Performance Analysis

T/TAC Online System Design Team
2010-2011

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1.0 Background

T/TAC Online (http://www.ttaconline.org/) is designed for educators working with special needs children. The site provides information, resources and training. As such, the content under those links is not targeted specifically to parents with key messages and benefits that address their particular needs/wants. This new project will enhance the value of the current T/TAC Online web site by re-purposing the site's content and identifying additional content needed to meet the needs of parents of children with special needs. This redesign will provide resources to parents of children with special needs to facilitate their involvement in their children's education.

Following the Instructional Design process (O'Grady & O'Grady, 2009; Brown & Green, 2006), the design team must first define the problem then conduct end user research. To do this, the design team first identified parents' information needs, the relative importance of each of those needs, as well as parents' preferences for the way in which the information can be obtained.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Identify the major stakeholders in the project.
- Identify the drivers and barriers of the project.

- Articulate a vision created by the design team to address the needs of the parents of children with special needs.

3.0 Stakeholders

Executive Sponsor
Prof. Michael Behrmann/Principal Investigator, Region 4 Training and Technical Assistance Center/George Mason University.

T/TAC Client Sponsor
John Eisenberg, Director Instructional Support and Related Services, VADOE

Faculty Project Manager
Dr. Shahron Williams van Rooij/Assistant Professor/George Mason University

Collaborating Faculty
Dr. Kevin Clark/Associate Professor/George Mason University

Subject Matter Experts (SME)
Cherie Takemoto/George Mason University
Kristine Neuber/ George Mason University

4.0 Teams

In order for this project to be successful, three teams have been formed to work on T/TAC Online for Parents. These teams will be working interactively to develop the parents' site. These teams are identified as follows:

Project Team:
Dr. Michael Behrmann and the T/TAC Online Team are working together primarily as the client for the T/TAC project. This team will review the work of the other teams throughout the development process.

Design Team:
Christy Stanley, Colleen Halverson, Dalia Abdelmeguid and Jeff Sears, graduate students in the George Mason University Instructional Design and Development Immersion program, and project faculty. The Design Team will be responsible for the ongoing design and development of T/TAC Online for parents.

Technical Team:
The Technical Team will handle the programming and other technical aspects of T/TAC Online.

5.0 Review of Extant Data

Data collected from the first sponsor meeting, meetings with the SME and the T/TAC Online content drilldown have been used as directives in determining the next steps for data collection and analysis (Brown & Green, 2006). Results of the current data have led us to conclude that the

next steps call for conducting focus groups and walk-throughs of the current T/TAC Online web site among parents of children with special needs.

5.1 Information from Project Sponsor
The team discussed the following questions with Dr. Michael Behrmann.

Is T/TAC the standard site for special needs educators in VA?
It is the state supported site for professionals in VA. It is designed to be the focal point for educators. Educators tend to find their own favorites however. In addition to T/TAC Online, every regional T/TAC has its own website, and there are many different private websites. T/TAC Online is the only website Virginia pays to operate.

What percentage of educators use the current T/TAC Online?
There is no data showing what percentage of educators use T/TAC Online. T/TAC Online gets about 1000 hits a day, 300,000 hits a year. The front page map identifies the distribution of users in superintendant regions. The largest region is region 4 (Northern Virginia) with 23-24%. The smallest regions are 3, 7, and 8, mostly in southern areas.

How do people find out about T/TAC Online? (marketing/promotion)
Mary Wildes is the state representative for T/TAC Online. Other T/TAC staff conduct presentations and attend conferences to promote T/TAC Online. There are also printed brochures. Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) also promotes T/TAC Online.

Our research plan includes conducting end user focus groups and T/TAC Online walk-throughs. Has previous research for T/TAC Online projects utilized audio recordings? Is there budget available for refreshments for focus groups and walk through participants (72 participants in both phases)?
Providing refreshments will not be a problem. Kristine Neuber will confirm the process; the Design Team will get in touch with her about procedure.

What kind of digital recorders are available?
Mike might have a Dragon Recorder; Kristine also has a Dragon Recorder; T/TAC has Livescribe, but that may not be the right choice at this point.

What is behind the T/TAC Online password-protected portion of the site?
The staff login lets people into the editing system and uploading system. There are also things in T/TAC Online that the public does not see. The design team will be receiving a staff login.

Do we need to be sensitive to the language we use? For example special needs versus disability.
Yes. Use people first language. Kristine will give the Design Team a document that will help them choose the best phrasing.

5.2 Inventory of Existing T/TAC Online Site
An inventory of our current site drill down is available at:
http://immersion.gmu.edu/ttac/fall2010/Deliverables.html

5.3 Information from Subject Matter Expert

Through ongoing meetings with Cherie Takemoto, as well as input from Kristin Neubur, the Design Team obtained the following information:

Target audience groups:

Target Audience Groups	Support Organization
1. Speech/Language Learning Disability/ADD & ADHD	Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)
2. Autism	Special Education Advisory Committee of Arlington
3. Intellectual Disability & Developmental Delay/MRID	ARC of NoVA
4. Emotional Disability/ED	
5. Sensory (Hearing Impaired/Sight Impaired)	
6. Homeschooled Students	

According to the Virginia Department of Education, the first three audience groups represent the largest proportion of the special needs population and consequently, should serve as our target participants for the focus groups. ("Special Education Child Count Reports," 2009) Parents from these focus groups and parents from the remaining three audience groups should be recruited to participate in the walk-throughs.

Cherie Takemoto provided the Design Team with the contacts for each group, the initial communication with the contacts, and the rationale for dividing the group according to the type of special need. Each organization is focused on a particular category of disabilities and parents participate in the organization relevant to the special needs of their children. Parents' individual information needs vary depending on the type and severity of the child's special need. Understanding the various information needs of each group of parents is vital to successful completion of the design project.

5.4 Minimum Resource Needs for the Design Team

The design team found the following to be resources. These resources serve to leverage what the team currently knows about T/TAC Online as well as continue to offer information and support to the team.

- Access to the Mason T/TAC Technical Support Team for coding/programming of website facilitates the job of the design team. The design team focuses its efforts only on gathering data, analyzing it and finding what the parents' needs are in order to design the website.
- Ongoing project sponsorship from the Mason T/TAC Team helps the design team in various ways: The design team conducts focus groups and provides refreshments for participating parents; the Mason T/TAC Team provides the design team with recording devices to record the focus groups and the Mason T/TAC Team helps the design team recruit parents for the walk-throughs.
- Content analysis of the existing T/TAC Online website serves as an indicator pointing to avenues for further exploration.
- Ongoing collaboration with Arc of NoVA, PEATC, and Special Education Advisory Committee of Arlington provides access to target audiences. Parents of children with special

needs who are members of these organizations volunteer to participate in the focus groups as well as the walk-throughs.

- Weekly access to Subject Matter Experts provides the design team with continuous interaction in order to benefit from their knowledge and get needed information promptly.

5.5 Limitations and Constraints for the Design Team
The design team found the following to be barriers:

- Lack of direct contact with the client hinders clarity and accuracy of communication.
- Lack of direct access to target audiences makes it hard for the design team to get immediate feedback.
- Language used, including acronyms and terminology, on T/TAC Online website is not necessarily understandable to the non-technical user. As a result, the design team faces some difficulty understanding what is meant by technical terms on the T/TAC website. The design team believes this might pose an obstacle to parents who are unfamiliar with technical terms.
- Project scope must be completed by May 2011, the end of the Mason academic year.

6.0 Design Team Vision, Mission, and Goals

6.1 Vision
The content and presentation of T/TAC Online will be improved and expanded to create a concise, informative, and user-friendly model for the parents of children with special needs.

6.2 Mission
To develop a web site to leverage the current T/TAC Online information and resources while incorporating new information that will fulfill the needs of the parents with children of special needs.

6.3 Goals

- Create T/TAC Online for Parents that integrates current T/TAC Online content and incorporates new, relevant content.
- Ensure a positive user experience for parents, providing a user-friendly easily navigable site.
- Deliver the project in a timely manner.
- Keep in compliance with Section 508/ADA.

7.0 Next Steps

The next step for the design team will be to conduct a detailed needs assessment to make decisions about priorities and about actions to meet the needs. That will be accomplished by conducting focus groups and T/TAC Online walk-throughs. The design team will develop a data gathering plan, conduct the data gathering, analyze the data, and then report the findings as part of the Performance Analysis/Needs Assessment document.