



Cerbumi.org Executive Summary

Developing an open-source network approach to real-world problem solving

What do you think you could do if you had the best minds of the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and Fortune 500 companies available to you?

Computer programmers have recently invented “open-source” software development. In this methodology, programmers donate human capital to a greater collective in order to write software. This collective of software developers then licenses the software to the public in a way that maximizes a user’s freedom to use, modify, and distribute the software. Open source software is collaborative, high quality, and responsive to users’ needs. The open source methodology has transformed software development and the computing industry.

Other fields of pursuit have an opportunity to capitalize the lessons learned in the software industry. Applying some of these lessons to the nonprofit sector could result in a greater net impact for society. It is possible to apply ingenuity to hundreds of real-world problems if we have a collaborative organizational structure.

Cerbumi.org is an opportunity to transplant “open-source” problem solving from the software industry to the nonprofit sector. It does this by introducing and supporting the idea of an open-source network approach to real-world problem solving. Cerbumi.org offers several advantages over the traditional nonprofit modus operandi. First, it gives stakeholders access to experts, and allows experts the opportunity to donate a small amount of time in a highly leveraged environment. In turn, this generates a wealth of ideas that are refined and tempered by a community of expert volunteers. The most promising ideas are then offered to nonprofits who can seek funding for their implementation.

Cerbumi.org provides two major sets of tools. A networking and knowledge search tool, similar to Friendster, offers a means of connecting and increasing the Cerbumi.org volunteer base. It enables existing Cerbumi.org volunteers to locate experts by searching against a database of members with keywords for skills, interests, and partnerships. A groupware tool, similar to Yahoo! Groups and Internet newsgroups, encourages and supports both creative brainstorming and focused research. Real-time discussion groups keep all informed and participating, while tools such as databases and file storage facilitate in-depth research. Cerbumi.org mimics the best tools of the open-source community but includes the additional structure necessary for the nonprofit sector.

Cerbumi.org has gained the support of several seasoned software developers and has the resources necessary to build a prototype. It needs both financial support and a use-commitment from at least one major organization to become operational. Once a limited pilot has proved feasibility, Cerbumi.org needs a “critical mass” of endorsements and modest financial support to become successful.