



**Community
Technology
Institute**

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Our mission is to remove phonelessness as a barrier to economic opportunity for homeless and poor people. We strive to strengthen communities' ability to connect poor people to opportunity through meaningful and relevant use of technology.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COMMUNITY VOICE MAIL EVALUATION ASSESSING CLIENT SATISFACTION AND USAGE PATTERNS

September 2001

The Community Technology Institute (CTI) conducted the Summer Survey 2001 to gather information for national fundraising, policy, outreach and program development efforts. The Summer Survey 2001 included a paper survey of Community Voice Mail (CVM) providers and clients and a group message recording to which clients could provide a verbal response. Twenty CVM sites volunteered to participate in the paper survey and seven sites participated in the broadcast message. There was a mix of urban/rural and old/new sites. Respondents took the time to rate CVM and provide feedback and suggestions. The Summer Survey 2001 allowed us to expand our knowledge of the ways in which individuals use CVM and the ways in which such a service impacts their lives.

As a result of this project, and in response to the evaluator's recommendations, CTI will continue to conduct national evaluation efforts and make improvements in reporting and accountability procedures. The following sections further summarize the results of the Summer Survey 2001.

SUMMER SURVEY 2001 GOALS

We implemented this two-part survey to do the following:

1. Obtain information from CVM users on helpfulness and user patterns.
2. Obtain information from CVM social service providers on the helpfulness of the voicemail system for communicating with their clients and on the service guidelines used to distribute the CVM service.
3. Engage in a learning process regarding CTI's role in evaluation of CVM Federation sites from a national perspective.

PROVIDER SURVEYS: 189 Provider Surveys Returned

The providers that responded to the survey represent the wide variety of community partners through which we distribute CVM services -- from traditional social service agencies and DSHS offices to public schools and private churches. Key highlights are presented here:

Helpfulness: **66%** rated CVM as "Very Helpful" for providing information to their clients.

Length of Time: **49%** allow client to remain on CVM as long as the client needs.

Distribution: **87%** distribute box for job search

CLIENT SURVEYS: 689 Client Surveys Returned

The client showed that the main reasons CVM is liked by respondents is the helpfulness for searching on jobs/housing, having a feeling of stability, presenting a professional image, keeping personal situations private, and maintaining contact with friends and family. Surveys also indicated that pay phones and social service agency phones were the main ways through which clients accessed their voicemail boxes.

The following percentages show the percentage of high ratings for each category: “*How helpful has your voicemail been...?*”

78% Very Helpful in Job Search (N=577)

68% Very Helpful in Housing Search (N=447)

72% Very Helpful in Medical/Health Care (N=434)

69% Very Helpful in Child Care/Services (N=179)

91% Very Helpful in Safe & Private Place (N=623)

RESPONSES TO GROUP BROADCAST MESSAGE: 907 Client Responses

The majority of the responses to the broadcast message clearly indicated that these users find their voicemail very helpful, useful, and/or important (95%). Several of the respondents also described using their voicemail to look for work, look for housing, coordinate medical appointments, stay in contact with family and friends, and have safe and private communication.

COMBINING STATISTICS AND STORIES

As seen in the comments, tables, and graphs of the full report, the clients we surveyed described several positive impacts that Community Voice Mail has had on their lives. When asked to rate CVM’s helpfulness, the majority of both clients *and* providers rated the voicemail as very helpful. The results of the paper survey allowed us to get a statistical picture of our services, while the client messages allowed us to clarify the scope and complexity of our impact. Furthermore, although we have tried to be cautious about stating that CVM is a direct cause of finding a job (for example), many of the recorded responses from clients seem to make that causal connection. Over and over again, clients indicated that having access to a reliable messaging service was the “reason” they were able to get a job, get a house, and/or get other services. In their minds, and from their experiences, the connections seem clear.

Since 1993, CVM sites across the country have been providing a very valuable service.

The recommendations that focus on improving data collection and reporting efforts are merely suggestions on how CTI might tackle some of the challenges of data quality and evaluation needs in the future. However, the most important thing that CTI can do is to continue to meet its goal of providing access to a reliable messaging system in order to help alleviate the barriers to economic and social opportunities.