TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT PROPOSAL

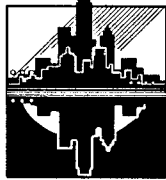*Ken's copy (draft)*

FOR THE
CITY OF BOSTON
MILLION MAN MARCH ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE

BY
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PRESIDENT,
INNER-CITY SOFTWARE

SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1996

INNER-CITY SOFTWARE

TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT PROPOSAL

1. Overview

This proposal outlines several ways that advanced computer technology can be deployed to increase the effectiveness and capabilities of the Million Man March Organizing Committee of Boston. A side effect of implementing this plan would be to increase the level of computer literacy of several area residents, as well as to promote the awareness and use of computer resources that are freely and readily available across Boston's inner city communities.

Specifically, this proposal describes how the questionnaires collected at Town Meetings I and II can be entered into a computerized database to allow fast and efficient retrieval of names based on any of the questionnaire information, as well as quick form letters and mass mailings.

The proposal also outlines how the Million Man March Organizing Committee can utilize the free global network of computers known as the Internet to establish lines of communication between Organizing Committees across the nation, as well as inform the general public of the sub-committee and/or overall Organizing Committee activities.

Locate Organi-
zation Consultants 559 Hem Ave.

Efficacy Group J. Howard
Bell Assoc (?)

by Tues

4/6:
Media Management
Class — 1-3 pm

Contact Brian
Higgins re:
Speaking @ MMM
Workshop re:
Understanding +
Utilizing the
Media
—using the March as
an example of media
coverage + we are
not putting them
on the spot.

NEXT
MEETING:
March 31
36 Winonah St.
1-3 pm

MMM:
Sarah Ann Shaw rep.

Archie Givens
Givens Foundation for
AA Literature
7151 York Ave S.
Minneapolis, MN 55435
612-831-2555
   831-2461 Fax

More to-do's:
Print up 50 copies of agenda
Tell J. Jennings about 4/6
Go to Tuesday meeting

Do Evaluation
Form: what
attendees would
like to see 3 points

Communications / Media Sub-Committee
BH: Need printed list of names of who to talk to re:
PSAs / News / Talk shows
Programs
Ask if there is any national-level letterhead
Next meeting:
11:30am

2. Town Meeting Questionnaire Database

2.1 Description

There are currently several hundred to one thousand questionnaires collected from Town Meetings I and II that contain information that is vital to the outreach and recruiting needs of the Million Man March Organizing Committee. In their present paper form, these questionnaires require excessive amounts of manual labor and processing for the information to be utilized. By entering this information into a computerized database, this information can be captured forever (and easily updated when necessary) and processed in any number of useful ways without requiring much human labor or time. Once implemented, the database will be able to provide the features listed below.

Figure 1 - Example of a database entry screen.

2.2 Features

2.2.1 Printed Reports

One of the most common uses of a database is to print out lists of people based on one or more criteria, such as people who expressed interest in a certain community issue who live in a particular zip code or street who are within a certain age range, et cetera. Any combinations of criteria of any information that has been entered into the database may be used to filter and/or sort the report information. Statistical reports (including charts, graphs and tables) can also be generated with ease.

2.2.2 Mail Merge

As it contains contact information on potential volunteers, one of the obvious applications of the database is to generate form letters inviting people to general meetings or to sub-committee meetings based on their stated areas of interest. The database will allow more efficient mailings to be done, reducing the cost of wasted postage.

2.2.3 Follow-up Log

The database can also be used as a follow-up log to allow people's names to expire from the database if they do not respond to mailings, again reducing the cost of wasted postage, as well as reducing the chance of sending mail to people who are not really interested in participating.

2.2.4 File Export

The information in the database can also be exported, or translated, to work with other computer programs that provide functions that the database cannot perform. I cannot give any specific examples at this time; this note is just to explain that the information, once stored in the database, is not limited to use only from that database, but can be used in other application as needed.

2.2.5 Security

The database can also provide a level of security that is presently not present in the human readable paper in which the information is currently stored. Not only can the ability to read the database at all be protected with passwords, but passwords can be given to data entry operators that allow them to enter data, but not to view, print or otherwise capture and save the data.

If secured in this manner, it is absolutely essential that several individuals possess the passwords necessary for total access to the data. I have recently read of a story (reputed to be true) of a government falling to a military takeover because the only person who had the password to the data file that contained the combination to their munitions building had been killed and no one was able to crack the database security.

2.3 Time Estimates

Based on current commitments and projects, the development of the database will take three to four weeks. The actual data entry time will ultimately be determined by the number of names and number of data entry operators, but is not expected to exceed 6 hours.

2.4 Requirements

2.4.1 Report Specifications

Written descriptions of the kinds of report information desired from the database are required in order to deliver them. I would be happy to provide some suggestions based on common uses of contact information in the private sector, but the exact nature of the reports must ultimately be driven by the intended use of the information by the Committee.

2.4.2 Data Entry Volunteers

Inner-City Software is offering to donate both computer time and database development time towards this effort; data entry personnel must be supplied by the Committee. In the past, two individuals have volunteered to perform data entry services based on their interest in improving their skill sets. I believe that locating these and other like-minded individuals represents a way to simultaneously serve the needs of the Committee as well as provide some useful experience to community residents, clearly a win-win for both sides. It is likely that one or more of the data entry volunteers will show enough promise to be considered for future projects for which Inner-City Software will require some data entry work. If so, the database project will also serve as a means for us to find qualified local help for hire, which would be another win for the volunteer and also a win for Inner-City Software.

3. Million Man March Boston Web Site

3.1 Description

The World Wide Web of the Internet, though unfortunately still just a buzzword in the minds of many of our people, is a proven effective means of communication that several million people around the world are using to advance their business, political and social agendas at a rate never before seen in the history of humankind. While more and more business and political decisions are being made (i.e. more power is being transferred) via the Internet, most of our people are completely oblivious to this trend and run the risk of discovering that the world has been redesigned and rebuilt under their feet by the time they get around to using this tool often called the Information Superhighway.

In typical Black-folks-behind-behind-the-times fashion, throughout the entire day of the actual Million Man March, I did not hear a single mention of computers and computer technology, let alone the Internet, all of which is truly reshaping the world as you read this.

Fortunately, due to the global, uncontrollable nature of the Internet, this new communications medium is completely open and available for us to use to further our agendas. As an example, though Inner-City Software is still quite small, we control two separate Internet sites; one for the company, and one created for the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan, which is where I suggest that the Organizing Committee make its online home. We are in the process of launching several more sites. Other good news is that there is at least one other Organizing Committee already using the Internet to make its presence and programs known. In the interest of preparing our people for the future and setting progressive examples, I believe that it is imperative that Organizing Committee take a stand to promote awareness and use of today's computer technology in our neighborhoods.

Although most of our people do not yet own personal computers, low cost and free computer time is readily available at libraries and other public access centers across our neighborhoods. The infrastructure is already in place. We just have to build something positive for our people upon it and make sure they know that it is there.

(By the way, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will be doing all of its procurement of goods and services via the Internet by August or September of this year. All of our business people who do business with the State will have to get access or get a job. 'Nuff said.)
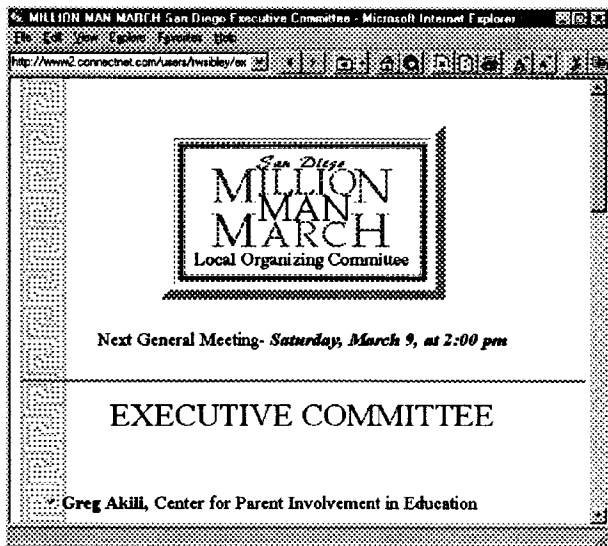
Here are some examples of existing Web sites:
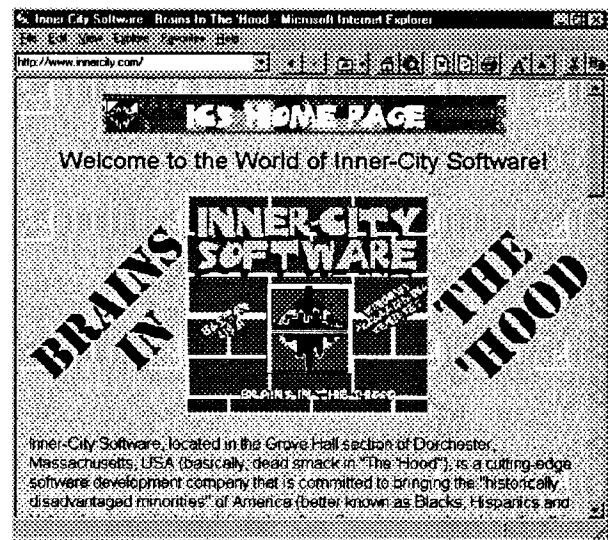
Figure 2 - San Diego MMM Committee Web Page

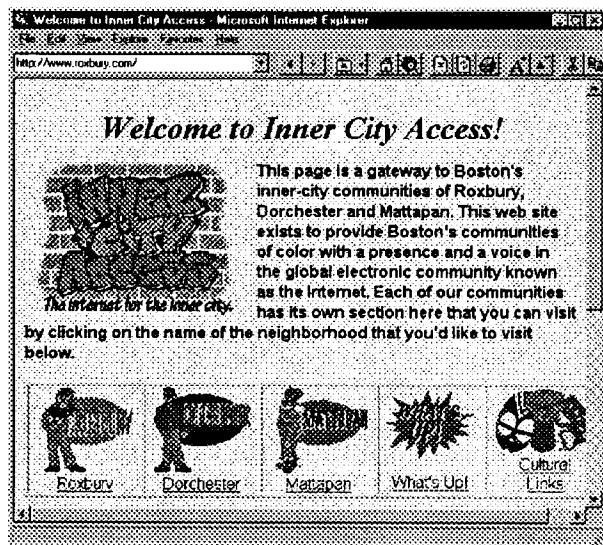**Figure 3 - Inner-City Software Home Page**

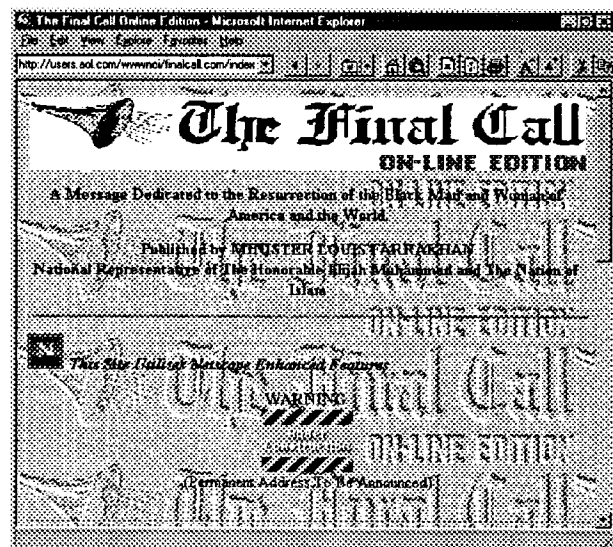**Figure 4 - Inner City Access (Rox/Dor/Matt)**

Figure 5 - Final Call Online Edition

Here are some of the things that the Committee could use an Internet Web Site for:

3.2 Features

3.2.1 Connection to Other MMM Committees

I have located one other MMM Committee (in San Diego) that is using the Web to announce their activities and programs. There are probably others out there that I have no run across yet, and there are certainly many more that would jump on the Internet bandwagon if it appears that it is thing for MMM Committees to do. As the Web is heavily used by many Black college students across the country, this would be an especially effective means to reach and recruit them. The establishment of MMM Committee Web sites across the country would provide the sense of community among Committees that thousands of net-connected Black people have experienced around the country. It is very powerful and inspiring to run across information put out by others who think and believe as you do, and can help break the feelings of isolation that often develops when groups are geographically dispersed and meet on an infrequent basis.

3.2.2 Connection with Each Other

Do you know right now what the other sub-committees are doing? As more of us involved with the sub-committees get connected to the Internet through our jobs, our schools, our homes, or the libraries and community centers, we will be able

to find out what the other sub-committees are doing in seconds without leaving messages, tracking down busy people or waiting for calls back.

3.2.3 Skill-Building Opportunities

As with the database project, the Web site can offer incredible opportunities for Committee members or the general public to develop the <u>VERY</u> marketable skill of Web authoring. Our core competency at Inner-City Software is computer programming, not Web authoring, so we would love to hire someone else to do the Web site work that is starting to come our way. There are lots of other companies who are also looking for people who know this skill that we would be happy to teach someone to lessen our workload.

3.2.4 Connection to the General Public

In addition to notifying the general public of Committee meetings, programs and reports, the Web site can be used to gather information from the general public, such as the Town Meeting Questionnaire information. We can also create online forms that people can use to ask questions or make suggestions. We can also try and expand their horizons by linking the Committee pages to pages of information anywhere in the world that deals with issues concerning the empowerment of people of color. The sky is the limit, the world is our playground. Let's have fun.

3.3 Time Estimates

Without any idea of the scope of information and capabilities desired for the Web site, it is not possible at this time to present any realistic time estimates. The most basic of Web sites can be up in a day, the more complex ones can takes weeks or even months to put together. I suggest that the project be implemented in phases that begin with pure information and graduate to dynamically retrieved information and interactivity.

4. Million Man March Boston Electronic Post Office

4.1 Description

Outside of the World Wide Web, electronic mail (e-mail) is the second most popular use of the Internet E-mail is essentially the same as private voice mail except that you use a computer to read and send it, you can send any kinds of computer files in addition to written messages, you can send it to anyone in the world (who has e-mail) for free, and you can send one message to hundreds or thousands of people (for free) through e-mail programs called mailing lists or list servers. Inner-City Software has been testing an e-mail program for some time that we plan to purchase within the next few months. Once we have purchased this product, we will be able to provide e-mail addresses for an unlimited number of people, and are interested in providing the following services:

4.2 Features

4.2.1 Electronic Mailboxes for Committee Chairs

We would like to create e-mail addresses for sub-committee chairs. We can arrange for the new system at the BCIC office to connect to our e-mail post office to allow sub-committee members to retrieve and send mail. This same connection can be used to travel the World Wide Web if desired. As the Internet is global in nature, sub-committee chairs could also retrieve their e-mail from any machine connected to the Internet, whether at home, work, or on vacation in Africa.

4.2.2 Electronic Mailing List(s) for Committee Chairs/Committees

We would also like to set up a mailing list for the sub-committee chairs and/or MMM Organizing Committees across the nation. These mailing lists would allow a sub-committee chair in Boston to post a single message that would be read by other mailing list members regardless of their geographic location.

4.2.3 Time Estimates

The time frame for this service is gated primarily on when we purchase the full version of the e-mail program. The demonstration version that we are currently using is severely limited in the number of mailboxes we can create, and the full product is kind of expensive (for us, at least). We may opt to purchase an intermediate version of the program that allows more mailboxes and lets us upgrade later for just the difference. If so, this will speed up the time frame of deployment of this service.
Once we have the available mailboxes, setting up accounts literally takes seconds and doesn't cost us any money, so there are no problems in getting things rolling at that point.

5. Conclusions

It is difficult to describe the power of this new communications medium until you have experienced it. On a daily basis, I discuss technical issues and problems with Black computer science students across the country via a Black Developer's mailing list that I set up. I do business with a dozen or so other nations on a daily basis via e-mail, fax, and a credit card processing service, without ever leaving my home in Dorchester. I can look up information on just about any subject under the sun in seconds. This new medium has allowed me to do things today that I never dreamed were possible five years ago, and it is available and much more affordable than most people think. Based on my experience and understanding of the directions in which things are moving, I believe that we will do our people a fatal disservice if we do not place computer literacy at the forefront of our agendas.

Finally, in case you haven't noticed, no prices are quoted or otherwise mentioned for these services. That's because we are not looking for anything except the opportunity to use what we know towards the empowerment of our people. If, during that journey, we help some people develop skills and we are able to hire them, that will be a double benefit for us and more than adequate compensation for the time that it will take to implement these projects.

Hope to see you online.

Peace and Prosperity,

- Ken Granderson
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