



The elp.net Project: The El Paso Netcitizen

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The objective of this proposed project is to become the digital interface between governmental bodies and the constituency they serve.

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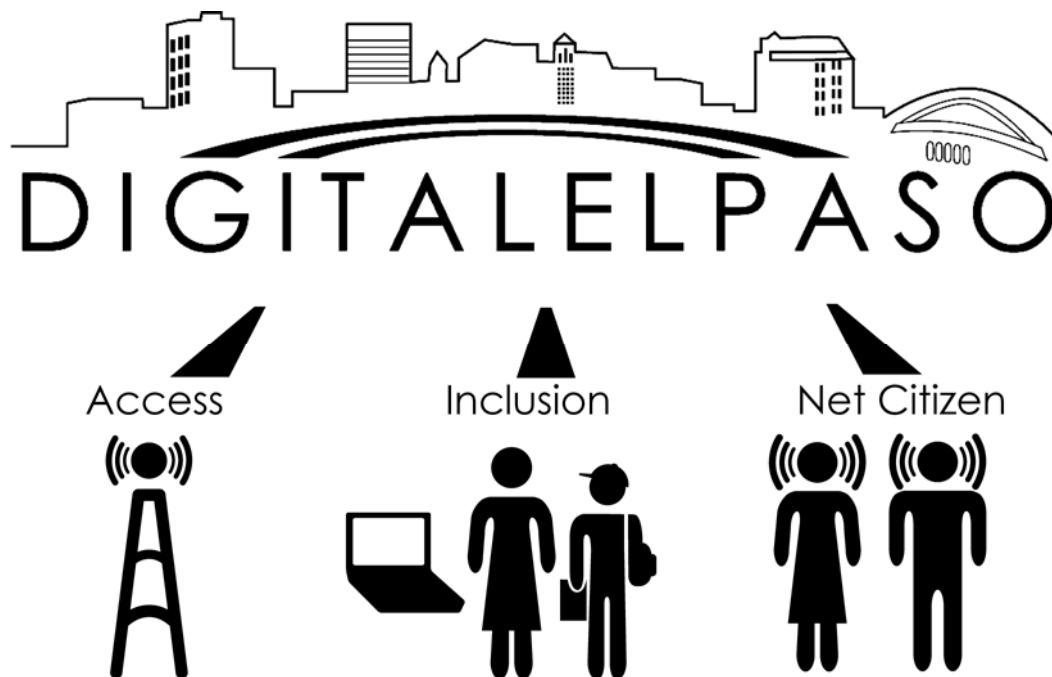
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Introduction

The expressed mission of Digital El Paso is to narrow the digital divide in our community through access and inclusion. By most measures Digital El Paso's pilot program in the downtown area has been successful. The model can and should be extended by the addition of a third leg to the project. Digital El Paso currently has two legs, *Access* and *Inclusion*. The WiFi part of the project is the component that provides access to broadband internet for the community. The other component, the inclusion is led by the Orion project which provides computers for access to the digital world. Digital El Paso's unique model is based on two unique components; a test and deploy model and a public/private partnership.

We propose that a third leg or component be added to Digital El Paso. This component, **the netcitizen component** provides for the engagement of our target individual into the Internet. By adding this component, Digital El Paso extends its mission by not only continuing to narrow the digital divide but also by engaging its new netcitizens into creating new content for the benefit of our global community.

The Netcitizen Model



Cognent, Inc. proposes to create the Netcitizen Model as the third leg for Digital El Paso. The creation of the netcitizen is a multi-layered approach whose goal is to provide a digital identity for each El Paso citizen. The objective of this leg of the project is to become the digital interface between governmental bodies and the constituency they serve. This would be accomplished by first providing an individual email account for life to each citizen of the community. This would be followed by engaging our citizens through the creation of a dataset of citizen expression through an online wiki. Finally we would provide each citizen in our community a *single online identity*. For the purposes of this presentation we will limit our discussion to a

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single online system that provides the necessary tools for each citizen in our community the ability to communicate and express themselves online. This model allows governmental bodies the ability to streamline their ability to interact with its citizenry.

Implementing a single online identity for each citizen in our community would result in a multitude of benefits for our citizenry which are too numerous to discuss individually here but some of the benefits of such a project would include the reduction of paper usage among our population just by the elimination of paper notices put out by our public entities and the immediate access of our citizenry to their public entities. A single online identity would give the public entities the ability to access the citizenry faster and more efficiently during normal operations and *especially during emergencies*. Reduced costs of operations for each public entity would be realized as the single online identity is implemented across the community.

The Netcitizen model is based on the concept of *citizen portals*. Coincidentally, one model of a citizen portal launched in 1998 is a Danish model named Netborger, or Netcitizen in English. The Danish initiative offers digital services and information in 8 different subject areas. The Danish project was developed and is operated by a private company named KMD. KMD and the Danish municipalities partnered up making their project a public/private partnership.

If this model is embraced by Digital El Paso, Cognent, Inc. proposes to launch the initial phase of the project on January 1, 2008.

Engagement

The proposed concept is to add a third leg to the Digital El Paso Initiative. This leg would extend the project by *engaging* the recipients of the access to the Internet to actively participate on the net. The mechanism for engagement would include two components, one is a lifelong email address for each participant and the second is a Web2.0 application that would allow the citizen full participation on the Internet. Engagement would create the synergy needed to expand the Digital El Paso initiative and should be the future of the project. While the expansion of the Digital El Paso initial two components continues, the engagement would be the catalyst that maintains the momentum of the participants.

The Existing Project

Digital El Paso has been very effective in narrowing the digital divide by addressing access and inclusion. *The question becomes what now?* What is the newly created netcitizen to do now that they are on the Internet? The easy answer is to release the netcitizen into the net to participate through existing sites where he or she does nothing to contribute to the dataset of our community. Why not extend the Digital El Paso Project into providing not only for access and inclusion but also as a tool to increase our community's unique culture and identity.

Web2.0 Cultural Shortcomings

Currently there exist numerous instances of Web2.0 tools that are engaging net audiences. Among the better known ones are Facebook, mySpace and YouTube. As successful as these projects are, there is one glaring missing component to all of them, a borderlander or fronterizo culture.

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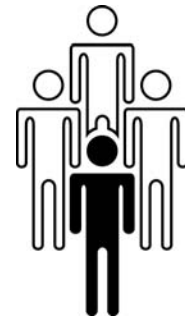
Fronterizos

Fronterizo, in Spanish, means someone from the border. As El Pasoans we share one of the most unique cultural identities in our world; both in history, language and personal identity. Yet, we are underrepresented in cyber space. Currently there exists no known area on the Internet that expresses our unique worldview. We are unique in how we deal with day to day activities and in many instances can share our unique way of looking at the global issues with the rest of world. Currently there is no place on the Internet where our multilingual, multi-cultural identity can be expressed. This gives us the opportunity to not only create a unique and different place on the net but it also allows the creativity of our citizens to be expressed globally. Coupled with the fact that geographically, El Paso is on the center of the greatest amount of economic activity between Mexico and the United States and not to mention our experiences with the realities of immigration there is no reason why our voices and our experiences cannot contribute to the ongoing public discussions on a global setting.

Crowd Sourcing and Web2.0

The largest problem with any web project is the expense needed to generate content. Unlike the design and the infrastructure, the most expensive part of any website project is the creation of content. Most of us know, or have used Web2.0 technology through the use of online technology such as mySpace, Flickr, Face Book and YouTube. We all know that these sites have experienced phenomenal growth recently. What made their growth possible is the use of crowd sourcing.

Although the concept of crowd sourcing is the act of taking a job traditionally performed by an employee and, or contractor and outsourcing it to an undefined and generally large group of people, in our opinion the concept is better used in the social networking models identified above. In this model crowd sourcing would allow us to maximize content for the project while engaging our target community. Coupled with social networking the mechanisms for our target recipients would be in place for the proposed third leg of the project.



Social Networking

A social network is a structure made up of nodes, usually individuals with a common interest or goal. A Web2.0 application focused on building an online community of people sharing interests and activities would complete the mechanism for the engagement of our community. A social network application usually includes messaging, video, blogging, discussion groups and file sharing as its core services. A properly initiated crowd sourced social network project would ultimately lead to the netcitizen of the future.

The Netcitizen

As envisioned herein the netcitizen of the future is an individual born into a net centric environment where his personal identity is not only governed by our existing analog model based on numeric identifiers under government control but also by a unique online identity for the citizen. The model netcitizen is as comfortable exchanging emails as he is making a telephone call. The future netcitizen would interact with governmental agencies electronically rather than via paper.

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Single User Identification (SID)

For the purposes of this proposal we will accept that that Single User Identification (SID) concept will not incorporate the process of using one digital identification token for all online transactions. Rather, this proposal proposes to begin the process of building the netcitizen through the layering of tools ultimately leading to a complete building block for the future netcitizen.

Building the El Paso Netcitizen

Before we can create the El Paso netcitizen we need to create the basic building blocks, or infrastructure for the ultimate digital presence for each user. This is the basis for the proposal to Digital El Paso.

The first basic building block would be to provide each city resident a lifetime, universal email address. This would be followed by an online application unique to each citizen where the citizen can interact with the community on the Internet and express themselves.

joe.martinez@elp.net

The Universal Email Address

Because email communication is the basis for any internet interaction, each citizen of El Paso should have their own lifetime email address. Cognent, Inc. proposes to provide one email address to each resident of El Paso. This email address would be a lifetime email address available to each resident. In order to avoid the problems associated with current free email services the El Paso address would be "identity verified" and free of advertisement.



An identity verified email address is an email address issued to one individual qualified to receive the email address and users will not be allowed to create multiple email addresses. This will begin to eliminate email abuse that leads to SPAM problems on the Internet. Each user will be required to go online at least once a month or else their email address will be removed and the address be made available to another user.

A protocol to identify eligible users will be developed in conjunction with the committee once Digital El Paso has accepted the proposal. The protocol's function would be make sure duplicate email addresses are not created for one user and that each user is positively identified as qualified for the service, in other words are residents of our community.

Each user will have an email address accessible via POP and Webmail via the Internet. The email address would be El Paso centric and will end on the **elp.net** domain. The elp.net domain is not only identifiable in our community as part of our community but it is also short and easy to remember. **Cognent, Inc. proposes to manage and maintain the email service for the first 100,000 users at no expense to the Digital El Paso community.**

Using existing free email services will not only detract from our stated goal of marking our unique identity online but will ultimately result in expanding the negative components of the Internet such

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as SPAM and other abuse. Our model includes the education of our future netcitizens on the concept of “netiquette”, or online etiquette. Use of existing “free” services by our netcitizens would inundate them with advertising which is the model driving the existing services. Our model proposes to eliminate this abuse.



The Next Step: elpasowiki.org

Because an email address is only the first step in the building of the netcitizen, Cognent proposes to add Web2.0 technology to the initial deployment. The Digital El Paso Project is composed of various public entities each with its own unique limitations making it imperative that the first step in the implementation of the Web2.0 technology be reflective of those limitations. For example, the public education partners of this initiative are extremely important to reaching the critical mass necessary for this component to be effective, but they are the entities that are most sensitive to the open and unimpeded access of the Internet that the initiative requires for success.

For example, a student created paper on abortion may be too sensitive of a matter for a school; therefore we must initially limit the content created by the user without impeding their creativity. At the same time we must provide the new netcitizen an alternative to the Youtube's of the world in order to allow us to leverage the user's interest in developing our social network project. In order to accomplish this we must provide the new netcitizen an online mechanism for self expression.

Therefore Cognent, Inc. proposes to create the **elpasowiki.org** application. The elpasowiki.org application is designed to leverage the enormous wealth of data generated by our students in our community each semester. From grade school to college students - writing papers about culture, history and their personal experiences is as basic as a taking a test. Most of these papers end up in a waste basket each year. This data set could be leveraged to solve two issues facing our digital community, *the lack of border culture* or identity on the Internet and *a reason for the new netcitizens to generate content for our community*.

The Wiki Model

The Wiki model is essentially one of collaboration. The object of a wiki project is to get as many people to work together with only the goal of assisting each other. Wikis are meant to be a place of sharing. One person contributes their time to teach another, who in turn does the same for a third person and so on. Ideally, a wiki can blossom into an enormous body of easily accessible information, or data sets free for everyone to use, edit and author. One wiki that has fulfilled these ideals is Wikipedia.

In our model, we have chosen the Wiki as the vehicle to launch the Web2.0 component of our project. This has been done for two major reasons, the first is ensuring that we address the sensitivity to controversial topics that schools may find unacceptable and the second is to realize the educational benefits to the project.

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In our model, we will make available an online vehicle where teachers can encourage their students to post their unique work online. Our model will be based on an encyclopedia concept where the content generated by the students will be of interest to the community both locally and universally. To avoid potential administrative problems both for the operators of the system and the users the system, the system will allow only content focused on our community culture such as our foods or our history. Teachers will be encouraged to engage their pupils to produce multimedia content about our historical identity, our musical and artistic experience and our food. Although this may at first seem limiting in the context of open expression, the model is designed to allow the participant to grow into the digital world as his experience grows. We will address the next phase of growth under the Chamizal.org section. By using the Wiki model we can leverage the key to the success of the project.

Our model will incorporate the ability for each user to express themselves by most multimedia in English, Spanish or both languages. The user's expression will not only give the netcitizen a vehicle with which to express themselves but their expression will share our identity with the rest of the world.

Teachers are the Key

By engaging the teachers in our community to participate in this project we begin to build the necessary critical mass needed to make this project effective. Teacher participation would not require changes to the teacher's curriculum; rather it would ask the teacher to encourage participation. By tasking a student to prepare a written report on a specific moment of history in our community or a report on the best mole recipe we begin to create a data set uniquely ours which we can ultimately share with the rest of the world. Rather than print the report on paper and turn it into the teacher the student would be tasked with posting the report online for the teacher to review and grade.



The act of posting the report will not only add to our border-centric data set but would also create synergy that would ultimately grow the social network to include the larger global universe. Imagine having your child write a report about Pancho Villa, wouldn't you share it with your coworkers? Wouldn't those coworkers share it with others? How about out of town families? Most, if not all families like to share the accomplishments of their children. This mechanism makes it easier than ever to do so and in the process will only get us closer to our goal.

School rivalries would only add to the data set as each school would then compete to add more and better content to the data set. More importantly, the quality of the data set would improve as the mass of participants is increased because the Wiki model allows and encourages the quality of the product by peer review.

Students, by their nature are competitive and as such would compete to establish their online identity with this concept ultimately leading to the growth of content through competition. As parents become engaged in the project, through their children's participation, their own contributions will be materialized in new content and more awareness of the project leading to the critical mass the growth of the project requires.

Better yet, the project can be leveraged to create contests where local and national companies can provide grants and prizes to students and schools for the best content. Competition among students and schools would only increase the quality of our data set furthering the goal of the project.

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Controlling abuse: The teachers

Most likely we can expect to have to deal with abusive users on the system and therefore our proposed model is based on using the teachers as the initial point of access to the system. Although the system will ultimately be open to the community for direct participation, the initial participation will be through the teachers. The teachers will invite their students to begin the process of creating content. As the system matures it will automatically open up to include a larger set of our city.

By initiating through the teachers they would be in the position to not only positively identify possible disrupters of the system but they would be effective in encouraging the violator to participate positively in the project. As the system grows, the teachers will become the first level editors and the initial set of students would become the second level editors and so on through the growth of the process. As more participants begin to contribute, the editorial levels would move each section one step up reducing workload and increasing our data set. More importantly this process would allow for our most important goal which is it maintain the integrity of the system and maintain positive identification of each element.

Peer to Peer review

The concept of pride of ownership is expected to manifest itself as the project grows. The teachers and the students would protect the quality and integrity of the project creating a peer review process where the quality of the content can only grow. This peer review would not only encourage quality and the growth of the system but also create the synergy necessary to grow the project.

As the project grows, new participants will be engaged and as they begin to participate in the system their entrance elevates the prior participants up the chain of editorial control. The ownership factor of the content will be invested in all participants protecting the integrity of it.

Because the nature of the Internet, as manifested by the new netcitizens, is such that the freedom of expression is paramount; the model can only grow by accepting this and providing the appropriate vehicle for it. As discussed, the participation of the educational part of our community is paramount to the development of the project but their participation is limited by the fact that certain topics and issues are sensitive to them. We must let the growth of our new netcitizens to manifest itself without limitation. As such, Cognent's model proposes the next logical step in this evolution, a system where expression through online discussion groups, photographs and videos or written works are allowed unimpeded.



Chamizal.org

Chamizal.org is proposed to be the next step in the evolution of the model. Chamizal.org will continue to focus on our primary function of both allowing our community the ability to express

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themselves while continuing to provide an expression of our fronterizo, or borderlander identity to the net space.

Chamizal.org will focus on building a social network of the people in our community. The service will provide messaging, video, file sharing, blogging and discussion groups to our netcitizens. Because the system will be an extension of the **elpasowiki.org** site, but not directly linked to the educational providers, it would allow a greater freedom of expression while maximizing the synergy of phase one. Because the netcitizens would have matured from the initial project their participation should be positive as their online maturity should be reflected in this continued growth.

This phase of the project would also allow us to grow our data set by including more of our community to include Cd. Juárez, our sister city. The continued use of our two basic languages and cultures would attract more interest in our project from the rest of the world. Our unique implementation of this model should make us the model for other communities to follow.

The word Chamizal was chosen for this phase because it represents a milestone in intergovernmental relations with the peaceful settlement of a centuries old international dispute. Two cultural and language identities came together as friends to find common ground. We believe this identifies us as a community better than anything else and makes us unique in the world.



The Final Step

Our ultimate goal is to create a fully integrated system whereby the netcitizen logs into his personal site and has immediate access to his online tools. Email, book marks, news links and all Web2.0 technology would be integrated into one user location. More importantly, the netcitizen would have his online identity and space on the web.

joemartinez.elp.net

In our proposed model, the netcitizen would have his personal home page at **elp.net**. Cognent proposes to offer each citizen a third-level domain for his own personal use. The user's online presence would have two Web2.0 components, a public view and a private location. Our example user, Joe Martinez would log into his portal as soon as he connects to the net. From there he

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would have access to his personal online book marks, RSS feeds, address book, files, email and the tools needed to manage both the private and public sections of his online identity.

The user would have full control over his personal online space. He will be able to choose what he wants the public to see and what he wants to keep private. The base tools would include the standard blogging, communications and expression packages.

Ultimately the goal is to make the user a netcitizen and therefore the package is designed with the ability to access and interact with the information he needs, because the Cognent developed core product is modular in design, allowing easy integration with hooks into proprietary systems while retaining security intact. This would allow public and private entities the ability to produce "widgets", online code snippets that would allow them the ability to provide the netcitizen with the information they need.

The system would be based on Cognent's Amitor™ system, a system developed by Cognent for commercial use. This system can be readily modified to incorporate the core products herein identified reaching our goal of a netcitizen interacting with the community around them digitally.

Conclusion

In conclusion we, as a team are ready to take Digital El Paso to the next step. In so doing we continue to embrace the collaborative nature of the project. Digital El Paso is leading the way with its innovative use of collaboration between the public and private sector. We have shown how effective a team we can be.

Cognent, Inc. wants to lead the charge to the next step and be part of the model that could revolutionize digital inclusion across the globe. *We need your help and support.* We are set and ready to begin the process on **January 2008**. The momentum is in place with the recent announcement by Digital El Paso. Community awareness is at the highest peak possible.

There are public led possibilities to reach the goal of attaining netcitizenship but they require time and money that will take time to make politically viable. While those initiatives are being examined and funded, Digital El Paso can lead the charge of digital inclusion by helping us launch the El Paso netcitizen project.

From a public entity perspective the ability for each citizen to have his own verified email address gives the government a strong tool to deliver the citizen the information they need in an effective and timely basis. From the citizen's perspective, having their own email address and space on the net continues to narrow the digital divide while sharing our culture and identity with the rest of the world.

Cognent, Inc. is prepared to make this a reality for El Paso. Help us to put El Paso on the cyber map!

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Graphical Process Summary

