



Technical Report submitted to the International Development Research Centre

Project Name:

Implementation of a Business Development Strategy, Association for Progressive Communications

IDRC Grant Number: 105371-002

Institution Name: Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Research Team:

Project leader: Chat Garcia Ramilo
Consultancy Coordinator: Jean Munro
GEM Services Coordinator: Angela M. Kuga Thas

Time Period of Report:

10 June 2010 – 10 February 2012

Date of Report:

8 June 2012

Development of the GEM Business Plan with Venture Fundraising Consultants

In 2009, IDRC's Partnership and Business Development Division (PBDD) supported the development of a 3-5 year business plan for a GEM consultancy service. IDRC, in collaboration with APC, hired the services of Venture Fundraising Consultants to lead this process. Working closely with Angela Kuga Thas (GEM Project Coordinator) and Chat Garcia Ramilo (APC WNSP Manager), Venture conducted two surveys and two workshops with the GEM team and other APC staff, project partners and GEM practitioners. The GEM business plan was finalised in March, 2010 after discussions by the GEM team as well as presentation to the APC Management team.

In summary, the GEM business plan included the framework and the necessary processes that APC needs to take in order to establish a GEM consulting business unit which would be able to address its funding needs and acquire a sustainable base of customers and customers prospects within that 3-year period. One of the main recommendations included structural staffing and systems requirements, namely, for the needed marketing unit which should be ideally led by a marketing director and which will be co-managed with a customer acquisition manager, a customer service and relations manager and a marketing communications manager.

In May 2010, APC sought the support of IDRC's PBDD to begin the implementation of the GEM business plan. In June 2010, IDRC approved a grant of CAD 24,400 initially for a six month period. This period was later extended for another 15 months.

Project objectives and implementation plan

Two specific objectives towards implementing the GEM business plan were set for the project:

1. to recruit and select a marketing director and begin to develop a Marketing Unit
2. to develop marketing and communication materials in line with the goals identified in the business development strategy

Funds were earmarked for the following: recruitment and 3 months salary of a marketing director, setting up of a business unit and marketing and promotional materials.

The GEM business plan identified the following activities for implementation for an approximate period of 18 months.

Preparatory Phase (3-4 months):

- Board and organizational approval of APC WNSP's Three-Year Strategic Business Plan;
- Development of business policies and operations guidelines related to the following:
 - Staffing and structure;
 - Customer and business partnership selection;
 - Budget, finance and financial transactions;

- Office, equipment and other organizational resources;
- Internal relations and communications (between and among APC units) and authority levels;
- Organizational schedules
- Staff recruitment;
- Equipping and capacity building;
- Completion of the business' operation and legal requirements;
- Business orientation of all APC, APC WNSP rank and file

Startup Phase (4-6 months):

- Rollout of the marketing database;
- Rollout of the customer-oriented and e-payment and member registration capable web site;
- Identification, list acquisition and encoding of the names and other contact and relevant details of the target customers;
- Planning, detailing and scheduling of customer acquisition and relationship marketing campaigns, strategies, targets and activities for Year 1;
- Production of the basic marketing communication materials and media mixes;
- Market launching of the APC WNSP consulting business

Intermediate Phase (6-8 months):

- Full implementation of the scheduled customer acquisition and relationship marketing campaigns and activities;
- On-schedule production and integrated use of all the required marketing communication materials and media mixes;
- Continuous building up of the list of target customers in the database;
- Consistent documentation of the business' plans, tasks, performances, trends, running and post-campaign analyses and other important information, etc.

This report will include the extent to which these activities were implemented within the project period (10 June 2010 – 10 February 2012).

APC Board approval of the GEM business plan and the APC consultancy unit

APC envisioned the GEM consultancy service to spin off from the the Women's Networking Support Programme and to develop as a self-sustaining and income generating unit. To achieve this vision, the consultants recommended that this business unit be located directly under APC's Executive Director and pointed out that the unit's work can potentially serve to support APC's overall consultancy work.

With this in mind, the APC Management team presented the GEM business plan and proposed the formation of an APC consultancy unit to the APC Executive Board. The aim was to set up the unit and get it up and running in the next three years (June 2010 – June 2013) with the right systems, processes and capacity and then expand the model as the business grows. The proposal included the following main points:

- In year 1, the consultancy unit will focus on building APC's GEM services. APC will invest resources in developing and delivering GEM products and building the GEM practitioners network as set out in the business plan. At the same time, it will put in place marketing and financial systems and build operational capacity within APC to deliver on all consultancies.
- Once the GEM services and systems are solidly in place, the APC consultancy unit will focus on developing APC consulting capacity in strategic use of ICT and policy research and training in year 2 and 3. The consultancy unit will relate with all APC programmes in managing the delivery of these consultancies.

This strategy received an encouraging response and the development of an APC consultancy unit, to be implemented in a phased approach starting with the GEM services, was agreed on by the APC Board. This process was completed in September, 2010 and delayed the hiring of the marketing director. Due to this, APC asked for an extension of the project and IDRC approved an extension until February 2012.

Staff recruitment

In July 2010, APC appointed Angela Kuga Thas as GEM Services Coordinator which included the management of GEM related consultancies (as set out in the GEM Business Plan). Her tasks included the delivery of high quality and timely GEM consultancy services for APC, supporting GEM evaluation facilitators that can deliver GEM services, managing the GEM practitioners network website and support for marketing related tasks such as target customer identification, marketing, acquisition and customer relationship to relevant units in APC.

APC also hired a Consultancy Coordinator to fill an internal skill and expertise gap within the organisation. The recruitment process for this position took longer than expected, because we wanted to attract a broad range of applicants with marketing expertise within a consultancy context. In October 2010, APC advertised widely for the position and received 200 applications. In April 2011, we appointed Jean Munro on a six month contract (working at 4 days a week from April -October 2011) to do the following tasks:

- implementation of the GEM business plan
- development of a strategic business plan for APC's consulting service
- identifying potential clients for both GEM and APC consulting services
- managing delivery of GEM and other APC consultancies

Jean Munro did an excellent job in implementing these tasks. Unfortunately, she resigned after only three months before she could complete all of her tasks to take up a long term appointment. Given the limited funds that were available for the completion of the project at this point, it was not possible to hire a new consultant. Some remaining tasks were taken up by the project leader, Chat Garcia Ramilo and the GEM services coordinator, Angela Kuga Thas. In December, Angela Kuga Thas also resigned as GEM Services Coordinator to pursue higher education. These

changes affected the timeliness of delivery and the completion of some project activities.

Development of APC's marketing/consultancy unit

Several building blocks were put in place for an APC marketing unit.

The first was the identification of potential clients for both GEMSolutions and APC consultancies. GEMSolutions was selected as the brand name for the GEM consultancy. A new database using CiviCRM for all of APC which will manage our overall partner and client information, has not been completed. This has been one of the most challenging activities and the problem has to do with not having a dedicated staff person doing this work which is quite substantial during the initial stage. This in turn has affected our outreach to potential clients.

<i>Activities Completed</i>	<i>URL (These documents are available on APC's intranet accessible to APC staff and members but not to the public)</i>
Consolidated information on past GEM solutions consultancies.	
Developed consulting service offer letter	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/gemsolutions-consulting
Set up GEMSolutions Calendar to plan consultancies and potential marketing opportunities	https://www.google.com/calendar/render
Set up fields for data base for past and potential GEM clients	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/gemsolutions-consulting
Set up fields for data base for past and future GEMSolutions consultants	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/gemsolutions-consulting

The second was the more systematic management of delivery of GEM and other APC consultancies. This was done through development of management and financial systems and processes for GEM and APC's consulting service and the discussion among APC staff of evaluation, knowledge-sharing and learning systems to support APC staff and others working on consultancies. Both of these activities were seen as critical for ensuring high quality delivery of APC's consulting service including managing consultancy staff and sub-contractors. What is needed for follow-up is a coaching period for staff and consultants to use the manual.

<i>Activities completed</i>	<i>URL (These documents are available on APC's intranet accessible to APC staff and members but not to the public)</i>
Developed APC consultancy procedures that includes all forms including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flow chart for deciding on consultancy • Consultancy time sheets • Consultant expense report • Consultant Invoice • Consultant Travel Advance Form • Consultant debriefing report • Consultant evaluation form • Client evaluation form • Quality control form 	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/apc-business-manual
Developed draft of APC Consulting Manual - APC Consulting Services, Marketing Approach, Completing Consultancies, Consultancy Common problems and processes to resolve them	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/apc-business-manual

The third was developing APC's consulting strategy and business plan. The business plan was to be developed with APC's Management team and included a broad outline of the products and services which APC can provide, and plans for how these can be promoted, costed and delivered. However, with Jean's early resignation, APC did not have the capacity to complete the business plan. We managed to complete a survey of APC staff, long-term consultants and some Board members, which looks at the competencies with APC, the services APC can offer, potential clients and marketing approaches and best business systems for APC. A summary report of this survey is available as set out below:

<i>Activities Completed:</i>	<i>URL (These documents are available on APC's intranet accessible to APC staff and members but not to the public)</i>
Business survey developed and Completed. Survey looked at competencies within APC, possible consulting services, marketing approaches, possible challenges and how to overcome them.	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/apc-consulting
Summary Report written for APC staff	http://www.apc.org/en/pubs/reports/apc-consulting

Development of marketing and communication materials in line with the goals identified in the business development strategy

As mentioned above, branding for APC's GEM consultancy services was discussed and we decided to call the service *GEMSolutions*. Once this was done, we redesigned one section of www.genderevaluation.net as GEMSolutions. We also identified promotional material for the consultancy services and decided to prioritise producing a promotional video rather than printed material for the service as this was more accessible to our potential clients.

<i>Activities completed</i>	<i>URL</i>
GEMSolutions website	http://www.genderevaluation.net/?q=gemsolutions
Developed GEM video promotional material	http://www.genderevaluation.net/?q=gemsolutions
Stories of change and articles	http://www.genderevaluation.net/?q=gemsolutions/stories

What we have put in place is our basic marketing materials through the website and video and through the branding of GEMSolutions. What we have yet to do though are outreach activities that will increase the visibility of the services we offer. We have to catch up on designing our marketing strategy to promote GEM and APC's other consulting products and services in coordination APC's communications unit. Our visibility as an organisation is quite strong in the networks, sectors and communities where we work. However, we have yet to significantly increase the visibility of our services to attract more clients and our outreach to more consultants who can work and partners with us.

Consultancies completed in 2010 and 2011

The size (amount of work and income) of consultancies that APC staff completed increased by about 10% from 2010 to 2011. GEM and women's rights related consultancies made up about 30% while the rest were consultancies related to access, internet infrastructure, and internet rights. Generally, we maintained the level of consultancies that our current staff capacity can manage. In some cases, we hired external consultants where we lacked capacity. The size of our general consultancies for both 2012 and 2011 contributed to APC's income for core costs. Covering core costs is essential for APC's sustainability given that most of our grants are for project implementation.

For gender and women's rights related consultancies, what grew were training/capacity building work with women's rights organisations and evaluation of our own projects. For the latter, rather than relying on external consultants, we conducted our own evaluations which contributed to capacity building of our staff as well as keeping funds within the organisation. Below is a summary of consultancies in 2010 and 2011.

Type of consultancy (2010)	No. of consultancies	No. of clients	Consultants	Income (USD) APC staff
Capacity building on online activism and digital storytelling for women's rights	3	2	3 WNSP staff members, 1 external consultant	9,758
Developing gender frame work for research and training	3	3	2 WNSP staff members, 1 external consultant	11,290
GEM training workshop	2	2	1 WNSP staff member	2,750
Evaluation of APC women's rights projects	1	1	2 WNSP staff members	4,000
Total	9	8		27,798

In addition, APC completed 7 external consultancies amounting to USD 102,329 for 3 clients in 2010. The consultancies included organising consultations, event coordination and the development of a conceptual framework.

Type of consultancy (2011)	No. of consultancies	No. of clients	Consultants	Income (USD) APC Staff
Capacity building on online activism and developing video for advocacy for women's rights	4	3	3 WNSP and 1 communications staff members, 1 external consultant	16,205
Development of Online activism toolkit	1	1	1 WNSP member. 1 external consultant	2,785
Evaluation of APC women's rights project (drawing on GEM evaluators)	1	1	2 WNSP members	32,310
Development of gender materials (drawing on GEM for gender analytical model)	3	3	3 WNSP members, 2 external consultants	7,430
Total	9	8		58,730

In addition, APC completed 5 external consultancies for 5 clients amounting to USD 131,397. The consultancies included event coordination and policy research.

Overall, the increase in APC's consultancy work in 2010 and 2011 is still modest but it is significant because it contributes to core costs (salaries for staff) that are not covered by project funds. What is clear from this experience is that there is a lot more potential to grow our consultancy work but what remains a challenge is managing the demands of implementing grants and increasing our capacity to do consultancies. What we have improved through this project is the management of consultancies from the procedures that we have developed.

Current situation and next steps

To continue the development of APC's consulting capacity, the APC's finance team has taken over the responsibility of managing APC consultancies. Karen Banks, APC's Finance Manager will provide oversight for this work. Their tasks will include developing our capacity to implement the consulting procedures that were developed through this project.

To replace Angela Kuga Thas, Dafne Plou, an experienced GEM trainer and evaluator, took over as GEM services Coordinator in March 2012 on a part-time basis (.30 FTE). She will be responsible for coordinating the GEM practitioners network. She will also take over the marketing and communications tasks for GEMSolutions and manage the implementation of GEM related consultancies. Chat Garcia Ramilo will continue to oversee the implementation of the GEM business plan in coordination with Dafne Plou and APC's finance team.