



Free Information Technology engineering for social innovators

OUR IDENTITY

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- Organization Website: <http://www.wecena.com/>
- Organization Description: Provides ambitious non-profit social innovators with free IT engineering and consulting services.
- Location: Maurepas (Paris region) France
- Existence: Since 2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our identity.....	1
What is our new, innovative idea to create lasting social change?.....	2
What drew me to this issue? When and how did I come up with this idea?.....	2
Let's demonstrate the need for our organization, using statistics and references.....	3
What's the root cause of this problem? How does our idea tackle this root cause?.....	3
What is wecena.com doing ? What are the specific programs that our organization engages in to deliver our long-term outcomes.....	4
What are our long-term desired outcomes ? How will we measure our progress toward these outcomes?.....	4
Building a new organization is challenging. How am I entrepreneurial? Here are my skills and experiences that demonstrate I can lead a start-up organization.....	5
Why am I uniquely qualified to lead this specific organization? Here is my experience working with this issue and population.....	5
How much money have I fundraised to date? Who is my largest funder ? Here is an estimate of my total budget for each of the next two fiscal years.....	6

WHAT IS OUR NEW, INNOVATIVE IDEA TO CREATE LASTING SOCIAL CHANGE?

Wecena services are pro bono (free) Information Technology (IT) engineering and consulting services that allow nonprofits' big IT projects to benefit from at least 1 person-year of professional IT skills each. Wecena services bridge the digital skills divide between nonprofits and corporations.

Access to corporate-grade IT skills will enable yet unforeseen technology-based social innovations. It will also allow nonprofits to increase the scalability and efficiency of their programs.

Wecena services are offered by engaging French IT services firms into delivering big amounts of pro bono work then by also turning pro bono IT consultants (work time) into volunteers (free time).

We use the French tax benefits systems to have IT firms donate big amounts of pro bono work to both French and non-French nonprofit organizations.

Everyday, the French IT services industry pays the salary of more than 10,000 employed on-the-bench (idle) consultants who are inactively waiting for their next customer engagement. The French tax law generates significant tax savings for employers who deliver pro bono work for non-profits. Wecena donors agree to give these tax savings back to nonprofits as an additional budget that allows us to get paid.

WHAT DREW ME TO THIS ISSUE? WHEN AND HOW DID I COME UP WITH THIS IDEA?

Having been scouting since 8, I could feel there was something beyond life in French cosy suburbs.

When 18, a friend (and role model!) of mine, both social worker and priest, introduced me to a community immigrant youth nonprofit « in the hoo »d. We gathered a small team of young volunteers from the community and I led our video making project. Awarded as the best youth project of 1992 by the French scouting organization, I followed-up in 1996 by creating a national nonprofit program using the Internet as a children attractor for 10 community centers.

Volunteering in communities allowed me to discover what real life means: how both enriching and challenging diversity is. As a geek, I then realized I can't have more fun and accomplish myself better than by devoting my career to bridging social gaps using my engineering skills. Having assisted more than 10 nonprofits in their technology programs, I identified that their scarcest IT resource is not hardware nor software but corporate-grade skills. Seeing the amount of brain power being wasted in the IT industry, I researched ways for tapping this source then invented and funded wecena.com.

LET'S DEMONSTRATE THE NEED FOR OUR ORGANIZATION, USING STATISTICS AND REFERENCES.

Among nonprofits having received assistance from the US trade association for nonprofit technology assistance providers (NTEN, 2003 survey), 95% consider IT as important for them to achieve their mission and for the non-profit sector as a whole. IT has improved the ability of 87% of them to reach more people in need of their services.

But IT budgets are extremely limited. Around 50% of non-profits spend less than 1% of their budget on IT (Leverus.com 2004 ; Bayer Center for Non-Profits Management 2006). Even big NGOs spend less than 2.5% in IT compared to a 2.6% to 8.0% figure for like-sized public and private sector organizations (NetHope 2008). 57% of US foundations consider their technology adoption to be lagging behind (Grantmakers Information Technology Survey Report, 2007). IT cost is the most often mentioned barrier to tech adoption.

In France, 1 year of IT engineering costs about 80 kEUR. But 92% of French non-profits have a budget of less than 100 kEUR.

Wecena services represent significant in-kind resources for non-profits. We can boost their ability to achieve their mission and let them become early adopters (if not designers) of socially impactful IT.

WHAT'S THE ROOT CAUSE OF THIS PROBLEM? HOW DOES OUR IDEA TACKLE THIS ROOT CAUSE?

Time spent idle on the bench by consultants is considered a non-avoidable waste in the IT service industry. There has been no channel for recycling this waste so far. Such time is most often too short for any productive assignment: unless costly knowledge management (KM) methods and tools are used, learning a new project context takes some time and knowledge can't easily be transferred from consultant to consultant. Most IT firms would rather invest in sales efforts to reduce the size of their bench. And there has never been any effort at marketing pro bono work as a solution to their own specific needs.

The French laws allows wecena services to generate significant tax savings which are converted back into money donations for supported nonprofits. With this money, wecena.com is hired to offer appropriate KM methods and tools that let consultants become productive fast enough and which encourage them to become volunteers once their pro bono mission has ended. We thus sell IT firms a zero-cost opportunity to increase their Corporate Social Responsibility which allows them to recruit and retain better consulting talent. We distribute free IT skills and provide productivity support.

WHAT IS WECENA.COM DOING ? WHAT ARE THE SPECIFIC PROGRAMS THAT OUR ORGANIZATION ENGAGES IN TO DELIVER OUR LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

A nonprofit (NP) requires better or new information technology for its new program. The NP staff leads the project and hires wecena.com for providing complementary IT staff for free.

Wecena.com allows the NP to promote its program while emphasizing both its skills requirements and its expected social impact. Wecena.com identifies and meets French IT service firms which offer proper skills and services and sells the NP program needs to the IT firm.

On-the-bench consultants apply on wecena.com for the program of the NP on a voluntary basis. The best of them starts the mission at the NP premises. After a couple of weeks, she stops and moves on to a new commercial engagement. Another on-the-bench consultant takes on the tasks left by her colleague. The NP staff uses wecena.com as a knowledge continuity management platform. At the end of the month, wecena.com generates tax receipts to the donating firm on the behalf of the NP.

Based on the calculated tax cut, the firm donates money to the NP which in turn pays wecena.com for the services provided. A portion of these consultants turn into volunteers in their free time with the blessing of their employer.

WHAT ARE OUR LONG-TERM DESIRED OUTCOMES ? HOW WILL WE MEASURE OUR PROGRESS TOWARD THESE OUTCOMES?

We envisage a world where pro bono IT services are considered a critical enabler for major social innovations from education to environment via poverty reduction. An army of computing experts and corporations join the fight for changing the world. Wecena services are considered the secret

weapon of high-impact social innovations. IT firms compete in donating more and better skills to prominent social entrepreneurs. Specialized for-profit social ventures emerge and compete with wecena.com.

By the end of 2010 we expect to deliver 10 full-time equivalents (FTE) of pro bono IT consulting and engineering to less than 10 ambitious non-profit projects and to increase this volume with a rate of at least 4 FTE per year. We will build non-profit satisfaction (surveyed) and loyalty (measured

retention rate). At least 10% of the employees involved pro bono will turn into volunteers in their free time. Anecdotal evidence and impact indicators shared by nonprofits will show that wecena services increase nonprofits programs reach or efficiency by a factor of at least 3.

Innovation is important to Echoing Green. Explain how your idea is truly innovative. Identify other organizations that are addressing this issue and how your approach is different and has the potential to be more effective

Wecena.com offers the first and only IT assistance solution for big social innovations (requiring more than 1 person-year) that costs nothing for both nonprofits and for

Free IT consulting for social innovators, **wecena** corporate donors without relying on volunteering or direct governmental subsidies. Other organizations provide IT assistance to nonprofits :

- either they offer donated software and hardware but no IT pro bono service (e.g. Compumentor/TechSoup);
- or they offer pro bono IT service but their grants are worth no more than \$35k USD (e.g. the Taproot Foundation) or mainly target a couple of weeks-long interventions (e.g. French mobee.org, KOEO.net or charitic.fr) compared with a minimum \$64k USD (1 person-year) per wecena grant;
- or they strictly limit the number of potential recipients because of the cost of dedicating individual consultants for the whole project (e.g. Accenture France can't donate much more than 10 FTE each year by chunks of 3 months to 1 year-long individual interventions) whereas wecena teams of "on the bench" consultants allow any IT firm to try out pro bono work a try at no cost, which generates higher volume of donations while turning more consultants into volunteers.

BUILDING A NEW ORGANIZATION IS CHALLENGING. HOW AM I ENTREPRENEURIAL? HERE ARE MY SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES THAT DEMONSTRATE I CAN LEAD A START-UP ORGANIZATION

In 1996, I co-created a French nonprofit. I raised funds from the French government for its Internet in the hood program. I led this program which provided technological assistance to more than 10 nonprofits in local immigrant communities in France.

In 1998, I co-created and led a small Internet consultancy, experienced its downfall and managed its closing without bankruptcy. I had earned customers including governmental agencies and the Fondation de France (the biggest umbrella organization for French foundations).

In 2000, I joined a Fortune Global 200 firm (Saint-Gobain) as head of its corporate web technology group. In 5 years, I turned this 5 persons team of engineers into a more than 20-consultants-big skills center offering engineering and consulting services.

In 2005, I became leader of the French Motorola Labs team researching Web x.o technologies for Motorola phones and set-top-boxes.

When ready to launch my wecena.com venture, in 2007, I negotiated a compensation package with my management line so that I could safely leave my position even though I am the only source of revenue for my family of 6. I funded Wecena SARL in July 2008.

WHY AM I UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO LEAD THIS SPECIFIC ORGANIZATION? HERE IS MY EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THIS ISSUE AND POPULATION

My project requires the following skillset : managing innovative IT projects, being an entrepreneur, serving the non-profit field.

As the head of a corporate IT department then as the leader of an IT research team, I demonstrated my IT skills : I led the creation of a global electronic identity system for more than 200,000 corporate users worldwide and created technology which generated academic publications and patents. I managed the growth of an IT service team until it was 20 IT consultants big. I supervised 100 intranet projects and have been the champion of free software and open source in corporate environments.

I successfully faced entrepreneurial challenges by taking organizational initiatives, raising required funds and selling innovative services to customers. I raised and managed an 8 millions EUR budget in a corporate environment for a project I led.

I have served nonprofits as a volunteer (Boyscouts, Ingénieurs Sans Frontières, Red Cross), as a board member and volunteer (my tech assistance program for 10 immigrant youth communities), during 8 months as a public servant (urban policies agency) and occasionally as a consultant (Fondation de France).

HOW MUCH MONEY HAVE I FUNDRAISED TO DATE? WHO IS MY LARGEST FUNDER ? HERE IS AN ESTIMATE OF MY TOTAL BUDGET FOR EACH OF THE NEXT TWO FISCAL YEARS

I funded Wecena SARL in July 2008 with 3 k€. I am the only (hence largest) funder of this company. Thanks to family savings, I can work fulltime on this until September 2009. Then my annual revenue needs are of 150 k€ which include:

- my salary and attached social taxes
- administrative and operating costs (IT included)
- corporate taxes

These needs will be covered by nonprofits paying for my services thanks to money donations from the IT firms I recruit. It is costless for IT firms because of the tax savings their pro bono work and donations allow. Either one firm donates a yearly 150 k€ or no more than 3 firms donate 50 k€ each. This represents about 4 FTE in pro bono work. My time is split between servicing nonprofits, mobilizing IT firms and developing the web application used for managing donations. By the end of 2010, I hire a consultant and have 10 FTE donated to nonprofits and a yearly revenue of 250 k€.

Seed funding would keep me working fulltime on the project in case I only get the expected revenue flow after September 2009. Then it would accelerate the hiring of additional consultants.