

Community Project Report: Project Coordinator for Taste Before You Waste

Name: Emma Greenwood

Contact: emmagreenwood7@gmail.com

Community Project: Taste Before You Waste

Student ID: 10323392

Major: Social Science: Anthropology and Sociology

Period: Jan 2015

Tutor: Dr. Jonathan Gill

CP Supervisor: Dennis Baranic

Contact: Dennis@TasteBeforeYouWaste.com

Date: February 2nd, 2015

Word Count: 2,876

Overview of Community Project

a.) Description of community project

I completed my community project with the student initiated organization Taste Before You Waste. Taste Before You Waste is an organization that aims to promote the awareness of the global issue of food waste. They mainly do this at a local level by working with different grocery stores within the east of Amsterdam in which these groceries donate food that would have otherwise been thrown away. Taste Before You Waste then utilizes this food by donating it to local charities, organizing weekly food markets, and also by hosting public dinners at the community center De Meevaart.

The designated job role I was given by the founder of Taste Before You Waste was to be the project coordinator of a project concept she had in mind to be implemented for the summer of 2015. The idea is for Taste Before You Waste to participate as an artistic simulation of the food production system at different festivals within Amsterdam as a way to both promote awareness on food waste and to implement a regular means for funding for the organization. The goal of this simulation is to be an absurd and disorienting experience for participants to put them outside of their comfort zone as a way to make them think. To think about how much food is wasted in the production system and to show them how this “unsellable” food can be used to create a delicious meal. The role that was designated to me specifically for my community project was to create a concrete project plan for the project itself. I have experience with structuring project plans as the president of my student council in high school, thus it was something I expressed enthusiasm for during the initial application process with Taste Before You Waste. The tasks I was responsible to complete as project coordinator for this project plan included: creating a project schedule for the year of 2015 creating specific tasks for each phase of the project; coming up with a clear project description by describing its main objectives,

goals, assumptions and feasibility; creating designated job roles to make up a project team and describing what each role will entail; creating a contact list of different festivals in Amsterdam for 2015; and creating a task list with both short-term and long-term project goals.

The first step as project coordinator was to research how such a project should be structured. Therefore, for the month of December, I mainly focused on conducting research on different project initiatives within Amsterdam that resembled similar interests as the project for Taste Before You Waste. This mainly entailed me searching other food waste organizations within Amsterdam and viewing the different kinds of events that they put together and how they were organized and structured. The point of this was to gain a better understanding of the feasibility of the project I was in charge of structuring. I felt as though it was important to do such research before actually drafting a project plan in order to gain a more well-rounded understanding of the ways in which such a production should be created. During my research, I contacted the head of the communications department of the Food Cabinet within Amsterdam. I felt as though it was important for me to establish contact with someone who has similar working experience with the same cause of food waste and with organizing similar project initiatives as the one Taste Before You Waste has in mind. We arranged for a meeting in the beginning of January as an opportunity for me to ask her questions I had about how exactly the Food Cabinet organizes a team to put on different events. The Food Cabinet has put on several different kinds of food festivals and has worked with many different organizations within Amsterdam to do so, thus the meeting was incredibly useful.

At the point of the meeting, I already had a rough idea of how I thought the project itself should be structured and had a draft project schedule in mind. During this meeting, she went over how the organization generally structures its team in order to manage putting on different events

and festivals. From this, I was able to rework some of the roles I already had in mind for how the project team for Taste Before You Waste should be structured. Additionally, I went over the draft plan I already had and asked if she had any other further suggestions for the direction in which I should progress in as the project coordinator. Her suggestions were extremely useful and constructive, and from this meeting I gained more reassurance for how to move forward.

After researching how exactly to structure such a project plan, I used the month of January to finalize the drafted project plan. This first included coming up with a clear and concise project description of the project itself. In this project description, I described the concept of the project, its main objective, and its short-term and long-term goals. After creating a clear project description, I created a project schedule month-by-month for which tasks and goals should be completed in order to be successfully ready by the summer. This schedule is broken down into different project phases which are: project planning, project initiation, trial phase, project implementation, and project evaluations. By breaking the project down step-by-step helps create a clearer reference point for the project team to rely on over the course of implementing the project plan. In addition to the schedule overview between January to the end of the Summer, I created a list of more specific tasks for each month.

After I created a list of the different job roles that should be included in the project teams. I structured this as two different teams: one executive team and one creative team. The function of the executive team is to manage all the components of the project plan in order to execute by the summer of 2015. On the other hand, the creative will be responsible for bringing to life the artistic concept by building and creating the components of the actual food system simulation. The executive team will be made up of the following roles: Project Manager, Project Sponsor, Head of Production, Head of Public Relations, and the Artistic Director. In addition to these

roles, there will also be project team members who will help assist the project team in fulfilling their job functions. For each role, I created a list of what each role will actually entail. After creating this list of roles, I worked with other members of Taste Before You Waste to advertise these jobs to AUC students to participate with this project as their spring community project. This included contacting AUCSA to have these jobs promoted in their weekly newsletter, creating flyers to hang around the dorms and AUC, and promoting these jobs in Taste Before You Waste's monthly newsletter. Furthermore, I also created a contact list of over forty different festivals that take place in Amsterdam over the summer. This list included the name of the festival, the date in which it will happen, a description, and also contact information. The idea is to contact as many festivals as possible to ask what their procedure is in order to participate as a catering and art production.

Since the beginning of working with Taste Before You Waste, I have also attended their weekly meetings held at AUC. During these meetings I would update the other members on the progress of my project planning. I worked closely with the temporary chair of Taste Before You Waste and another intern on evaluating each stage of the planning process and coming up with what exactly needed to be done next. I also maintained regular contact with the Chair of Taste Before You Waste whom was away for the semester by having Skype meetings. During these Skype meetings, I would also update the Chair on my progress and use it as an opportunity to ask any questions I had on moving forward. Therefore, there was clear and constant communication between myself and other members of the organization in regards to each phase of the project plan that took place over the course of the intensive period.

In addition to structuring this project plan, I also participated with other aspects of Taste Before You Waste that was not directly related to the project. This included helping out as a

cook at the weekly dinners Taste Before You Waste holds at the community center De Meevaart. During these dinners, I worked a shift helping put together the dinner in whatever way I was useful. This included: washing, chopping, preparing, and cooking different foods; washing and putting away dishes; cleaning up any left over food; interacting with other members of the community who joined the dinner; and cleaning the kitchen after the meal. These dinners were an enjoyable experience in which I actually got to see the food that would have been thrown away otherwise made into a delicious meal. Actually seeing the amount of food that would have been wasted if it had not been picked up by Taste Before You Waste helped reinforce the organization's message to me personally. It has become a cause that I personally have become to feel passionate about as well, which was something that I had not really initially thought about otherwise. I feel as though that it is important as the project coordinator to share similar beliefs as the organization itself in order to do my job to the best of my ability.

I feel as though the activities that I have done for Taste Before You Waste has helped create a clear and structured plan for how the project should exactly be conducted. By creating a concise project plan, Taste Before You Waste now has a reference point that explains exactly what the project will actually entail. In addition, by creating a clear project schedule, the project team will now have a step-by-step guide for the short-term and long-term goals and tasks that need to be completed in order to be ready by the summer. I think this has been a major contribution for not only the project itself but also the organization. By creating a structured plan, a list of weekly tasks, maintaining constant communication, and keeping the bigger picture always in mind.

b.) Skills, insights, and knowledge gained

Throughout my participation with Taste Before You Waste, I have gained an great amount of knowledge on the issue of food waste itself. This was something that I was aware of but not something that I necessarily incorporated into my daily habits with food. I think that has been an important contribution to what I can take away from doing my community project with Taste Before You Waste, that their cause has actually affected the ways in which I think about food.

In addition to gaining general knowledge on the cause of food waste, I have also gained insight on how to structure and organize such a project plan. This has helped me to both think about both short-term and long-term goals that are involved in moving a project along. That in order to complete the big picture idea, a plan must be broken into very specific steps. Therefore, I have developed a better understanding on how to balance the small details of a project with its bigger picture. I found that striking this right balance was the most productive way to progress. Moreover, I have also learned that clear and constant communication is extremely helpful when working with a team. I have learned that the more organized and concise you are with each step of the project, the easier it is to move forward. That although sometimes things may seem redundant or obvious, it is important to have a full understanding of all aspects of a project in order to prevent future confusion. Furthermore, I have learned that it is always important to maintain an open and professional relationship with other members in order to work together to complete all necessary tasks and accomplish collective goals.

In addition, I have learned that is it extremely important to learn the ins-and-outs of an organization if you are given a role such as a project coordinator. I was thankful that I did not only spend all my time focusing on my designated role, but also participated in other aspects of the organization in order to gain a full understanding in regards to what they are actually about. Also, I learned that it is always best to remain open, professional, and enthusiastic about what

your doing because I think it is extremely reflective in the work your produce. I have experience with organizing events, managing a team, and delegating tasks as the head of the student council in high school, and I thoroughly enjoyed using this skill set again as the project coordinator for Taste Before You Waste. I found the work that I did for Taste Before You Waste to be quite different than kind of work I have been used to doing in my courses at AUC. I had to work more on a team with Taste Before You Waste more than I did doing independent work for my classes. Also, I had to set the deadlines for myself instead of having deadlines provided to me by my professors. Therefore, I had to have more more self discipline in making sure the tasks that were set out for me to do were completed in time. Thus, the pressure to do a good job came more from within my self. I actually intend to work with Taste Before You Waste as a team member on the executive team for the project plan. I thoroughly enjoyed working on the project planning phase and feel as though I want to see the project all the way through.

c. Evaluation and reflection

I feel proud of the work that I have produced as project coordinator for Taste Before You Waste. I was able to meet all the short-term and long-term goals I had set for myself. I think that the other members of the organization including the Chair also feel as though my work has been sufficient. There was constant and clear communication over the course of the entire intensive period, which helped create a good relationship between myself and the other members of the organization. The expectations I initially had in the application phases of my community project were all met. I had an idea that I would enjoy the challenge of coming up with such a project plan. Organizing, structuring, and managing such plans is something that I have experience with and that I enjoy, therefore I knew I would be able to complete what was designated to me.

The aspect what was better than I had expected was that there was a great deal of trust placed in my ability to actually come up with such a plan. I thought there would need to be more communication on approving different aspects of the project phases before moving forward, but I was given the freedom to work in the way that was most suitable for myself. Therefore, I enjoyed the flexibility of the organization. I think a criticism that I would have for Taste Before You Waste is that it should be a bit more structured in terms of weekly meetings, coming up with agendas, tasks list, etc. I think it would be beneficial to organize more aspects of the organization in the same format in which this project plan was structured.

Working as the project coordinator for Taste Before You Waste reminded me that this is the kind of work that I enjoy doing the most and something that I feel as though I am naturally good at. It helped reiterate to myself that in terms of a long-term career I would definitely want to work with an organization in which I believe in their cause. In addition, I thoroughly enjoy working on a team with different people who share similar goals as myself. I would enjoy working as the head of public relations for the project as that is something that I would perhaps like to explore as a career in the future. Working with Taste Before You Waste was an enjoyable way to end of experience at AUC. It was a different kind of working environment that I have been used to over the last three years with working on a team to accomplish collective goals. It has definitely enriched my experience and I look forward to continuing working with Taste Before You Waste on the project that I helped structure and organize but also with just the organization itself.

