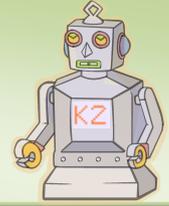


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K2 Consulting Firm

Longwood University's Unity Alliance Communication Audit

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Table of Contents

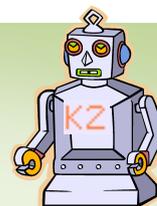
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
Research Methods	3-4
Organizational Strengths	5-6
Opportunities for Improvement	7-9
Interview and Survey Results	10-12
Recommendations	13-14
Conclusion	15-16

Appendix

Interview Guide	17
Survey Guide	18-30

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Unity Alliance Communication Audit is to improve communication within the client's organization through identifying strengths and weaknesses while presenting opportunities for improvement in order to better the organization as a whole.

- **Creating a comfortable environment**
It is a goal of the organization to make the internal communication open to all members and foster positive personal and professional relationships throughout the organization.
- **Awareness**
Many students on campus are unaware of exactly what the client's purpose and goals are. Through this audit, it will be possible for the client's goals to be more clearly conveyed. Unity Alliance works very hard to get their message across the Longwood Campus, though through this communication audit, the K2 Consultants realize that the organization is not always very effective in doing this.
- **Teamwork**
The strongest organization is one in which each member has a task to perform and no one member is burdened with a severe workload. Moreover, a strong organization is one in which all of the members work together and strive to keep the organization's best interest in mind. Through this audit, we found that tasks are not being properly delegated, and there is a severe lack of commitment amongst the members of Unity Alliance.

Introduction

Through a detailed communication audit, K2 Consultants assisted Unity Alliance in improving their communication— both within the organization and with the students of Longwood's campus. This audit took place over the course of the fall 2010 semester and Unity Alliance granted K2 Consultants full permission to carry out the audit and agreed to fully cooperate in order to make the audit a success.

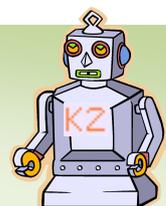
Research Methods

Throughout the semester, interviews with Unity Alliance members, surveys, and observations were used to create a profile of the organization in its current state. This profile was then used to identify the positive aspects of the organization's communication as well as suggestions on how the organization could be improved.

- **Observations**
K2 Consultants regularly attended Unity Alliance meetings to personally experience how meetings are run and the tone in which they are conducted. It was observed that the meetings were typically very informal and that the Unity Alliance members seemed very content during these times. However, not all members were in regular attendance at the meetings.

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- **Interviews**

A broad spectrum of Unity Alliance members were selected to be interviewed based on their level of involvement within the organization. This spectrum ranged from executive board members with significant time invested in the organization to new members who had little experience and held no office position. In these interviews, members were asked to candidly answer questions regarding how they felt about the organization as a whole based on the interview guide constructed by the K2 consultants. This interview guide was tailored to probe areas of concern based upon our observations.
- **Surveys**

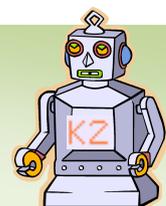
Using *surveymonkey.com*, a brief survey was conducted in order to ascertain the feelings of the Unity Alliance members regarding the communication climate within the organization. In order to seek out members to participate in our survey, we provided the secretary of Unity Alliance with a link to the survey to be included in their weekly e-mail and sent out as a mass text message. After few members had participated, in an effort to boost the number of participants, representatives from the K2 consultants handed out lollipops with the survey link attached at the beginning of a Unity Alliance meeting.
- **Limitations**

K2 Consultants were presented with a challenge when working to obtain a survey sample size that fairly and accurately represented Unity Alliance. We recognize three potential reasons explaining this: (1) privacy concerns, (2) timing, and (3) lack of commitment. Though a vow of confidentiality was taken at the beginning of this communication audit, we recognize that participants may still not have felt comfortable sharing information with us in fear of being judged. Additionally, we understand that the timing of the surveys and interviews may have swayed members from participating since it was later in the semester when most students have higher workloads and stress levels. Finally, the K2 Consultants realize that the last option is also the most probable; a general lack of commitment within the organization.
- **Organization Report**

Through a detailed analysis, K2 Consultants were able to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement that will assist the Unity Alliance in achieving their goals.

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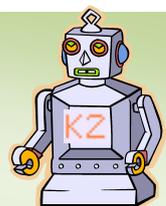
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Organizational Strengths

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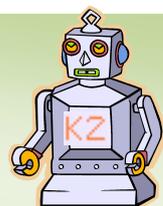
Organizational Strengths

K2 Consultants were able to identify six main strengths within Unity Alliance through observations of the organization and interviews conducted.

- **Ideas**
Unity Alliance, especially the executive board, has many ideas about the goals of the organization. These ideas include Oktoberfest and Spring Weekend booths, campus awareness events, and social events to be held for the organization. It is evident that each member has a creative vision of where they want to see the organization.
- **Educational Information**
Unity Alliance offers valuable information to students across the campus. They hold panels and information sessions to share what it's like to be homosexual or to be an ally. These events are also usually well attended.
- **Social Aspect**
Members regularly engage in social events held outside of the organization, creating bonds among them. This strengthens the organization and makes the atmosphere much more comfortable, which is a goal to most members.
- **Communication Channels**
Information is distributed through e-mails and text messages. Members are always informed of what has happened at meetings they missed through recorded minutes. Facebook is also commonly used to communicate with the campus as well as reiterate information to the organization's members.
- **Weekly Meetings**
Regularly scheduled weekly meetings keep the face to face contact between members frequent. The more frequently members are in contact with each other, the more likely it is for the communication to become stronger.
- **Hampden-Sydney College Connection**
Having a connection to the Unity Alliance located at Hampden-Sydney College is highly beneficial. The relationship provides a unique opportunity to not only expand the organization's contacts with other members, but to promote communication between Hampden-Sydney and Longwood. The two organizations are able to sponsor events together and support one another.

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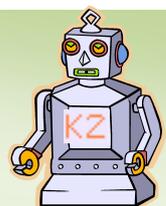
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Opportunities for Improvement

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Opportunities for Improvement

Through K2's research, team members found several areas in which Unity Alliance could progress in order to improve their communication with the goal of becoming a better organization as a whole.

- Commitment
 - Commitment

It was observed that not all members are fully committed to the organization. When volunteers are needed for tasks such as tabling on campus or attending social events as a member of Unity Alliance, few members step up. Furthermore, it is usually the same few people volunteering each time. In addition, there are many members who do not pay any dues, which impairs the organization as a whole because then the funds must be used much more sparingly.
 - Delegation

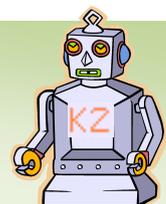
Throughout the interviews conducted, the majority of interviewees claimed that one of biggest issues within the organization was that tasks are delegated in an extremely poor manner. The members of the executive board handle most, if not all, tasks themselves. This creates severe tension amongst the rest of the members, because they feel left out even if they want to be involved. Also, this involves the tasks processes theory which relates to how tasks are delegated and performed. If everyone is aware of what their job is, it's easier for them to complete it.
 - Directionality of Communication Flow

The flow of communication within the organization is very poor. Horizontal flow is divided in groups because of the different cliques that have little contact with one another. There is also a very poor relationship between the executive board and the rest of the organization, making the vertical flow of information poor as well.
- Public Relations
 - Planning

While many members have ideas about what they want for Unity Alliance, they rarely come to completion due to poor planning or no planning at all. The organization would be much more effective if there was a collective effort to follow through on ideas. Furthermore, ideas that are followed through tend to be poorly planned with frequent last minute changes.
 - Advertising

Through our research methods, as well as experience as students on the Longwood campus, we found that Unity Alliance does not advertise themselves or their events well. Many events do not have a large turnout aside from organization members or those required to attend for school purposes.
 - Public Perception

While Unity Alliance is known on campus, many people still do not know exactly what the organization does or what they stand for. Several interviewees even mentioned that they do not want the Unity Alliance to be known as the "gay club."



- Inefficient Meetings

- Cliques

It was observed during meetings and mentioned in interviews that a major issue within the organization is the split between small groups of friends. The organization as a whole seems to be divided into sects and does not seem to operate as efficiently as if it were one collective unit.

- Inappropriate/Off-Topic Discussions

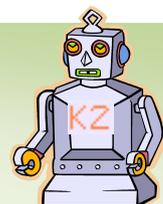
An observation made by all of the members of K2 Consultants was that during meetings, discussions about conducting business are difficult to engage in due to the fact that there are many off-topic discussions that constantly arise. It is a frequent tendency of the organization to get side-tracked. Members fighting for attention in meetings pose a problem, as well. When suggestions are asked for, members will frequently voice options they know are not legitimate such as bringing Lady Gaga to Longwood.

- Meeting Room

The Unity Alliance meeting room is very comfortable and welcoming; however, members tend to get too comfortable and forget that Unity Alliance is an actual organization, not just a hangout. It does not support an environment for discussing business or accomplishing tasks.

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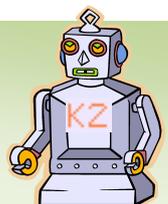
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Interview and Survey Results

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Interview and Survey Results

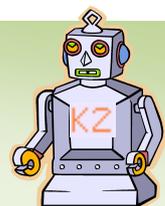
K2 Consultants interviewed six members of Unity Alliance: four executive members, one general member, and one member who had resigned from an executive position. Through the interviews, team members found five areas of concern.

- **Delegation**
From the interviews, 100% of participants expressed a concern in the way tasks were delegated throughout the organization. As Unity Alliance is suffering from low involvement and the loss of several executive board positions, the remainder of the executive board, particularly the president, has taken over all tasks.
- **Control**
From the interviews, 67% of the participants informed the K2 Consultants, either directly or indirectly, that they felt as if the executive board was unwilling to allow general members to provide input to the organization. Basically, general members expressed concern that even when they presented their ideas, the executive board disregarded them. Additionally, going hand in hand with delegation, general members and even a former member of the executive board felt as if the executive board was unwilling to let other members help with events or other tasks for fear that it would be done incorrectly.
- **Lack of Commitment/Social Club**
Possibly as a result of the prior two issues, 100% of our interview participants felt as if members were not committed to Unity Alliance. Many of the members see the organization as strictly social, and therefore do not take Unity Alliance seriously. People no longer sign up to help with events, or when they do it is unlikely that they will keep their word.
- **Comparison to Previous Years**
With the exclusion of one participant who was a new member this year, 100% of the interview participants made reference to things done differently in past years. These things included past events, higher involvement, rules that are no longer followed, as well as things that were done that made the organization run much more smoothly and effectively than they presently do.
- **Low Involvement**
Two of the executive members that were interviewed expressed concern that members do not speak their mind during times of brainstorming for the organization. These two members felt frustrated that people would not speak up, yet they continually feel the need to complain when things do not go their way or they are dissatisfied with the way something played out.

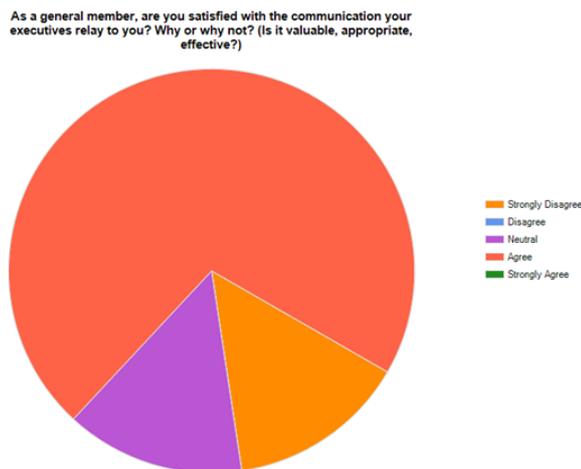
K2 Consulting Firm had low participation with the survey due to limitations previously stated. After analyzing the survey results, team members found it difficult to reach a conclusion on several questions because the answers were so varied. However, for some questions there were answers that seemed typical of most respondents.

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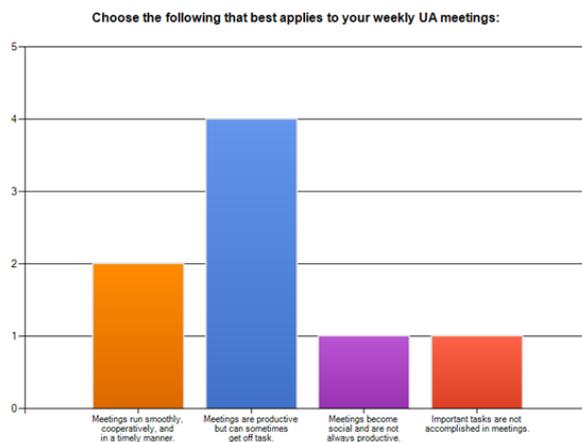
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- In the open-ended question asking what members of Unity Alliance would like to communicate to the campus, four of the seven respondents wanted people to know they were more than just a “gay club” and that they were a community where people could feel safe with one another.
- When members were asked if they were satisfied with the communication their executives relay to them, five out of seven respondents agreed.



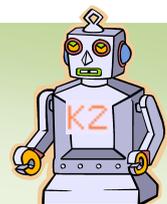
- When members were asked how weekly meetings run, four out of six respondents said the meetings were productive but tend to get off task.



- When asked how committed do they think other members are in an open-ended question, half of the respondents said somewhat to very committed, while the other half expressed concern. One member said that many people in the organization don't do anything, while another said that the group is a “clique”.
- When members were asked to choose words that described the meetings, only one person picked a negative word. Most of the words chosen were positive such as, “cheerful”, “comforting”, and “welcoming”.

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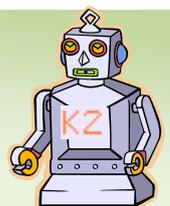
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Recommendations

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Recommendations

K2 Consultants feel the recommendations stated below will help Unity Alliance improve their communication with each other as well as with the campus, to better their organization as a whole.

- **Meetings in a Separate Room**

We feel that it would be highly beneficial for Unity Alliance to conduct business in a more formal setting such as the Amelia Room in the Student Union. The Unity Alliance room in the basement of the Student Union could be used primarily as a place for members to socialize and recruit new members. With this solution, business and pleasure would be kept separate, creating a more efficient culture within the organization.
- **Update Constitution**

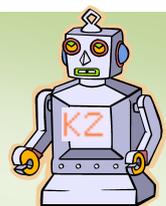
We feel that it would be highly beneficial for Unity Alliance to update their constitution in order to improve the communication climate of the organization. In doing this, Unity Alliance should develop goals for each aspect of the organization: social, educational, and business. Under the business aspect of the organization, Unity Alliance should consider making both meetings and dues mandatory.
- **Build Upon Strengths**

The K2 Consultants found many strengths of the organization. We feel, though, that by improving upon the things that Unity Alliance already does well they will be able to become an even stronger organization.
- **Train Younger Members**

There are no young members on the executive board. This is a serious issue because when all of the members of the executive board graduate, there will be no one left in the organization that has any experience in an executive board position. This can lead to the dissolving of the entire organization in a worst-case scenario. This relates to the innovation function theory because it's allowing members of the organization to be resources for suggestion to change and improvement. If newer members are able to advance in rank, it will benefit the organization overall.

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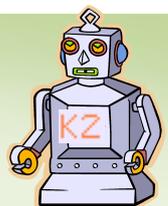
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Conclusion

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Conclusion

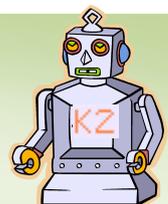
Overall, the lack of participation from Unity Alliance was a limitation within K2's audit. However, from the information we were able to obtain, it wasn't surprising that members weren't willing to cooperate.

Unity Alliance has strengths in their educational information as well as the social aspect of the group. Members feel comfortable around one another which can strengthen the atmosphere.

Some areas that raised concern with team members are the lack of commitment from members, their public relations efforts and public perception, and their ineffective meetings. Recommendations have been made by K2 for these opportunities of improvement in Unity Alliance.

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Appendix: Interview Guide and Survey Questions

Interview Guide

- * Auditor and reporter introduction and explanation of the purpose of the interview
~ Remind interviewee of our confidentiality policy
- * Identify name and position of the interviewee
- 3. Describe your position in the organization:
 - a) What are your chief responsibilities and duties?
 - b) With whom or with what positions do you regularly communicate?
 - c) What factors tend to facilitate your effectiveness on the job? Please give an example.
 - d) What, if anything, inhibits your effectiveness?
- 4. Describe the way decisions are made in your organization.
 - a) What decisions do you normally make?
 - b) What information do you need to make these decisions?
 - c) Are there formal or informal policies that determine how you get information?
- 5. Describe the organization's/unit's primary objectives for this year:
 - a) How does the organization know when it has done a good or a bad job? What are the criteria for success?
 - b) What are your own personal objectives?
 - c) What communication strategies does one use to achieve them?
- 6. How would you evaluate your manager in terms of:
 - a) Openness to new ideas?
 - b) Willingness to share information?
 - c) Ability to clarify expectations?
 - d) Ability to coordinate the work in the unit?
- 7. What do you see as the greatest unresolved problem of this organization?
- 8. How would you describe the general communication climate here?
- 9. How does your physical work setting here affect your communication?
- 10. What are the major communication strengths of the organization? Be specific.
- 11. What are the major communication weaknesses of the organization? Be specific.
- 12. Is there anything that I have left out that I should have included?
- * Thank the interviewee for their time and input.

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