Summary of Improving Access to County Employee Directory Information

Let Your Computer Do the Finding!

Issue

Do the employees and agencies of San Mateo County have an accurate and up-to-date directory or other alternatives that enable efficient communications?

Summary

When members of the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) reached wrong numbers while using the most recent edition of the County phone directory (a.k.a., "*The Green Book*") they realized that the directory was not current, and later found out that publication of a new edition had been delayed until a planned County reorganization is complete. The Green Book is out of date. County employees and agencies have increasingly turned to the County's intranet that provides a searchable source of directory information that is more up-to-date. This is a more user-friendly system, and there are plans to implement a new electronic directory that uses better data from the Payroll Information and Personnel System. A third directory source is used by County operators handling incoming calls. This commercial electronic directory system is separate from the other directories and is kept current by the operators. In the near future, it will be possible to update much of the operators' information from the same source as the new electronic directory that is to be installed on the County intranet.

The Grand Jury recommends continued efforts to install an electronic directory containing all employee contact information that is currently found in the Green Book. The electronic directory should eliminate the need to publish the Green Book yearly and would be easier to update frequently. More coordination among departments will be needed to meet minimum standards of available information and ongoing revision. Within the constraints of privacy, as much directory information as possible should also be available on a publicly accessible website. There should be multiple listings for departments under names that are commonly used, but do not necessarily correspond to their "official" name.

1

Improving Access to County Employee Directory Information

Let Your Computer Do the Finding!

Issue

Do the employees and agencies of San Mateo County have an accurate and up-to-date directory or other alternatives that can provide efficient communications?

Background

The San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury (Grand Jury) realized that there may be difficulties with communications among government officials and County employees when various attempts by Grand Jurors to reach County personnel listed in the current County phone directory (a.k.a. "*The Green Book*") led to wrong numbers. The Grand Jury investigated whether the Green Book and other printed and electronic directories are up-to-date and facilitate good communications among government officials, employees and agencies.

Investigation

The Grand Jury reviewed the existing Green Book, interviewed representatives from the Information Services Department (ISD), which publishes the Green Book and the Sheriff's Department, which is responsible for emergency communications. ISD staff also demonstrated the system used by County operators receiving outside calls and the County intranet system. The Grand Jury also reviewed the reorganization of County departments that was proposed in March 2006 by Management Partners, Inc.

Findings

- The Directory, assembled and published by ISD, consists of the following six substantive sections:

  - Green Pages: a Table of Contents listing departments and principal sub-departments

  - Gold Pages: a "Where Is?" section

  - Gray Pages: an expanded listing of departments and employees

  - White Pages: an alphabetical list of County employees

  - Blue Pages: Fax numbers

  - Yellow Pages: an abbreviated list for other cities in the County and selected officials

- The Directory has been published annually at a cost of $16,000. The most recent Directory was printed in January 2005 using information assembled in Autumn 2004. Parts of the reorganization plan are being implemented and will affect information in the Green Book. This is a reason given as to why the publication of a new edition has been delayed. The reorganization may also affect the public's ability to locate some departments.

- Some departments and agencies operate autonomously and maintain separate directories and employee lists. Many special districts and some other agencies are not included in the County directory at all.

- Other sources of directory information are available and regularly used by County employees.

  - Employees increasingly use the County intranet e-mail system, because it provides a user-friendly, searchable list of County employees, their telephone numbers, email addresses and department information.

  - Directories from private companies may have more up-to-date information about cities than does the County's directory.

  - County operators use a separate Conveyant TeleDirectory System that accesses data that is kept current with regard to new employees, terminations and other changes. These updates to the Conveyant system are done manually on most workdays. The changes do not appear in other County directories. It should soon be possible to link the new intranet website to the TeleDirectory system so that updates will be much easier. As a result, the information would come from the most up-to-date and complete source, the County's Payroll Information and Personnel System (PIPS).

- The County ISD currently requests information from other County departments for purposes of updating the Green Book and some of the intranet information. Not all departments are responsive.

- County departments are responsible for keeping their intranet web pages current and informative, but results are mixed and range from very informative to completely missing.

Conclusions

The Green Book is out-of-date, but there are other sources for most information on the County intranet. The shortcomings in the current system that are enumerated above have been recognized by the County ISD and efforts are underway to correct them. Foremost among these measures is the creation of a new intranet website, referred to as the SMC-Directory, that will be up-to-date and searchable by name and department. The data on that website would come from PIPS, and may be in place by October 2006. Additionally, data from that PIPS-based web page will be linked to the Conveyant TeleDirectory System, eliminating the need for most manual updates.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors assign the responsibility and authority for obtaining and disseminating directory information to the Information Services Department. Specifically, ISD should be directed to:

1. Continue efforts to move to an electronic version of the Directory that has the types of information currently found in the Green Book's white and gray pages, and is updated regularly.

2. Cease printing the Green Book's white pages now that intranet directory information has become widely available.

3. Make the information currently found in the Directory's gray pages available on the intranet in a form that can be downloaded and printed for those who may need hard copies; these versions would be modified as necessary during the ongoing reorganization of County government. In addition, printing and distributing updated gray pages on a regular basis until the reorganization is completed should be considered.

4. Establish standards for the minimum information that should be on a department web page and coordinate among departments so that they meet those standards. Include basic information about all governmental agencies, districts, special districts and joint power authorities operating within the County.

5. Make available on a public website as much searchable information from the electronic directory as is possible within the constraints of privacy.

6. Consider multiple listings for some departments under names that are commonly used, but do not correspond to "official" names.

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

County Manager's Office

DATE: January 8, 2007
BOARD MEETING DATE: January 23, 2007
SPECIAL NOTICE: None
VOTE REQUIRED: None

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: John L. Maltbie, County Manager

SUBJECT: 2006-07 Grand Jury Response

Recommendation

Accept this report containing the County's responses to the following 2006-07 Grand Jury report: Improving Access to County Employee Directory Information.

VISION ALIGNMENT:

Commitment: Responsive, effective and collaborative government.
Goal 20: Government decisions are based on careful consideration of future impact, rather than temporary relief or immediate gain.

This activity contributes to the goal by ensuring that all Grand Jury findings and recommendations are thoroughly reviewed by the appropriate County departments and that, when appropriate, process improvements are made to improve the quality and efficiency of services provided to the public and other agencies.

Discussion

The County is mandated to respond to the Grand Jury within 90 days from the date that reports are filed with the County Clerk and Elected Officials are mandated to respond within 60 days. It is also the County's policy to provide periodic updates to the Board and the Grand Jury on the progress of past Grand Jury recommendations requiring ongoing or further action. To that end, attached is the County's response to the Grand Jury report on Improving Access to County Employee Directory Information issued November 6, 2006.

Improving Access to County Employee Directory Information

Findings:

Staff is in general agreement with the Grand Jury's findings.

Recommendations:

The Board of Supervisors should assign the responsibility and authority for obtaining and disseminating directory information to the Information Services Department. Specifically, ISD should be directed to:

1. Continue efforts to move to an electronic version of the Directory that has the types of information currently found in the Green Book's white and gray pages, and is updated regularly.

Response: Concur. ISD has created and deployed the SMC Directory application into production. In addition, nightly updates to the SMC Directory from the payroll system are in production.

2. Cease printing the Green Book's white pages now that intranet directory information has become widely available.

Response: Concur. The Green Book will be printed and distributed in FY 2007-08 for the final time, to facilitate the migration to SMC Directory.

3. Make the information currently found in the Directory's gray pages available on the intranet in a form that can be downloaded and printed for those who may need hard copies; these versions would be modified as necessary during the ongoing reorganization of County government. In addition, printing and distributing updated gray pages on a regular basis until the reorganization is completed should be considered.

Response: Concur. During the 1st quarter of 2007, ISD will be modifying the format of SMC Directory Department and Employee reports to make them more printable.

4. Establish standards for the minimum information that should be on a department web page and coordinate among departments so that they meet those standards. Include basic information about all government agencies, districts, special districts, and joint power authorities operating within the County.

Response: Concur. During the 1st quarter of 2007, ISD will work with all Departments to establish standards for Internet-based departmental information.

5. Make available on a public website as much searchable information from the electronic directory as is possible within the constraints of privacy.

Response: Concur. During the 1st quarter of 2007, ISD will be adding a "Contact Us" section to the County Internet home page that will contain basic departmental information.

6. Consider multiple listings for some departments under names that are commonly used, but do not correspond to "official" names.

Response: Concur. During the 1st quarter of 2007, ISD will work with all Departments to establish standards for Internet-based departmental information.