



“It is a collaboratively written, free content, open source networking platform that links NGOs, funders, business, government, social entrepreneurs, students, organizers, academics, activists, scientists, and citizens”

This online community was launched in April 2007. Overall it offers social networking tools and groupware for people to connect and collaborate around issue areas such as Social justice and Environmental restoration.

WiserEarth Directory, Groups, Community and Taxonomy

What can WiserEarth do for you?

- 1) Find and connect with people and organizations.
- 2) Visibility and credibility for your organization, initiatives and expertise.
- 3) Potential funding opportunities or potential organizations to fund.
- 4) Join communities of action.
- 5) Grow your network and coordinate community efforts.
- 6) Global knowledge base of solutions and resources.
- 7) Information on any events, jobs or volunteer opportunities free of cost.

Community guidelines

Collaborate and Share your Knowledge
Be Polite and Civil
Make Comments
Embrace Diversity and Transparency
Do Not Infringe Copyright
Build Community and Visibility
Write From a Neutral Point of View
Do Not Send Spam
Community Guideline Infringement

Objective:

Analyze the different community members perceptions about different parameters of the organization.

Method

Ethnographic research: Interviews + observations

Results:

The parameters analyzed are presented below:

Origins

Creating a sustainable world
Database for a large number of non-profit and private organizations
Provides tools and resources for communities of action
Support these groups in their social and environmental causes

Role definition

The staff based on the individual, their expertise and background role
Roles evolve according to the efforts and work done in the community
The community, all members can have their opinion
Editor community

Encourage other members/newbies

Invitation of members
Direct interaction, participation in a group, Frequent Asked Questions and automatic emails
Chatterbox and discussion threads

“I find that when a user finds that the info here is useful they come back. If they want to get involved in discussions then they have to join, and if the discussion is something that they are really interested in then they will join”

Challenges

Retention of new members
Retentions as active and contributing members
Make the resources more prone to lead to interaction
Greeting newcomers
Getting constant engagement

“People join groups and don't participate - thinking that the act of joining is all that is required. For WE to work we need more active members - users who will update and contribute information on specific topics. So we need more networkers and joiners - people who create the linkages!”

Retaining members

More worried about qualitative than quantitative results

“(…) particularly since many NGOs in our field are number-driven but then fail to provide meaningful services”

Use of social media to broaden exposure of WiserEarth to target audience
Partnerships with other like minded NGOs and Communities
Participation in conferences and panels
Blogging / Guest Posting
SEO to improve search engine traffic
Organic growth / word of mouth
Retention through engagement in groups, use of WiserEarth, outreach
Retain through engagement
Promotion through other social networking site such as Twitter, Facebook and their own newsletter

“The use of social networks and working towards the ability to inform newcomers and older users WHERE the action is occurring within the community is a huge focus right now. Retaining members is really reliant on the ability to engage them. We are all working on that”

“ [About facebook] (..) at the moment it is still the number 1 referral site for new members”

Regulation Policies

Editors are assigned to report either spam or abusive behaviors
Spammer – account is deactivated
Abusive member – warning and if persists account is deactivated

“We have clear terms regarding what is not acceptable for inclusion on WiserEarth”

Future of the community

Groups in different languages – more accessibility to other non-speaking members
More international
Develop more partnerships with Non Governmental Organizations
Growing in different directions and languages

“[WiserEarth] (..) is now shifting towards initiating real life projects, as well as translation into numerous languages. As the UI changes to become more ‘facebookish’ I believe WiserEarth will become recognized as the ideal place to come for primary source information as well as for collaborations and movements towards social justice, sustainability project and relocalization”

Future Work

Increase the sample of analysis. Gather more data with members who joined later in the process. Combine these parameters and evaluate them in a survey to obtain a larger sample in terms of opinions