the message out
- Timely communication
- Cost effective
- Increase volunteer interest
- Increased members and donors

Education

- Improve communications
- Home/school communication
- Advertise services
- Course content online
- Creative opportunities
- Sharing resources
- Build collaborative partnerships (with other schools, universities, businesses)
- Increase ability to deliver workforce training/continuing education curriculum
- Reduced information technology costs by sharing resources with other community organizations

Business

- Increase Customer Base
- Overcome geographic isolation
- Greater access to bidding for government & industry contracts
- Reduce printing costs
- Electronic fund transfers (revenues and expenditures)
- E-commerce

For more information contact:
Bill Shuffstall,
 Community Development Agent,
 Cooperative Extension and Outreach
 Phone: 814-765-7878
 Email: shuffy@psu.edu

Community Information Network Resources

- Association for Community Networking
<http://www.afcn.net>
- Community network design and development information
http://www.bev.net/project/digital_library/
- Blacksburg Electronic Village
<http://www.bev.net/project/evupstart>
- Communities of the Future
<http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>
- Communities, technology, and local governance issues
<http://www.newdemocracy.org/>

Community Web sites

- Rosenet – Madison, NJ
www.rosenet.org
- Blacksburg Electronic Village - Blacksburg, Virginia
www.bev.net
- Potter County, PA
www.pottercountypa.net
- Charlotte's Web – Charlotte, NC
www.charweb.org/