

Nevada County
Economic
Resource
Council

***Business
ReLocator
A case study***

January 2004

A California Technology, Trade and
Commerce grant funded this Business
ReLocator project

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: What is a Business ReLocator?

Chapter 3: Business ReLocator components

Chapter 4: Design considerations

Chapter 5: Business ReLocator Contracting

Chapter 6: Integration and testing

Chapter 7: Helping customers find your site

Exhibit A: Marketing plan with sample brochure

Exhibit B: Sample use analysis charts

Exhibit C: Sample information architecture

Exhibit D: Current systems architecture

Exhibit E: Sample Request for Information

Exhibit F: Sample Request for Proposal and scoring matrix

Exhibit G: Sample Consulting Services Agreement

Exhibit H: Sample Memorandum of Understanding with County

Exhibit I: Sample Memorandum of Understanding with Board of Realtors

Selected Bibliography:

- a. Information Architecture
- b. Navigation and usability
- c. Search Engines

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Economic Resource Council of Nevada County, California, built a Internet-based business property search engine to assist businesses wishing to relocate or expand to our community. This case study is based on the experience gained by the ERC, while building our Business Re-locator. In the following chapters we have tried to pass on what we learned and the challenges we faced in bringing this Internet tool online. We hope that readers who are interested in building their own version of this powerful economic development tool can learn from our experience.

A California Trade and Commerce Rural E-Commerce Grant (C01-0163) funded development of this economic development tool. Work started in February 2002 and ended in January 2004.

GIS systems have a wealth of information businesses can use in making relocation decisions. However, this data is rarely integrated with other economic development data, nor is it available on the Internet. To take advantage of the existing County GIS, the ERC Telecommunication Infrastructure Task Force proposed a public private partnership with Nevada County for access to the County owned and operated Graphic Information System. By forming a partnership with the County, it was possible to create a synergistic tool for making this government information available over the Internet.

Internet access is becoming a significant tool in the relocation process. According to information provided in the 2002 DCI Survey, 40% of all business relocations start on the Internet, and 82% of site selectors use the Internet to collect data for decision-makers some time during the process. Recognizing the need for an Internet-based business relocation tool, the Nevada County Economic Resource Council set in motion a process that produced a team of partners as follows:

Economic Resource Council: This nonprofit corporation is a public/private partnership representing the efforts of local business and government, working together to protect and enhance the quality of life in Nevada County by promoting job creation.

ERC Telecommunication Infrastructure Task Force: This volunteer team was formed by the ERC to tap into the wealth of telecommunication expertise in the community in order to explore access to broadband Internet and e-commerce applications. Volunteers include interested individuals, corporate engineers, retired telecommunication experts, public employees and entrepreneurs. This team wrote the grant that funded this project.

California Technology, Trade and Commerce Agency: This agency served as the State's principal catalyst for innovation, investment and economic opportunity, enhancing the quality of life for all Californians. They selected the Telecommunication Infrastructure Task Force's proposal, which was awarded \$90,000 in matching funds for the ReLocator. They also provide ongoing oversight for this project.

Nevada County Information Systems: A key member of the Telecommunication Committee, Information Systems Director Steve Monaghan, proposed the idea of integrating a business property locator with the County's Graphic Information System, and was a principal member the grant writing team. The County provides the host servers, and GIS staff for managing the locator software and provides over a hundred layers of infrastructure and recreational information. They will also help develop maps detailing the availability of broadband communication, such as DSL, Cable and Wireless coverage in the County.

Nevada County Board of Realtors: Under a partnership agreement, the Board of Realtors provides access to Multiple Listing Service information for Commercial Real Estate and Raw Land zoned for industrial use. Using the MLS information instead of manually entering all the information in a separate database significantly reduces the cost of operation for the real estate community and increases data accuracy and timeliness of Business ReLocator information.

Spiral Studios: Designed the web site and overall information architecture and is currently providing Business ReLocator usage information as an in-kind service. They track who visits the site and which sections are visited.

AMG Consulting: Anna Greco, AMG Consulting, has invested hundreds of hours of in-kind consulting as an advisor to the Business ReLocator program, and developed the Business ReLocator Marketing plan.

Art of Logic: Provided engineering support for downloading the MLS data from the host server and making it available to the County GIS server. Paul Castro invested many in-kind hours attempting to fully automate the process.

The Insightworks: The primary program project manager and author of this case study.

Chapter 2: What is a Business ReLocator

A Business ReLocator is a powerful search tool for commercial property, demographics, and lifestyle information in Nevada County.

This is not the first business property search tool; others cities, counties, regions and even states have developed search engine tools. Our goal was to build a single source of commercial real estate information, and include a broad range of community information for companies wishing to expand or to relocate to Nevada County.

We wanted a tool that would provide a twenty-four hour a day, seven day a week window to our community. Global business customers work in different time zones. Small business customers need site relocation information on weekends and after business hours. Our locator enables users to search for property, demographic and related business information any time of the day or night. We wanted potential companies to find our web site and harvest the information they needed for specific relocation or expansion projects. While the site can be used by any business, we are specifically targeting industries compatible with local clusters who would like to open local development, manufacturing, or sales offices.

In addition to business property listings, we are adding local community information including schools, hospitals, special health services, housing, recreation, arts and entertainment, creating a multi-dimensional view of our community. All this information is displayed in pictures and colorful color-coded maps. Our web site should say we are a professional business community.

Research has proven that web-based economic development is more effective than trade shows, direct mail, advertising and telemarketing. While these traditional advertising media should be part of a target program, the twenty-four hour availability of the web makes it a powerful tool. It cannot be thrown away, or stacked on a shelf, and is always up-to-date. It avoids the stigma of telemarketing by not intruding on a process, but complements it in a timely fashion. The web pages are supported by reports and analysis that can be downloaded to customer computers. This printable material can be rapidly integrated into written reports discussing potential relocation sites. Our web-based Business ReLocator includes links to government services, local building codes and planning requirements. It also, provides links to Chambers of Commerce, and the Downtown Association web sites, adding more depth to business planning.

Chapter 3: Business ReLocator Components

All business ReLocators start with a web site. Some are stand-alone sites with only one function, to search for available property. However, the most effective sites integrate economic development information with property location tools and a one-stop source of community information with a high visual content. We are integrating community information with Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data layers; so potential customer will have access to a complete picture of community resources.

It is estimated that approximately 80% of all information has a "spatial" or geographic component. In other words most information is tied to a place that can be shown on a map. So when making decisions about where to locate a new facility, geography plays a significant role. Business placement decisions are influenced by the availability of transportation networks, communication networks, physical infrastructure, and utilities.

Geographic Information Systems technology is a computer-based data collection, storage, and analysis tool that combines previously unrelated information into easily understood color-coded maps. But, GIS can be more than maps, performing complicated analytical functions, and then presenting the results visually as maps, tables or graphs, allowing decision-makers to see the results, then select the best course of action.

A short tutorial of how GIS works can be found at: http://www.sfu.ca/rdl/GIS/tour/gis_wrk.html

Add the Internet, and GIS offers a consistent and cost-effective means for the sharing and analysis of geographic data with local, national and global customers considering expanding or relocating to your community.

The GIS program used in this application is ArcView 3.3 and ArcMIS sold by ESRI, 380 New York Street Redlands, CA 92373-8100 USA, 909-793-2853. Additional information can be found on their web site at: <http://www.esri.com>

Arc View Systems Requirements:

Computer: Industry-standard personal computer with at least a Pentium or higher Intel-based microprocessor and a hard disk, 24 MB RAM. However, we highly recommend the maximum memory available.

Operating System: Windows 98/98SE, Windows Me, Windows NT 4.0, Windows 2000, and Windows XP--Home Edition and Professional. Versions of the ArcView also run on Unix based platforms. All user interfaces are web based, using Microsoft Explorer 5.0 or Netscape 4.7 or higher.

Note: By the time you read this, the requirements could have change significantly. For the most current information, consult the ESRI web site for the latest information at: <http://www.esri.com/software/arcview/system.html>

Customer: Spiral Studios designed our customer interface. Their goal was to make it as intuitive as possible, and at the same time prompt the user with embedded instructions.

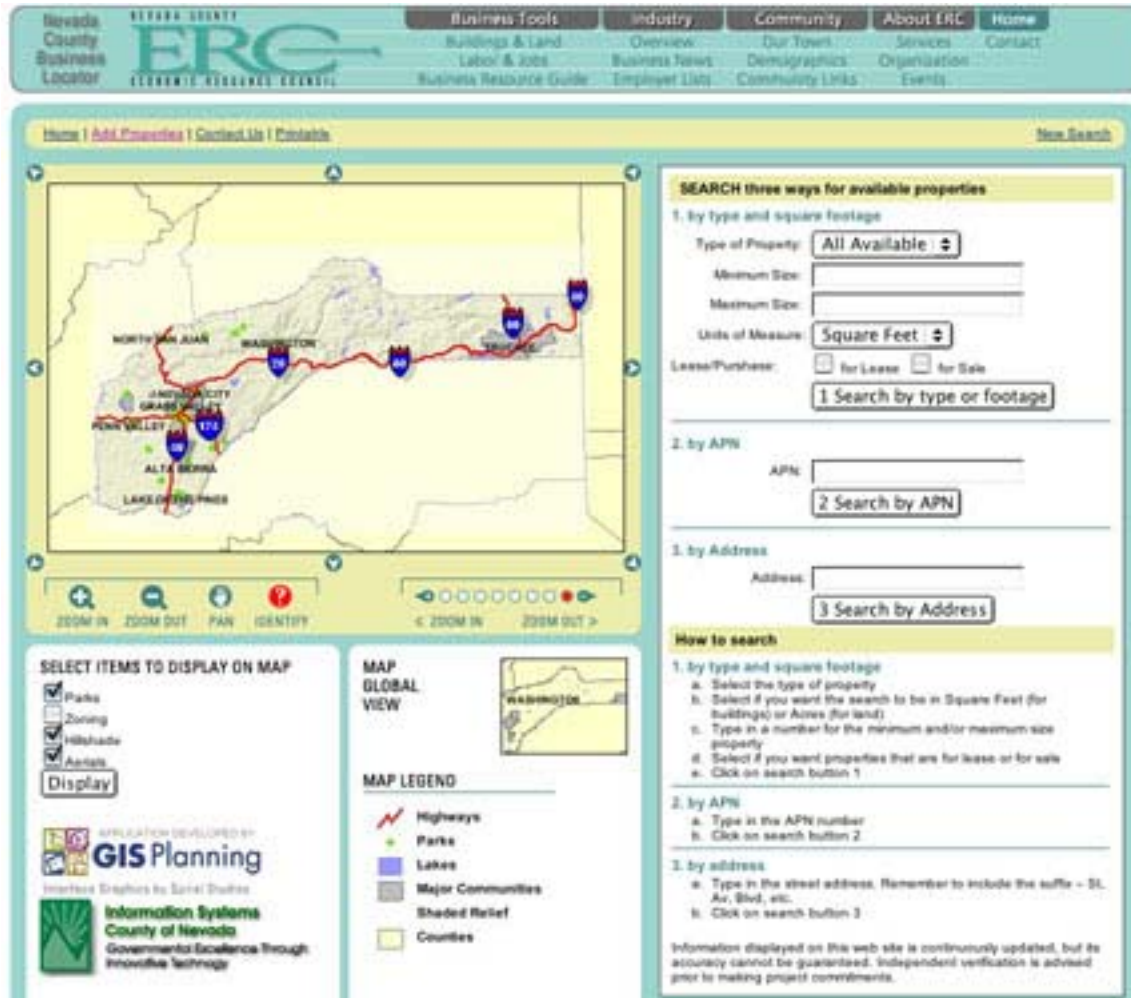


Figure 1: Business ReLocator Entry Page.

Administration: The web-based administrator interface is an integral part of the package provided by GIS Planning. The administrator log-in is password protected. Once logged in, the administrator has access to tools for viewing the complete set of listings, tracking broker activity, and managing broker access. Brokers use this same page to enter new properties. A user guide is provided for real estate professionals using the system. The directions come up in a separate web page, allowing the user to follow the guide while using the data entry web page.

Real Estate Community: The real estate interface is both automated and manual. The automated system downloads commercial and land data from the Paragon MLS server. Property data is entered using MLS templates on the MLS system. All corrections or changes are made by correcting the information in the MLS, which will then be reflected in the next update to the Business ReLocator.

The Real Estate data can also be entered manually using a web-based template provided by GIS Planning. The data entry tool is included in the administration function of the GIS Planning software. Both methods allow for pictures to be included in the information file. The manual method, also allows for additional information to be included, such as Adobe PDF files and brochures.



Figure 2: Broker property listing entry page.

The key to web site marketing is to know your customer and how they use the Internet to gather information. The ERC has defined a customer set, based on our regional business clusters. Exhibit A is a copy of the ERC Business ReLocator Marketing Plan.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of our marketing, we first had to establish a base line for the existing ERC web site. This base line was developed with software hosted on our ISP's server and by data provided by Spiral Studios. The free service provided by our ISP, Nevada County Community Network, uses Webalizer 2.0.1. A sample of the free product is at Exhibit B. Spiral Studios uses propriety software. The ERC will track who visits and how often, monthly. Now that the Business ReLocator is on-line, we will continue to track visitors and will be able to assess the Business ReLocator's impact.

Chapter 4: Design Considerations

The ERC web site was designed using the same logo, colors and fonts used on other business materials. The goal was seamless brand identification. The Business ReLocator was designed with this in mind. The ERC takes every opportunity to promote the web site address by putting the address on all correspondence and brochures, and by mentioning the web site address on weekly radio shows.

Since 40% of all business relocations start on the Internet and 82% involve Internet data collection at some point during the process, being listed on the top search engines is critical. Most searches start with one of the top three search engines: Google, Yahoo and AOL. While we want to be in the top three, it is essential that the web site be found and ranked by all search engines. Below is a list of the top ten search engines and statistics from January 2003. These rankings will change over time. Check for the latest listing at <http://www.1cog.com/search-engine-statistics.html>

Search Engine	Search Hours Per Month (in millions)	Search Minutes Per Day (in millions)	Searches Per Day (in millions)
Google	18.7	37	112
AOLSearch	15.5	31	93
Yahoo	7.1	14	42
MSNSearch	5.4	11	32
Ask Jeeves	2.3	5	14
InfoSpace	1.1	2	7
AltaVista	0.8	2	5
Overture	0.8	2	5
Netscape	0.7	1	4
Earthlink	0.4	1	3
Looksmart	0.2	0	1
Lycos	0.2	0	1

Being found by the search engine is not enough. The web site must be designed in such a way that it shows up in one of the first two pages. Research has shown that online searchers will pick the choices that show up in the first or second page views, the first twenty entries on the results pages. We have developed a search engine strategy designed to keep us at the top of the search results pile. According to several experts, good search engine placement strategy is the least costly promotion method to draw targeted traffic to a web site. They say search engines can contribute 80% – 90% to a site's traffic. But developing an effective positioning strategy requires a significant investment in time to implement the strategy and more time still to continuously update the strategy, as search engine indexing keeps changing.

Target Marketing, April 2000, had to say this about search engine placement:

Top ways websites are discovered:

- Banner ads 1%
- Targeted email 1.2%
- TV spots 1.4%
- "By accident" 2.1%
- Magazine ads 4.4%
- Word-of-mouth 20%
- Random Surfing 20%
- Search Engines 46%

Hence, unless our web site is at the top of the search engines, we will be losing potential business property and relocation customers. Search engines are clearly an important source of traffic for relocation sites. We sat down with Jamie Low, a recognized web site developer, who pioneered the use of key words. He helped us develop a strategy with just a few hours of in-kind support. Once the site is online we will continue to refine this strategy. We can track the key words that bring customers to our site using Webalizer site traffic analysis.

Some keyword tips from: <http://www.keyword-marketing-and-keyword-ranking.com/>

Tip 1: If you must have a keyword list, do not use keywords that do not pertain to your content. Example: If you are selling cars, but also have a link on your site to books about cars, do not put the word 'books' in your list.

Tip 2: Target keyword phrases and keep them to a minimum. Remember, the more keywords you target, the less each will be emphasized.

Tip 3: Think of what words you would use if you were doing a search of your competitors. Your words need to be very specific. Don't just say SUVs, but what kind of SUVs? Use something like: Jeep Cherokee Laredo 1991 Inline 6. Now that is specific.

Tip 4: Use misspellings. People make mistakes when they are doing a search. So make sure to include typos in your keyword list. Example: Say that one of your keywords is 'apples,' now look at keyboard when you type 'apples.' If someone is typing really fast they might hit the letter 's' when instead of 'a' and spell 'spples.' This is a very simplistic way of looking at it, but that is how it's done. Also, you have to take into consideration all of the possible misspellings someone may use. This is trickier.

Tip 5: Make sure that you have keywords and keyword phrases throughout the text of your pages. Have them on every page, but don't over do it.

Tip 6: People do searches on the web by searching for products first, companies later. So unless you've been in the biz for decades and are synonymous with a product, your company name means little to someone doing a search. Therefore your keywords should focus on your products or services.

Tip 7: Your keywords and phrases need to be highly descriptive. Think of the search engine as a librarian. You're not going to ask the librarian for a book on trees. You want to say something like, 'growing ficus trees in your own back yard.' Now that is specific.

Information Architecture: Special attention was given to the site architecture to insure ease of navigation. It is a real challenge to design an elegant navigation system that is aesthetically pleasing, while making the information easy to find, with multiple layers of complex information. We used a professional designer, Spiral Studios, with a proven track record for developing complex sites. (The Spiral Studios information architecture is at Exhibit C.) We wanted a site with the following features:

Easy to read: Since the designer has no control over the browser used, pages should be capable of being easy to read using the two main browsers, Explorer and Netscape, and on the Windows Personal Computer and Apple Macintosh. The user may be browsing with a large screen or a small screen. Background graphics and text must have a high color contrast. Do not use background that obscures the text. Small text is hard to read. Large text shouts at the customer. Font selections should enhance readability of the pages, both on the screen and in printed output. In general sans serif fonts increase legibility. Avoid Flash and GIF animation, unless they are absolutely essential, and then make sure they move slowly.

Easy to navigate: Visitors to the site should know where they are at all times. If they get lost they should have access to a site map, a help page, a search engine for the site or access to the home page from any page on your site. This will help them determine where they are, where they might like to go and where they have been. Lost customers will exit the site, return to their initial search page, and browse competitor's sites. All links must be clearly labeled and easy to read. All graphics should be easy to read and text should have high color contrast. Select backgrounds with care. They can hide the text, depending on the computer and chosen browser. Users skills will vary from the highly web savvy to new users, thus hyperlinks should be consistent and predictable. Use underlined links that change color once selected and use standard default colors.

Easy to find: This is a two-pronged find: Finding the site and finding the information the customer is looking for within your web pages. In addition to search engines, there are other sites that are directory driven and require notification. Industry specific sites were notified of the Business ReLocator. The ERC targeted sites in five specific industries: digital video, medical devices, scientific glassblowing, information processing and alternative energy. We tried to insure all information on the site was no more than seven clicks from the home page. The most important information should be above the fold, at the top of the page, so users do not have to scroll down. Contact information, postal addresses, e-mail and phone numbers should be on the front page or accessed from a menu on every page. It can also be put in an About Us or Contact Us page. Getting the customer to contact you is the beginning of a relationship building process, so make it easy and inviting to contact your organization.

Consistent layout and design: A consistent layout will help the user navigate the web site. The navigation themes should be consistent through out the site. The site should also reflect branding information, your logo, typefaces, and signature colors. Photo dimensions should be consistent, in horizontal and vertical format, and consistent display. If you use drop shadows on some

photos, use it on all photos.

Quick to download: In general a page should download in 30 seconds or less, using a standard dial up connection. There are exceptions, such as for a graphic that the searcher requested with a warning that the file is large and will take some time to download. Developers often use high-speed network connections, your office may have a broadband DSL or cable modem connections, but not all visitors will have this advantage. Make sure your site works well for customers using dial up modems. Some tips for faster loading sites:

Limit Animation. Use animation only when absolutely necessary. This case study site does not use animation.

Keep it Simple. Craft your site to meet relocation and expansion customer needs. These customers are looking for information about your community, the business environment, and available property for lease or purchase. Your customers are not looking for a site with award winning graphics and special effects.

Use small graphics. Use thumbnails for larger graphics and invite the customer to download the larger graphics. Being in control they will be more accepting of a slower download speed.

Logographic. Putting your logographic on every page reminds the user which site they are on and the logo will be cached then downloaded only once. Putting a different graphic on each page will slow down the site.

Search Engine Friendly: Search engines perform three basic tasks (Reference Thurow):

Search engine spiders find and fetch web pages, a process called crawling or spidering, and build lists of words and phrases found on each web page.

Search engines keep an index (or database) of the words and phrases they find on each web page they are able to crawl. The part of the search engine that places the web pages into the database is called an indexer.

Search engines then enable end users to search for keywords and key word phrases found in their indices. Search engines try to match the words typed in the search query with the webpage that is most likely to have the information for which the end user is searching. This part of the search engine is called the query processor.

One of your main goals in building a site that meets end users needs, is building a site that search engine spiders can find, read and index. Most search engines take the text information on the web page and assign a “weight” to the words and phrases on the page. Weights are driven by where on the page the words appear, how many times words appear, if they appear in the meta tag, in the title, etc. Each search engine has a proprietary mathematical formula or algorithm. These algorithms are constantly being changed and refined. An optimization expert can ensure that:

Targeted words and phrases are placed in a strategic manner on the web pages, no matter what the current algorithms.

Spiders are able to access the web pages. There are words and process that can stop a spider from finding your key words. Some java scripts will side track a spider. On the other hand, web-page-to-web-page links will aid spider searches. If the spider cannot find your web pages and find the key words on those pages, your pages will not rank well.

Information Rich. Since the search engine spider is looking for specific words in the text, it is important to sprinkle these keywords through out the text in a very readable format. One page of text on a browser screen is typically only 20 lines long. Long pages of unbroken text that require the end user to scroll down the page to find important information are not user friendly. They should be avoided. Better to break the information into easy-to-read pages, with lots of white space. Long text documents should be stored in Adobe PDF files for down loading.

Dynamic updates. Visitors will return to a dynamic web site time and time again. Static sites will not attract many return visitors. Thus, the site should be designed for easy management, and easy updating with fresh material. By analyzing customer visits with tracking software, it is possible to track customer needs and add additional material to the site accordingly.

Lessons learned: In starting the design process, the ERC team visited multiple business location sites on line and noted features they would like to have on the case study site. This led to a long list of features that were include in our request for proposal. The New Mexico Economic Development Department site was one of our favorites at:
<http://www.edd.state.nm.us/COMMUNITIES/SITELOCATION/index.php>

This process resulted in the design and specification of a high-end site costing over \$100,000.00. When the proposals were opened, we realized that we had specified a site that exceed our budget by two-thirds. We had specified a Cadillac, but only had a Chevrolet budget. Fortunately, we had specified segmented cost estimates from potential contractors, allowing the team to select those segments we could afford under the grant.

Security issues: Server and network security can be a major issue for public and private servers. Since we were using our county's public servers, we had to be extra cautious. Instead of having each real estate agent enter text and graphics using a browser-based tool over the Internet, we automated the process so the server would accept all MLS data, including pictures. This reduced the number of people who actually had access to the public server and did not add any additional burden to the real estate agents. The handful of agents who do not list their properties on the MLS will enter their data manually after signing a security affidavit that they have read and understand the security requirements. Any infraction of the rules will disqualify the agent from posting properties on the Business Re-locator. Another issue was the size and format of the gif, jpeg and PDF files. Multi-mega-pixel photos and megabyte PDF files would take up critical space on the county GIS server. The design was modified to store the pictures and PDF files on a

non-GIS server with Microsoft Active Server Pages or ASP. The current systems architecture is shown below in Exhibit D

Server issues: To insure adequate security, we used an inexpensive router as a firewall and installed virus detection software on our picture and document server. The County uses similar features to protect the core Business ReLocator.

Systems Integration: Integration would have been more simple if the Business Re-locator was hosted on the contractor's servers. However, we wanted to take advantage of the County GIS system and the multitude of layers available for presentation to the end user customers, so we had to locate on the county system. The contract with GIS Planning calls for all software code to be held in escrow by the County, should the company fail for any reason.

Integration became a larger issue when the Business Re-Locator had to be integrated with the County GIS Server, especially when security requirements mandated that pictures and PDF documents be stored on a separate server. Integration process increased in complexity when the update process was automated, requiring coordination with the contractor providing MLS retrieval and display services for the Board of Realtors. This integration process was further complicated by the lack of a single authority over the entire player. One of the challenges of public / private partnerships is to get each partner to accept responsibility for their contribution and then work with all partners. The integrator's challenge is to bring all partners goals and objectives in line with the project requirements. The more partners, the harder it is to gain and sustain the alignment.

Chapter 5: Business ReLocator Contracting

We started our contracting process by reviewing business property locators used by other communities via the Internet. Once we identified sites that had features we wanted on our site, we contacted the site and asked to visit the staff responsible for developing the site. Our goal was to learn from the challenge faced by the builders and host organizations. We made two onsite visits to San Mateo and Vallejo. This research produced a laundry list of desired features and options to consider. The options were to host on governments servers, on our Internet Service Provider's servers or on third part servers used by the site development contractor. Using government servers has some challenges, as they may be unattended on weekends, or turned off on the weekend as a security measure. Some of those hosted on third party servers seem to be slower than those on co-hosted dedicated servers at an ISP. However, dedicated servers are more expensive than those provided by a government partner.

In addition to the monthly fees for hosting and access, co-hosted servers require a separate GIS license, adding to the setup costs and then the long-term maintenance cost of the site. Given the cost of long-term maintenance, we chose to host our business ReLocator on the County GIS server, which operates 24/7 with strong technical support. This choice however, produced some security challenges we will discuss in the integration section of the study.

Therefore it is important to define the core group of features that you must have on the site. Create a second list of nice to have features. This list will help define the capabilities in your request for proposal.

Requests for Information: A request for information from industry is a good method of collecting additional data on the latest capabilities in the market and an opportunity to evaluate special features offered by individual contractors. We also attended several trade shows in Sacramento to evaluate the emerging technologies and seek qualified contractors. See Exhibit E for a sample RFI and a list of potential California contractors. Our grant required that we contract with California companies, or companies that had California divisions.

Requests for proposals: Our request for proposal is Exhibit D. We addressed the proposal to the specific individuals that we had met with during our fact-finding meetings. In one case this individual was not at his desk and the request was not opened until late, requiring an extension to our requested response date. Address the proposal to an organization rather than an individual, and you can avoid this delay.

We have included sample evaluation forms and a scoring matrix used to evaluate the proposals you receive. Evaluators included the ERC staff, County Information Systems staff members, and the Project Manager. Once GIS Planning was selected, we started negotiations to reduce the scope of the effort.

Contracts: Different organizations have specific contracting requirements. This was a State grant which required specific clauses in all sub-contracts. A sample consulting services contract is at Exhibit G.

Chapter 6: Integration and Testing

The GIS Planning software was integrated with the existing County GIS. This work was done remotely, requiring extensive coordination between the County IM Staff and GIS Planning's prime developer. This coordination was done over the phone and Internet. While this remote approach eliminated some travel costs it made the process more complex. It was difficult to coordinate schedules.

Test Planning: A test plan was attached to the contract, which is at the end of Exhibit G. While this plan described a process for evaluating the final product, it failed to consider the number of security issues that came up during the integration process. This resulted in rolling changes, which prevented freezing a final product for testing, as defined in the process. As with most software development projects, testing gets short changed by the schedule.

The final product called for pictures and supporting PDF documents to be stored on the GIS server. Due to security concerns raised by the County staff we decided to introduce an off site server for storing pictures and PDF documents. This significantly increased integration complexity.

The original contract did not call for an automated process to update the commercial and raw land inventory from the MLS database. This process also increased integration complexity. This automated process was originally thought to be a solution to all security issues, as the MLS software included a number of safeguards to insure photos accompanying the data were in fact .gifs and .jpegs, and not viruses. However, the ERC wanted to create a database of commercial property photos, and create opportunities for non-MLS users to enter properties. This required a redesign, to include a co-located processor at our ISP.

Security issues were not adequately considered in the original design. During the integration phase the County staff expressed concern that multiple individuals would be posting material to the GIS Server, material that could contain hidden viruses. They were also concerned that there was no control over the size and the content of pictures and PDF documents that real estate users would be up loading to the GIS server. Solving these issues delayed the launch of the Business Re-Locator while a co-located server was built and installed at the Nevada County Community Network, the ERC's Internet Service Provider. While our ISP had additional server capability, they did not use Windows server software with active server pages. The GIS Planning software requires active server pages, requiring a separate server with capability at our ISP. Additional work was required by GIS Planning to develop scripts linking this server with the County GIS.

Lessons learned: Security was not given adequate attention in the original design and planning. All stakeholders must be involved in the design process. The solutions to the security issues could have been included in the original design, if they had been identified early in the process.

Chapter 7: Making sure customers can find site

The most advanced technology web site is useless if your customer can't find it. Prime customers for a business relocater are businesses planning to re-locate, and local business looking to expand or needing a more effective location for their business. To get the word out about this new tool, the ERC web site and the Business ReLocator were integrated into our on-going ERC marketing process. Some areas reinforced for the Business ReLocator launch:

Branding: To insure a unified design theme, ReLocator colors were chosen to match the existing stationary and publications. The ERC web address is included on all letterhead correspondence, business cards and brochures.

Internet tools: An extensive effort was made to use the power of the Internet to help potential customers find the Business ReLocator.

Developing customer relationships: The site will include an option to join an online mailing list. This will allow the ERC staff to send updates to customers when major changes are made to the web site or when major property status changes. For example a major new business park opens, or a plant closure opens a major facility for reuse. This alerting system is not designed to replace the relationship with qualified property managers or real estate agents, but rather to keep potential customers interested in Nevada County.

Key words and phrases: If the site is unknown to customers, the primary method of finding it will be search engines. To assist the search engines, we have identified a series of key words and phrases customer are likely to use and built them into the web pages. A preliminary list of key words was included in the consulting contract. See the contract at Exhibit G.

Letting others speak for us: Studies show that material written by third parties about our community will be seen as more credible than that written in house. Wherever possible we plan to use material published in national, regional and local publications. These write ups can be found in national news magazines like Time and Newsweek and business newspapers like the Wall Street Journal and the Business Journal. We will also track industry magazines that have favorable write-ups on local industry clusters.

E-mail Notices: Recent Federal and State SPAM legislation required us to modify our plan to send e-mail notices of ReLocator changes. We did not want our mail to be viewed as SPAM, so we will include an opt-in e-mail for those who would like to be kept abreast of web site changes.

Web links: The ERC website and the Business ReLocator are linked to other economic development organizations in the community, including County and City government web pages, and the five Chambers of Commerce.

Direct Mail: Two options were available for sending mail notices to potential relocation organizations, brochures and post cards. We chose to develop a brochure that can be used in both direct mail and as a handout at tradeshow and face-to-face visits. This was a cost saving measure. The brochure at Exhibit A is handed out at trade shows, and at planned visits to potential relocation and expansion customers. This brochure will also be posted on our web site as a PDF document.

Public Relations: Press Release was sent to local and regional newspapers, radio stations and Chamber Newsletters. In addition, the ERC hosts a weekly radio show on KNCO, the local talk radio station. The host, Larry Burkhardt, promotes the ERC web site and the new Business ReLocator on his radio show.

Selected Bibliography

This bibliography provides a few suggestions for further reading and credits some of the writers from whom we have drawn ideas during the business Re-Locator development process.

Information Architecture:

Information Architecture for the World Wide Web
Louis Rosenfeld & Peter Morville
O'Reilly, Sebastopol, CA

Navigation and Usability

Non-Designers Web Book, 2nd Edition
Robin Williams and John Tollet
Peachpit Press, Berkeley CA

Creating Killer Web Sites, 2nd Edition
David Siegel
Hayden Books
Indianapolis, IN

Search Engines

Search Engine Visibility
Shari Thurow
New Riders
Indianapolis, IN