



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES OF PENNSYLVANIA (AICUP)

PROMOTING THE PATH TO PARTNERSHIP

THE CHALLENGE

It started with a request. The CIO of a member university asked Tim Alexander, Vice President of Finance and Administration of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP), to think about creating an association-wide contract with a board portal company. "Member boards were ready to convert the paper process to an electronic version," he recalls.

So Tim surveyed his 90 member schools and found a wide range of existing options, from online platforms to home grown software, to their own websites, but there was no go-to provider or consensus on the right tool.

THE SOLUTION

Ironically, Tim found the answer by leaving Pennsylvania, home to both AICUP and BoardEffect. According to Tim, his counterpart in a peer organization in Florida raved about BoardEffect as a user for some time. "He practically smacked me, explaining the solution was an obvious, cost-effective, no-brainer – in our own backyard!"

Tim was wowed from his first demo. "Shifting from administrative to end user modes, and even the iPad view, looked seamless." He knew very few of his members' administrators would be able to engage a lot of IT support, so BoardEffect was an obvious preferred choice.



Among AICUP's goals is to provide leveraged discounts to members, and BoardEffect presented a proposal to make the platform not only affordable, but irresistible. "The company sent an executive to help me demonstrate the software and pitch to my committees and board. We worked together from the start to serve AICUP members and BoardEffect offered a trifecta—well-priced, highly-functional and user-friendly for non-IT professionals."

THE BENEFITS

So far, approximately one third of AICUP members are using or considering using , up from only four organizations two years ago. And, Tim explains, "we have a good success story that will continue to replicate. Some schools still use other tools, like password-protected pages on their websites, but such options are less secure."



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Tim tells members to divide the annual cost of BoardEffect by 12 months, then by 365 days per year, 24 hours per day. “THAT’s how much they DON’T need to spend for IT support on a homegrown eGovernance system.” Even when an organization has no budget for technology, he explains, “the cost of BoardEffect is less than what they’re spending on paper, copying and staff time. If a board adds four new board members a year, the cost of creating their orientation packets alone is excessive. With BoardEffect, they simply can deactivate the outgoing board members, activate the new ones and provide access to all the materials they’ll need for review at their own pace.”

“Yes,” he adds, “member institutions have board members who have NO email, by choice, yet they still log on. And, if need be, an administrator can download a board book PDF and send it for color printing at the Kinko’s nearest any board member who prefers to pick up a hard copy at his or her own expense.”

THE PERKS OF PARTNERSHIP

To use BoardEffect most effectively, Tim offers this guidance:

At AICUP, Tim embraces his role in finding business services where leveraged services or group pricing will result in something better for members than they can arrange on their own. “Simply for the effort of working together, BoardEffect and AICUP have added great value to colleges and universities in Pennsylvania.”

Tim identifies what makes the partnership work so well:

- High attention—“The BoardEffect team made a leap of faith that we’d serve as a great reference to our 90 member organizations. Various leaders go out of their way to make sure our needs are always met, effectively and creatively.”
- Ongoing improvement—“The momentum at BoardEffect shows in the company’s growth and resources devoted to the software application. Other companies can replicate or enhance technology, but no one else is so focused on improving board governance.”
- Thought leadership—“The team cares and knows about governance. They offer expertise not only about software, but also board decision-making and different modes of governance.”
- Nonprofit focus—“BoardEffect understands our members, recognizing that nonprofit colleges and universities don’t have resources to spend on anything not related to students. This tool saves them money in paper, postage and time.”
- Flexibility—“We feel our arrangement with BoardEffect is unique, partly because the team was so creative in addressing our needs. And, as our needs change, BoardEffect remains both flexible and steadfast in accommodating our members.”



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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Tim is creative in leveraging his relationship with BoardEffect to benefit his members through initiatives such as:

- Offering a weekly webinar to members for both current and prospective BoardEffect users. "I demonstrate how easy it should be to build a board book, and someone from BoardEffect joins me monthly to keep it fresh."
- Reiterating the highlights of any news that comes out from BoardEffect in a follow-up notice to members from his office.
- Setting up a special workroom in an AICUP shared platform where BoardEffect administrators can message each other to ask about best practices, such as "what instructions did you give to your board when you implemented BoardEffect?"
- Covering half the registration cost for members to attend the BoardEffect users conference to promote ongoing learning and collaboration with other platform administrators.
- Providing an opportunity for new administrators to step out of their offices and gain confidence through training, co-facilitated by someone he's invited from the BoardEffect team.

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