

"A User Service Website for the SBU Career Center's Career Closet"

By Kevin Tao and James Leonardi

1) Identify a disadvantaged population

The disadvantaged population we decided to focus on are economically disadvantaged people who do not possess and cannot afford professional clothing for interviews, job fairs, or networking events. This type of clothing is relatively expensive but is expected in white-collar professional settings. The lack of appropriate attire will negatively impact a student's ability to make a good impression and land jobs or internships. In this sense, you need to already have professional clothes in order to afford to buy professional clothes, creating a negative cycle.

2) Postulate a problem statement

Those who cannot afford to dress elegantly for professional events due to financial hardship have their chances of finding a job or internship negatively affected, even if they are capable of performing the job tasks. Professional clothing can be prohibitively expensive for students with limited financial means. This puts them at a disadvantage compared to their more affluent competitors when interacting with potential employers at these professional events, who may see them as less capable due to the way they dress. The students are then stuck in a negative feedback loop, where they cannot land a job due to not owning expensive professional clothing, yet cannot afford expensive clothing because they do not have a job.

Information technology could help remedy this disadvantage by facilitating the Career Closet's operations. For example, having a front-end website for their services could greatly boost usage. Students may be too afraid of stigma to go to the closet in-person, so having a website where they could browse and order clothes remotely could help them access their needed attire. Once they obtain the clothes, they could remotely make appointments for the other Career Closet resources, such as interview training, all through a new service website.

3) Identify a campus club, agency, or office; or a local nonprofit that serves that population

The Stony Brook Career Closet provides professional clothing and accessories free of charge to Stony Brook students, which they can keep for the duration of the semester. The program is run through the university's Career Center as part of its mission to help students gain equal access to job and internship opportunities. The donations are provided by faculty, staff, alumni, and members of the community. Students in need can make appointments with the Center to help fit their attire for upcoming interviews, career fairs, internships, and other professional events.

4) Identify the stakeholders

Admins - The Career Closet director (Andrea Lipack) and career center coordinators who oversee operations, marketing, partnerships, budgeting, and strategic planning.

Staff - Paid employees who handle daily operational activities like appointment scheduling, closet inventory management, and servicing students.

Volunteers - Individuals who donate their old professional clothing for use by students in need. Volunteers may include campus faculty/staff, alumni, or community members.

End-users - Economically disadvantaged Stony Brook University students who utilize the Career Closet services to obtain suitable interview, internship, or workplace attire free of charge. This includes both undergraduate and graduate students.

5) Provide demographic data on stakeholders

Admins and Staff:

- Age range: 25-55 years old
- Occupation: Higher education career services
- Socioeconomic status: Middle class
- Education level: Bachelor's degree or higher

Volunteers:

- Age range: All ages
- Occupation: Various (faculty, staff, alumni, community members, etc.)
- Socioeconomic status: Varies
- Education level: Any

End-users (students):

- Age range: 18-26 years old
- Occupation: College student
- Socioeconomic status: Low income
- Education level: Some college/Graduate student
- Infrastructure access: Have access to campus facilities, technology, transportation

References:

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