University of Nevada, Las Vegas

INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION

Date:	1 March 2009
To:	Julie Staggers
From:	Larry, Moe, Curly, Shemp
Subject:	Team E-waste: Research Design Plan

The purpose of this memo is to present the Research Development Plan for Team e-waste. It is comprised of the background to the problem of e-waste, planned methods, and potential obstacles.

What is e-waste?

E-waste is electronic waste. Think old cell phones, computers, TV's, and office equipment. The buying public purchases new electronics because their old ones can't surf the web fast enough, don't have the best and brightest picture, or can't copy/staple/bind/make dinner. What happens to an old CRT monitor? In some instances, old gadgets are repurposed, recycled, or stripped to the metals that make them up, enabling the manufacture of new products from old material. But frequently, this is not the case.

We want a better, cleaner earth, and UNLV is currently a fixture of our world. But because recycling is so tied to current market prices, profitability is a fickle friend. It would be fine if UNLV stood to gain from its e-waste in every case; however, we believe that social responsibility should be the primary currency the university fares in.

We want a resting place that doesn't allow much rest for our old stuff. But if it must be so, because of disrepair or inutility, it should rest in pieces, responsibly handled and thoroughly mined.

Background

We want to discover just what happens to all of UNLV's old junk. It has been difficult getting the broker for UNLV to talk much beyond them explaining that they shred the hard drives. We'd like to discover the following:

Comment [MSOffice1]: Remember, this memo is really a proposal. Your purpose is to get me to approve your plan for doing research. Also, assume that I – your manager am either a dingbat or very, very busy and need some reminding about what this project is, why I asked for this info, and have no idea what your project is or why you are proposing this client/project. You have good content forecasting here – putting that info in a bulleted list will make it easier to skim.

See the textbook for details on info that should be in the introduction of a proposal: http://ebooks.bfwpub.com/supp3.php?box&16&3&bookId=techcomm8e

Comment [MSOffice2]: First, really terrific voice/strong writing. Second, a strong 1-sentence definition of e-waste will make your examples stronger "E-waste is any kind of waste that…" Third, you need a clear statement/explanation of why e-waste is a problem, i.e. "E-waste creates problems for the earth, people, goldfish, whomever when….because…"

Comment [MSOffice3]: End of this section also needs a chunk where you introduce members of the team, explain what roles they will play, etc. That's your opportunity to establish ethos/convince reader you have the guns to do the job. Take a look at the other team's background section. They have a sketchy start and I gave them some notes that might help you once you see where they're at.

Primary Questions

- After its end of service life, where does the average UNLV computer go?
- How far is it broken down, if at all?
- The current process takes our campus e-waste to California. Is this something that could be taken care of locally, avoiding freight costs and long-distance trucking?

Secondary Questions

- What exactly is the current trajectory of UNLV's e-waste?
- What are current best practices for 'breaking down' e-waste (computers, cell phones, monitors, etc.)?

As a university, UNLV must stay current with technological trends. The e-waste problem will, thus, be a perpetual one. We plan to discover what would be the best possible solution for UNLV, the environment, manufacturers, and perhaps even local non-profit organizations that would collect, process, palletize, and recycle the campus's electronic waste.

Research Plan and Data Collection

Our group will be interviewing the specific departments in UNLV that facilitate the collection of campus e-waste, as well as the specific facility or company in charge of recovering, re-purposing and redistributing the materials they collect. This would ultimately assist us in looking for ways to improve campus recycling standards. Other information will be gathered by using online resources (news articles and previous research documents), as well as books on recycling e-waste. We will compare how other corporations and institutions dispose of their e-waste to anything lacking in our university's recycling regulations. We want to show the life-cycle (and afterlife) of a UNLV computer, checking if along the way, something better can be done.

Potential Obstacles or Problems

Some resources may not be too keen to provide specific information on where the waste goes after collection. Not all companies and institutions are open about the specific steps they take to dispose of the materials they collect, especially if it involves overseas contractors. This could be an obstacle in trying to find out what to improve in the regulations that our university follows and in trying to find a better recycling system. A high amount of information gathered can also pose as an obstacle in trying to pick the most important data to include in our research and recommendations and sort out those that can only be used as supporting information. Also, the members of our group have different class schedules which may present an obstacle in holding group meetings, as well as coordinating specific assignments delegated to each of us.

Schedule

Please see "407BEWaste_Gantt.xls" on class wiki.

Conclusion

Every day, technology is improving and new gadgets replace the old in consumers' homes. There is a constant flow of "in with the new and out with the old" and as a result we're left with a growing pile of old. Though this a global issue, we decided to look at the problem locally and start with UNLV since it is a large part our present lives. With this project we hope to find the safest, most eco-friendly way for UNLV to dispose of our e-waste, and potentially cut the university's costs as well.

Our group has the talent and motivation needed to complete this project. We care about our environment and are interested in finding ways to sustain it. With 3 English majors, one Journalism major, and one informatics, we are a well qualified group that has highly-developed, hermeneutic-flavored thinking caps. We're capable of performing research, uncovering information, and communicating that information clearly. These three skills will be essential to the success of this project. We request approval to continue with this project. Thank you for taking the time to read our research design plan and welcome any questions you may have.

Comment [MSOffice8]: Same deal here re: intro paragraph that sets up the whole section. "We anticipate problems in four areas…: or whatever.

Might want to think more about the problems you'll have doing primary research, because this project requires significant primary research. Think in terms of things like: We don't really know how to write/do valid surveys, we don't have a lot of experience doing interviews, etc. Also things like team communication processes, time constraints, whatever is going to cause you problems.

Whatever you include here, describe how you are going to resolve or work around the problem.

Comment [MSOffice9]: Nice closing overall. Beautiful formatting overall.