



DC NON-PROFIT THRIVES WITH AN AGILE APPROACH

Nonprofits across the country and around the world rely on technology to spread their mission and raise the funds necessary to serve and succeed. Technological failure can paralyze organizations - sometimes permanently - unless they are able to quickly pinpoint the problem and associated solution. Such is the case with one local non-profit, left nearly inoperable when faced with a botched software migration. The Excella team spotted the issue, implemented an immediate fix and helped create plans for long-term IT success.

IT: The Cornerstone For Close Up's Business

Since 1971, Close Up Foundation has been inspiring high school and middle school students to become engaged citizens by bringing them to Washington, DC, to participate in educational programs. The non-profit gives participants a “close-up” look at the inner workings of the federal government, providing them with an amazing experience that, according to 96% of teachers, help students better understand current issues and their roles as citizens in a democracy.

It takes a lot of operational and technical support to facilitate that experience. With 16,000 students visiting through the program each year and 1,200 website visitors per day, Close Up is completely dependent on its IT systems for registration, logistical, coordination, financial tracking, and accounting.

Close Up had been working with a vendor for months to migrate their legacy IT system to a more streamlined, modern web application that could support new business needs. But when the new software went live, nothing worked. The staff was immediately barraged with issues and complaints—students and teachers couldn't log into their accounts, and the non-profit couldn't close the books at month's end.

When the original software vendor was unsuccessful in fixing the system, Close Up had to postpone key business activities. Their reputation was at stake, and their future was in question.

An Agile Approach Averts Crisis – and Lays the Foundation For Future Success

Understanding the level of urgency, Excella jumped in immediately to leverage key Agile engineering best practices, such as continuous integration, Scrum methodology, and automated build and deployments across Close Up. Within just two weeks, the system code base was stabilized, allowing students and teachers to access the most critical logon and registration functions, and enabling Close Up to resume critical business functions. The program was up and running within days and saw significant costs savings within weeks.

After the software migration fix, Excella worked side-by-side with Close Up to design a new IT system from the ground up. The team created a long-term roadmap for IT success, implementing such requirements as safeguards and source control. Excella was able to construct a more seamless and adaptive application, which would provide Close Up flexibility as it's business changed. The team engaged the [Excella Extension Center](#) for some of the software development effort, resulting in cost savings for CloseUp along the way. The new application provides Close Up staff with a much more robust suite of business capabilities, and the students an enhanced user experience when planning for their trip.

Today Close Up Foundation is thriving. Students continue to flock to DC for the experience of having the Capitol as their campus. And for many, that's the experience of a lifetime.

About Us

Excella is an Agile technology firm helping Washington, DC's leading organizations realize their future through the power of technology. We work collaboratively to solve our clients' biggest challenges and evolve their thinking to help them prepare for tomorrow. Together we transform bold ideas into elegant technology solutions to create real progress.

Learn more at www.excella.com.

