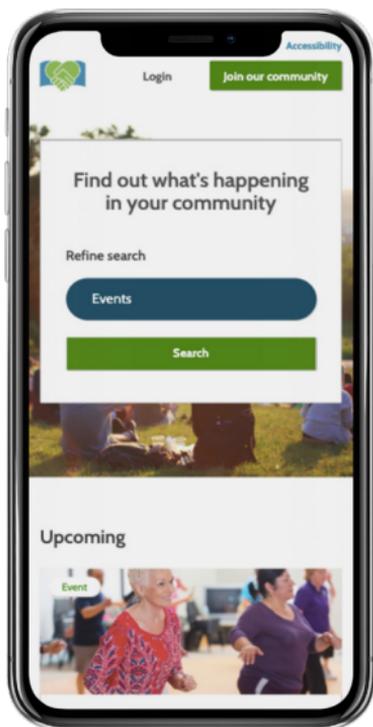


Hallnet works with Inform People and Wigan Council to develop Community Book



PROJECT BACKGROUND

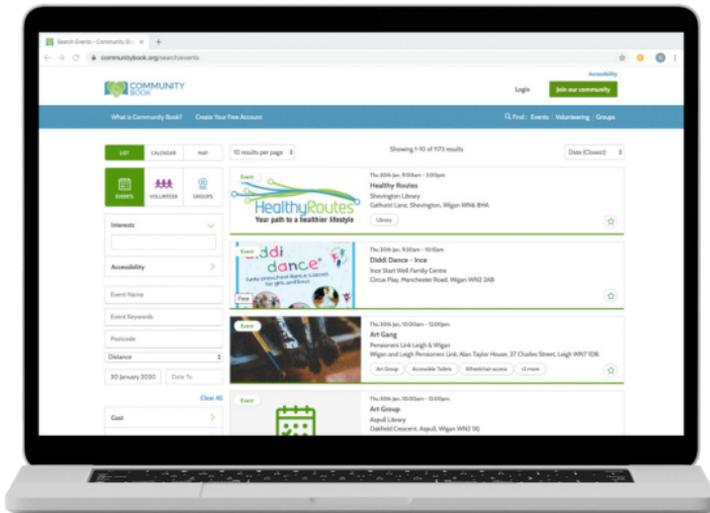
In February 2016, Inform People approached Hallnet to help them develop their product, Community Book. The idea of Community Book came from a strong desire to solve the problem of Social Isolation that was present in local communities. Inform People noticed there was no centralised location to find events, groups or volunteer opportunities in their local area of Wigan. They also noticed that this seemed to be the case across the entire UK.

There was a lot of information on

local communities, however, it was spread across many different mediums, which were often incorrect or out of date. Thus, the idea of Community Book was born. Inform People chose to partner with Wigan Council, and WB Community Partnership, to bring all their information to one place. Where individuals could find exactly what's happening in their local community, whilst also being able to register their own groups, events and volunteer opportunities for others to see.

WHY HALLNET?

Inform People chose to work with Hallnet for a number of reasons. First of all, the two organisations had worked together previously to develop Inform People's key product: 'The Virtual PA'. From this, they knew that Hallnet had the right knowledge and experience to develop software and do it well. Secondly, Inform chose to work with Hallnet so that they could reduce the risks that were associated with hiring a full time



development team from the beginning of the project.

THE APPROACH

The project was managed through Hallnet's Agile project management approach. The team minimised the number of formal meetings needed and communicated daily via Trello card updates and phone calls. The Trello cards were kept heavily detailed and technical and were fully accessible by both Hallnet and Inform People to maximise transparency between each party. Sprints were scheduled fortnightly and the workload was tackled in a way that was most technically efficient. This was important on this project due to its large scope.

CHALLENGES

One of the challenges was meeting the project's large specification within the allocated time and budget. The team had to effectively prioritise

which elements were most important and required a fully bespoke development approach and tackle those first before addressing the tertiary elements. One of the ways they achieved this was finding ways in which third party services could be used for more generic elements rather than developing this functionality from scratch. For example, they chose to

implement the commenting system 'Disqus' rather than developing a full commenting system themselves. This saved the organisations around 3 weeks of work, which could then be spent meeting the project's top priorities. This was also the case with the calendar system that was also implemented into the website.

BENEFITS

Working with Hallnet meant that Inform People were able to achieve their vision for Community Book without the

associated risks of hiring a full time development team from the start. Inform People's project manager, Chris Thomas, commended the communication flow that he had with Hallnet, saying the following:

"A lot of the communication was done over text, and messages using Trello. That was really useful for me as I was often out and about, so if I needed more clarification, I knew I could pick up the phone and discuss it further if needed."

He also noted how 'easy' it was to engage with Hallnet on a technical level and how it was useful to be able to be open about his own technical knowledge, having things explained clearly to him when he needed it. This was especially helpful during the handover

process which was 'extremely smooth', unlike past experiences with other project handovers which can become quite protracted.

THE HANDOVER

When the handover process had begun, Inform People hired one full time developer to take over the maintenance of the project. During his first few months of employment the developer worked from Hallnet's Liverpool office, where he had full access to the project manager and developers that had worked on Community Book. This meant that the handover could be done in person and if he had any questions he could get answers quickly from the Hallnet team. This was crucial to the success of the handover.

DESIGN REFRESH

In 2017, Inform People approached Hallnet again to refresh the designs of the system. They wanted to create and highlight the use of universal search on the site, so

that different audiences (local groups and individuals), could easily find what they came for. They also wanted events to be shown in a clear list and calendar view, so again, it would be easier to see what's on in the local area. Hallnet's in-house designer worked closely with the team at Inform People to create a design that met the specification and was also feasible within the designated time and budget.

COMMUNITY BOOK NOW

Community Book has now been successfully connecting locals in the Wigan Borough for over 2 years and sees over 2000 events uploaded to the system per quarter. Inform People are now looking to implement Community Book into more local communities to further their mission of bringing people together. If you want to know more about the product, visit their website at www.communitybook.org.

GET IN TOUCH



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