Selecting the Best Giving Day Vendor
Decision Making in Complex Environments
Final Project

Victoria Bianco
4.19.2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND 3

GOAL 3

ALTERNATIVES 4

MODEL 4

MAIN NETWORK 5
CONTROL CRITERIA 6
SUBNETWORKS 6
- BENEFITS 7
- OPPORTUNITIES 8
- COSTS 9
- RISKS 10

ANALYSIS 10

BOTTOM LEVEL SENSITIVITY 10
OVERALL SYNTHESIS 13
- MULTIPLICATIVE 13
- ADDITIVE (NEGATIVE) 13

CONCLUSIONS 14

BACKGROUND

Fundraising in higher education is imperative to a university's success in all facets. Of course a school benefits from increased funds, which lead to increased resources, but the university's reputation is also impacted. University rankings such as US News and World Report utilize alumni participation as a factor when comparing colleges, and alumni participation is measured by the percentage of alumni that give back to the university. Making a gift of any size can positively contribute to the participation percentage and make an impact on the lives of current students at the school. The collegiate world is also becoming increasingly concerned about student debt and the request for scholarship support from donors is certainly at the forefront of higher education fundraising.

When crowfunding became popular in the early 2000s, universities slowly began harnessing the concept in higher education. Eventually, this turned into daylong online fundraising campaigns referred to ask giving days. Giving days have become an especially popular trend in higher education over the past five years, and many universities raise millions of dollars and acquire the largest influx of new donor support in a 24 hour period.

The main objectives of higher education giving days typically consist of some combination of the following:

- acquire new donors (referred to as first-time donors)
- unify university communities
- increase alumni participation
- engage young alumni through social media
- allow donors to give to the whatever university entity they are most passionate about
- raise a great deal of funds through the initiative

Many schools contract with a web development company to host their giving day, while others create their own site if they have the capacity to do so. A number of web vendors have marketed themselves exclusively as giving day platforms, offering both their web development services and giving day expertise to help clients optimize their programs. Technology is improving every day, and giving day platforms compete to be the most innovative and release updates fastest.

GOAL

In the University of Pittsburgh's Annual Giving department, we have struggled year over year to find the best vendor to host our annual Pitt Day of Giving (PDoG). This may seem like a simple choice, yet it drastically shapes Pitt's giving structure and is also the most public-facing fundraising done for the University. Pitt has hosted three giving days (2017-2019) up until this point, and every year there is exponential room for improvement.

For Pitt, acquiring new donors and increasing alumni participation are ongoing objectives in all giving initiatives and the main goals for PDoG. Dollars raised is always a consideration as well, especially when it comes to return on investment. Based on the options made available in the last three PDoGs, Pitt donors are now used to being able to direct their gift

to the fund of their choice. Therefore, a platform that can accommodate a high quantity of fund options (in total, Pitt has over 7,000) will be crucial in selecting a vendor.

To see an example of a giving day site, please visit Pitt Day of Giving 2019.

ALTERNTATIVES

Four main giving day vendors are under consideration:

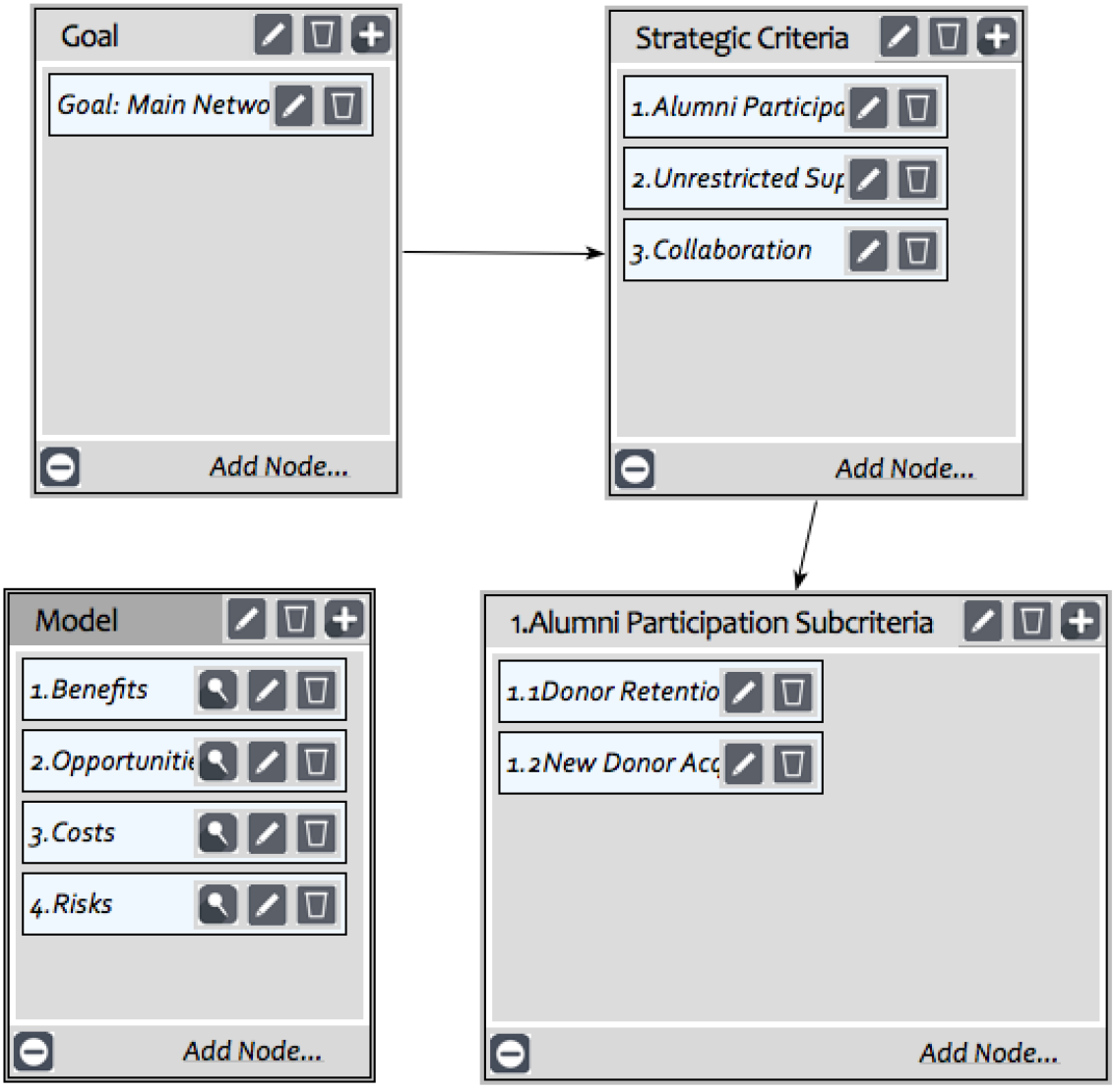
1. Snap! Advance
    a. Snap! Advance is a small but premier online giving company utilized by many big name universities across the country. They are well known for their site aesthetics but have limitations when it comes to the template they utilize to build giving day sites. They promise giving day expertise in the form of "strategy sessions" and are present on-site during the giving day itself to help with whatever the team needs. Pitt contracted with Snap! Advance for its 2019 PDoG.
2. iModules
    a. iModules is a full-service website platform for universities, providing broadcast email, general giving sites, giving day platforms, crowdfunding platforms, and more. They are known for their customer service and for facilitating collaborative environments amongst higher education clients. Pitt currently utilizes iModules for broadcast email, the Pitt Alumni Association site, and is building the general giving site (giveto.pitt.edu) through this vendor. Costs can vary due to benefits from contracting with other iModules services.
3. Scalefunder
    a. Scalefunder is a user-friendly, low cost vendor that provides giving day and crowdfunding platforms. Their giving day site template is relatively basic, but they offer more ways for donors to engage with the platform. Because Pitt already utilizes Scalefunder for its crowdfunding services, the giving day platform is simply an add-on.
4. GiveGab
    a. GiveGab is a newer web platform beginning to enter the higher education giving day market. Pitt does not have a relationship with the vendor but has had positive experiences working with smaller companies new to higher ed in the past. GiveGab has a number of up-to-date features and a well-organized design, which add to the donor experience on a giving day.

The following universities' giving day sites and feedback were utilized during benchmarking to evaluate each vendor:

Columbia University – Snap! Advance
Northeastern University – Snap! Advance
Loyola Marymount University – iModules
Central Arkansas University – iModules
Duquesne University – Scalefunder
Boston College – Scalefunder

Purdue University – GiveGab
University of Notre Dame – GiveGab

MODEL
Main Network
The main network consists of an ANP model among the goal, strategic criteria, strategic subcriteria; and a separate cluster for the benefits, opportunities, costs, and risks subnetwork. The main network is shown below:

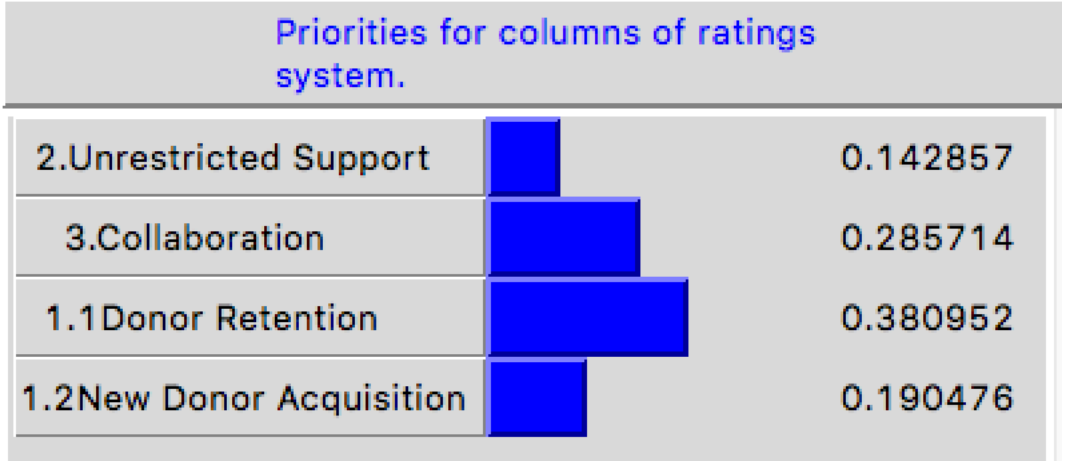


Strategic Criteria

The strategic criteria denote the overall goals of the Annual Programs department, which is responsible for growing Pitt's donor base and stewarding annual donors into the major giving pipeline.

1. Alumni Participation – number of University of Pittsburgh graduates at any degree or certificate level that make a gift to Pitt
    a. New Donor Acquisition – alumni making their first gift to Pitt
    b. Donor Retention – receiving continued support from alumni donors that made a gift the previous fiscal year
2. Unrestricted Support – funds donated to the University that are not designated to a specific purpose and able to be utilized for areas of greatest need (i.e. The Pitt Fund, General Scholarship Fund)
3. Collaboration – It is impossible for the Annual Programs team to be successful without collaboration with and support from the various schools, departments, centers, etc. of the University. Creating and maintain positive relationship throughout the Pitt community is key.

The ratings model in Super Decisions produced the following rankings amongst the strategic criteria:



The rankings of the strategic criteria were as expected. Donor retention is the most important, as lifetime value of a person that gives to Pitt year over year is much greater than someone who is a first-time (new) donor but only gives once. Unrestricted support is still a priority, but when compared to the other criteria, unrestricted giving typically takes a back seat. At the end of the day, it is more important for alumni to make a gift somewhere than for the gift to be unrestricted.

Control Criteria

Due the various impacts of fundraising on the University, the following control criteria were selected for the BOCR subnetworks:

1. Economic
    a. The ability to raise funds on the platform and the impact of those funds on the University.

2. Operational
    a. The ability to integrate the vendor platform with Pitt's established systems.
3. Organizational
    a. The impact of the vendor on the Annual Programs team and various University stakeholders.
4. Social
    a. The external perception of Pitt by alumni, the community, prospective students, and all those concerned with higher education.
5. Technological
    a. The overall design, content, and visual features of the giving day site.

Subnetworks

With the help of Annual Programs colleagues, we brainstormed a number of considerations that must be included when selecting a giving day vendor. After the brainstorm, I separated the factors into benefits, opportunities, costs, and risks, and then categorized the factors by control criteria.

Benefits

The factors included beneath each control criterion respective to the benefits subnetwork are shown below:

Economic	Operational	Organizational	Social	Technological
Major Gifts	Offline Gift Uploads	Backend Access	Ambassador Program	Customization
Platform Value	Tax Receipt	Best Practices Input	Donor Recognition	Giving Form
Total Dollars	Vendor Assistance	Unit Involvement	Global Reach	Visual Appeal
			Social Media Toolkit	Leaderboards/ Challenges
				Unit Pages
				User Friendly

Benefits Synthesis Results:

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Subnet under 1.Benefits

Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		1.000000	0.288379	0.801142
iModules		0.809661	0.233489	0.648654
Scalefunder		0.918582	0.264900	0.735915
Snap! Advance		0.739419	0.213233	0.592380

The benefits synthesis was a bit surprising, as I expected Snap! Advance to rank higher, though the difference in the normal values between all for vendors is not too drastic. I believe this is due to the heavy weight I placed on the economic control criterion and specifically platform value, which works against Snap! Advance because of the high cost associated with its services. GiveGab likely ranked first due to its diverse services, none of which are necessarily best in class individually, but both the features and flexibility exist for the client to customize the platform as they wish.

Opportunities

The factors included beneath each control criterion respective to the opportunities subnetwork are shown below:

Economic	Operational	Organizational	Social	Technological
Financial Resource	Access to CSS (site code)	Exceeding Goals	Consistency	Multiple Designations, One Transaction
Growth in Donor Base	Payment Methods	Senior Leadership Support	Increased University Ranking	Platform Improvement
Major Gift Pipeline	Reporting	Stakeholder Commitment	Pitt Love	Queriable

Opportunities Synthesis:

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Subnet under 2.Opportunities

Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		0.803799	0.243857	0.619214
iModules		1.000000	0.303381	0.770359
Scalefunder		0.508143	0.154161	0.391453
Snap! Advance		0.984243	0.298601	0.758221

I was not surprised by the synthesis results for the opportunities subnet, as it makes sense for iModules to provide the most opportunities for Pitt. Pitt already contracts with iModules for its giving website, alumni association website, and broadcast email systems. iModules would allow for smooth integration amongst Pitt's systems and consistency in all giving/alumni-related sites. Scalefunder ranks last because it's long-term benefits are limited by the restrictions of its template site.

Costs

The factors included beneath each control criterion respective to the costs subnetwork are shown below:

Economic	Operational	Organizational	Social	Technological
Additional Fees	Bad Customer Service	Manpower	Negative Alumni Response	Complex Navigation
ROI	Gift Processing	Time Commitment	Donor Recognition	Site Functionality
Platform Expense	System Integration	Unit Buy-in	Student Debt	Fund Capacity
Tuition Cost				Template Site
				Offline Gift Count
				Giving Form Length

Costs Synthesis:

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Subnet under 3.Costs

Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		0.892882	0.256202	0.702055
iModules		0.869083	0.249373	0.683342
Scalefunder		0.723105	0.207486	0.568563
Snap! Advance		1.000000	0.286938	0.786280

The costs synthesis results were what I expected given the heavy weight I applied to the economic factors and the prices of the platforms, which range from $10,000 (Scalefunder) to $65,000 (Snap! Advance) for a single year. I did expect Scalefunder to rank a bit higher in costs, simply because the template site, more complex site navigation, and negative alumni response pose more problems than other platform options.

Risks

The factors included beneath each control criterion respective to the risks subnetwork are shown below:

Economic	Organizational	Social
Dollar Decrease	Failure to Meet Goals	Negative Publicity
Donor Base Decrease	Mismanagement	Too Many Emails
ROI	Staff Turnover	Unsubscribes
	Too Time Consuming	

Risks Synthesis:

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Subnet under 4.Risks

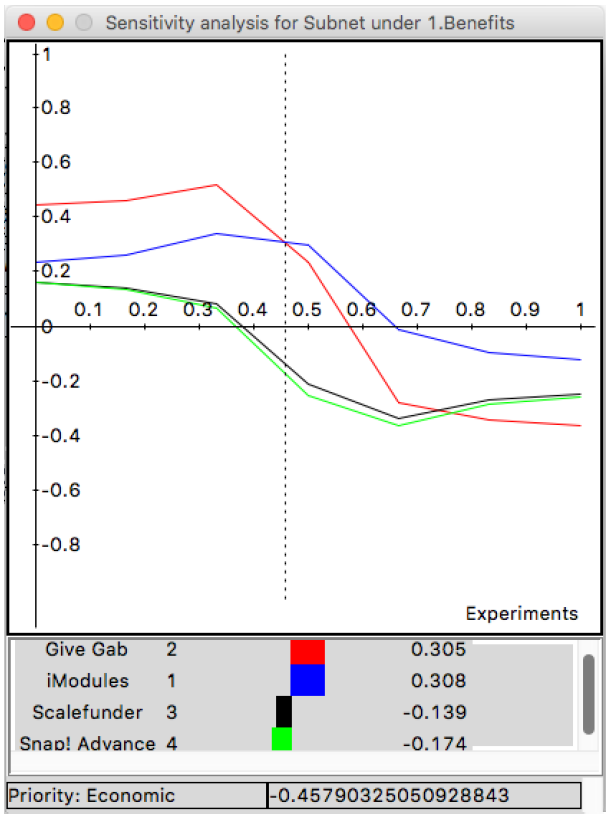
Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		0.474741	0.151345	0.386122
iModules		1.000000	0.318796	0.813331
Scalefunder		0.786666	0.250786	0.639819
Snap! Advance		0.875400	0.279074	0.711990

It was very interesting to me that the vendor that achieved the greatest opportunity in the Super Decisions model also posed the greatest risk. It almost seems to follow the "high risk, high reward" principle. GiveGab appears to be the "safest" option by a long shot, with half of the normal value percentage (15.1%) compared to iModules (31.9%). Though Scalefunder's site limitations may cause a dollar and donor base decrease, there is a good chance that the ROI would still be worthwhile, considering the low price of the platform. These factors likely contributed to it being the second least risky platform.

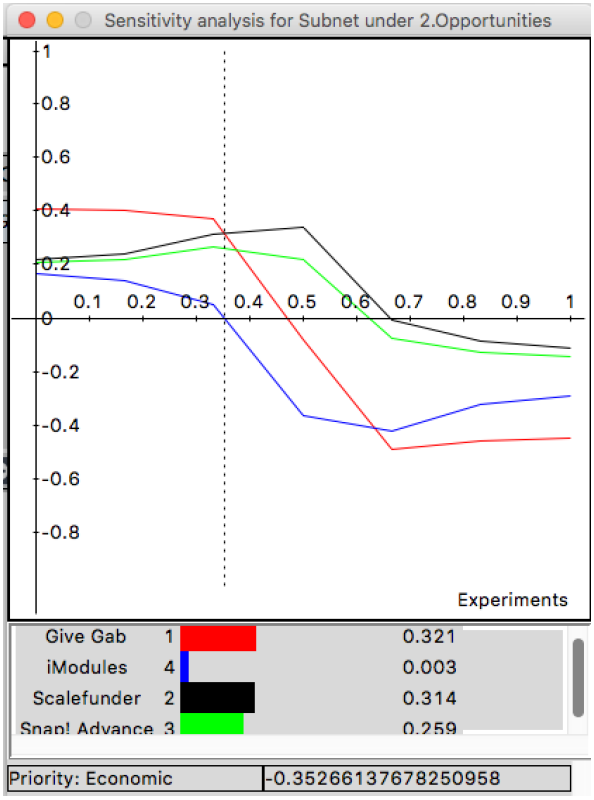
ANALYSIS

Bottom Level Sensitivity Analysis

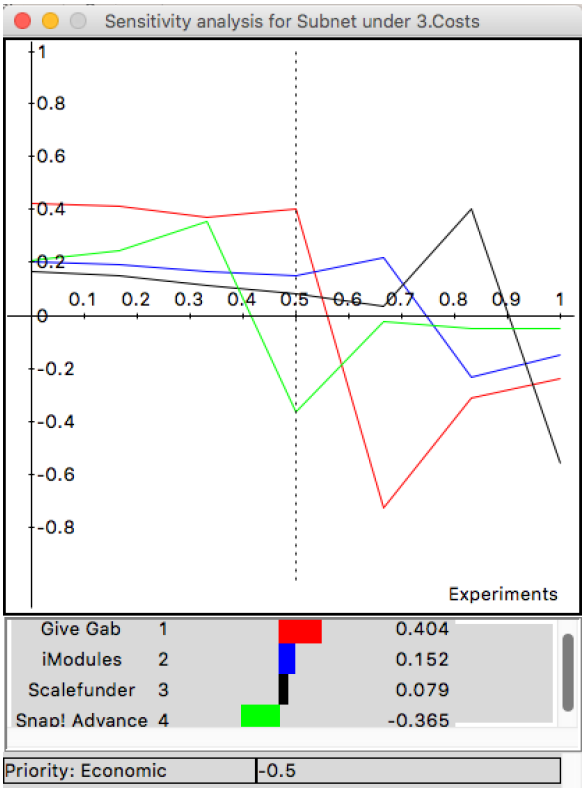
For each bottom level subnet (BOCR), I ran an AHP sensitivity analysis to evaluate the alternatives at when the economic control criterion changed in level of priority. The economic criterion was identified as the highest priority in each BOCR. Each sensitivity analysis will be discussed below, but overall, clear and consistent patterns did not emerge from the analyses. The costs and risks subnets are particularly sporadic. The lack of pattern within each subnet can be attributed to the Annual Programs team (and me in particular given that I created the model) are not yet ready to make a decision about a giving day vendor. If I had a better idea of the factors to best meet Pitt's needs at this point in time, fewer rank reversals would exist, and a top choice would have better presented itself.



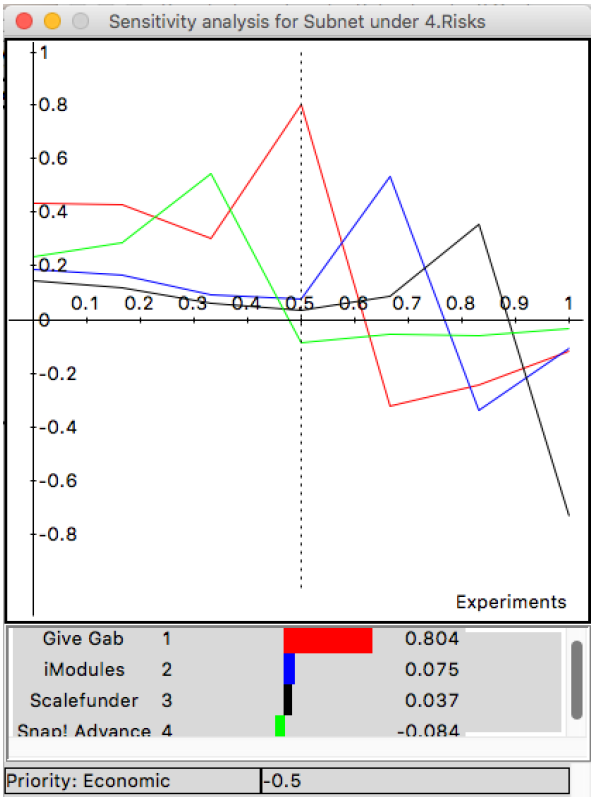
The benefits sensitivity analysis shows GiveGab as the best vendor until the level of priority of the economic control criterion becomes more important at about 45%. iModules then becomes the best option.



GiveGab again demonstrates its top ranking in the opportunities subnet until economic priority increases to 35%. Scalfunder, the least expensive platform, achieves the highest ranking after 35%.



We see a number of rank reversals in the costs subnet, yet GiveGab remains the best vendor choice until the economic level of priority reaches roughly 56%. iModules and Scalefunder become better options as the economic level of priority increases.



The risks subnet sensitivity analysis also includes a series of rank reversals, though GiveGab is the best option for the majority of the time. iModules and Scalefunder are closely ranked as economic priority is low, but slowly spread when it increases in priority.

Overall Synthesis

Multiplicative Formula

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Main Network: BestGivingDayVendor_test2.sdmod: formulaic: ratings

Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		1.000000	0.423290	1.830017
iModules		0.491299	0.207962	0.899085
Scalefunder		0.432729	0.183170	0.791902
Snap! Advance		0.438420	0.185579	0.802316

The multiplicative formula produced final synthesis results for the short-term, which shows GiveGab as the clear best choice. Its normal value is over double the second best choice of iModules at 20.7%. Given that Pitt has not yet fully explored GiveGab as a platform, the results of this Super Decisions model demonstrate that the vendor is definitely worth further exploration. Snap! Advance, the vendor Pitt used for its 2019 day of giving ranked third, just slightly above Scalefunder by 0.2%.

Additive (Negative) Formula

Here are the overall synthesized priorities for the alternatives. You synthesized from the network Main Network: BestGivingDayVendor_test2.sdmod: formulaic: ratings

Name	Graphic	Ideals	Normals	Raw
Give Gab		-0.269294	-0.097914	-0.054857
iModules		-0.877086	-0.318903	-0.178670
Scalefunder		-0.603941	-0.219589	-0.123028
Snap! Advance		-1.000000	-0.363594	-0.203708

Unfortunately the Additive (Negative) formula was not terribly helpful when predicting the best giving day vendor, but it does show that GiveGab is the "best of the worst" long-term options at -26.9%. Snap! Advance proved to be the worst long-term option by a significant margin of about 7%.

Due to ratings scales that did not provide enough separation between levels, both formulas were not calculated as accurately as possible in Super Decisions. A more

customized and measurable ratings scale relevant to the strategic criteria would create better results in the future.

Conclusions

Overall, I found the results of the Super Decisions model to very intriguing, though the model certainly had its problems. Snap! Advance did not perform well compared to the other three alternatives, which raises concern given that the Annual Programs team chose to contract with them for PDoG 2019. The creation of this model showed me how biased I am to the economic criterion, and I'm sure my personal biases influenced the model's results in favor of a less expensive platform and potential increased return on investment. My personal bias also likely influenced Snap! Advance negatively because I have actually experienced their company first-hand as opposed to doing benchmarking with other schools and demos with the staff of iModules, Scalefunder, and GiveGab. Though we can do our best to appropriately vet a vendor prior to signing the contract, we can never really know the quality of the company until we are actually experiencing their service and platform.

Although there are several areas in which the model could improve, this analysis provides enough evidence that the Annual Programs team should at least explore other giving day vendors and become more educated about the options. In the future, I would like to use the framework of this current model, but utilize a group decision for the ratings model. This would allow each team member to weigh in on what he or she feels is most important to PDoG's success and create a more accurate representation of the vendor we should select.