

# Think, Act... connect.

An online service to bring those together locally that wish to have a global impact.



As our world embraces globalization, there develops a disconnect between ideals (feeding the world, global education, maternal health, world peace, etc.) and the actions to make these ideals a reality in the world. There have been individuals with passion and drive that have overcome the barriers to creating change in the world, such as Craig Kielburger, founder of Free the Children (2011). Kielburger's program focuses on acting locally with the intention of making improvements globally. The concept of thinking globally and acting local (as applied by Frank Bruner to the economy, 2004) describes local actions that have the underlying intention to affect global change.

A particular group that typically demonstrates such a desire (and influence) as Kielburger are educators. Educators are in a position to influence their students to become global citizens by acting locally—the challenge is that they are taxed with their current workload, and expansive projects that have a potentially global impact are difficult logistically alone. Schools are required to take an active role in encouraging global citizen education for all students (Scheweisfurth, 2006), but this can be a challenging endeavor for an overloaded educator. An undertaking with global impact is a daunting task that requires collaboration, connections, and relationships between the groups.

## Overview of Think, Act...connect.

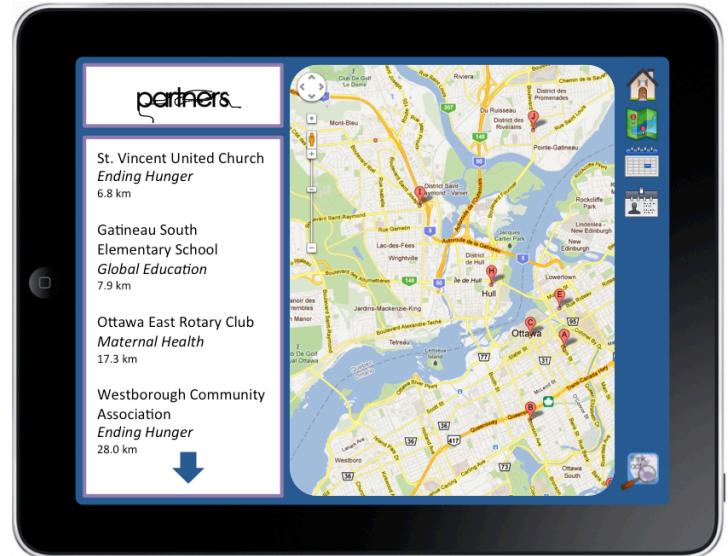
**Think, Act...connect** (TAC) is a web-based system (with app support) that is designed with three core functions:

- Connecting local educators to one another with common global ideals
- Providing a space for collaboration for projects that exemplify the think globally, act locally mantra
- Connecting educators and project leaders to funds and local organizations that could support the project

TAC builds on a radical perspective of learning where social change is a high priority (Spencer, 2006). It holds to the educational perspective that it is through collaboration and learning that changes can be made with effects on the global stage. Through consciousness-raising, learners receive global citizen education that exemplifies the *think globally, act locally* mantra.

TAC is successful in that it capitalizes on the concept of synergy; by bring individual educators together under common ideals, the learners under their care and their efforts are felt on a larger stage. Educators and community groups can connect to one another by accessing the *Nearby Groups* feature in on the TAC website (or through the apps). This feature uses geographic web browsing data and displays on a map (powered by Google) other organizations in the area that are adopting a *think globally, act locally* perspective in their programs. The user can search by category of ideal (global education, maternal health, feeding the world, etc.), or nearby organizations. By selecting the organization, the user is directed to additional information (most importantly, means of contact). The networking features of the application are free for the user.

Should a relationship develop through the use of TAC, it is simple to create a collaborative web-based workspace (blog, message forum, document sharing, and project planning site) for an annual fee. These workspaces are based on a researched and tested template, but offer flexibility and customization to increase buy-in and a sense of identity for those involved with particular projects.



## Our Team

The TAC leadership team is comprised of an experienced, passionate, knowledgeable group of individuals with varied backgrounds in organizational development, project management, sponsorship, international development, and community development. Through partnerships (in the form of advisors) with internationally recognized centres (such as the Local Capacity Institute (LCI) and the Canadian Government), TAC has facilitated the development of over 900 local projects with global impact.

Philip Harrop, the Founder and Executive Director of Education has been an educator for over twenty years in both Canadian and international contexts. His passion is tangible, conceivable actions that have an impact felt globally. Maximus Andrews, the Director of Technical Development, comes from a background of software development, security, and privacy with the Canadian Federal Public Service; his contributions ensure that the privacy of both users and organizations of this service is upheld. Finally, Carson Elliot leads research and development as Director of Research and development.

## The Market

TAC is targeted towards both educators and organizations with intent to improve local conditions (e.g., community associations, church groups, etc.). Educators in all areas (training, higher education, and public schools) can connect to one another and build fruitful relationships. Educators and social organizations exist in countless capacities, therefore creating a seemingly endless potential market in which TAC will be



successful.

With TAC, the user is a project lead (typically an educator or leader in the organization); while the project lead is the user, he/she often acts as well as the buyer. Through careful marketing, TAC has growth potential to be adopted more widely as a tool used by entire school boards or provinces.

TAC is currently intended for use in Canada and the United States of America exclusively; this is due to connectivity and availability of tools in only English and French language, with support primarily provided in English. Through mobile apps and the web-based utility, TAC capitalizes on mobile learning devices (specifically the location services) and cloud computing to ensure that educators and organizations alike can continue to contribute to their projects in any situation.

## Existing Products

Currently there are select other apps and website services that provide select similar functions. The Variety Children's Charity (2010) app is a philanthropic app that connects users to Variety Children's Charity initiatives and connects purchasers to potential contributions. The VolunteerMatch (2010) app is a database of volunteer opportunities that a potential volunteer can utilize to search opportunities. VolunteerMatch is specifically designed for individuals to connect to organizations for the purpose of volunteering; while similar to TAC, TAC is intended for project leads to connect to other project leads with the objective of bringing together the power of their entire organizations to maximize both teams' capabilities (i.e., synergy).

For the project sites portion of TAC, there are existing products that currently are able to fill the need. These products, such as Microsoft's Sharepoint (2011) and Ninian Solutions' Huddle (2011), are much more extensive than the requirements of basic collaboration as they are intended for major organizations with international users. They are cumbersome to train and learn, and offer far more capability than the average project lead requires.

## Invitation to Opportunity

It is TAC's balanced approach to providing service, content, and infrastructure that make it the tool of choice for educators and organizations looking to collaborate locally for a global impact. TAC's approach to technology for education is simplistic and straight-forward: it places technology back into the role of *tool* so that the infinitely more powerful human tools of the mind, capacity for relationship building, capacity for empathy, and drive to improve can take centre stage. It removes complicated technological barriers through its simplicity and refocuses project leads' energy by creating a network of like-minded individuals that act as one.

We at **Think, Act...connect** are excited to share this opportunity with you and your partners. It is through collaboration at a meta-level, that innovators like yourself provide the tools to others to go forward and have a wide impact. Through your financial partnership with TAC, we will grow and flourish, with clear social (local and global reputation) and financial benefits for your organization.

## Self Evaluation

Creating a venture was a challenging process. It was through brainstorming and discussion with my friends and family that I was able to come up with an idea that is a repurposing of other like ideas that already exist, but that didn't meet a specific function. While it was challenging, it was quite interesting as a process. I found that I had a difficult time with some of the more business-like aspects (e.g., should I ask for a specific amount of money for a specific share in my venture?), but in the end I decided to leave the invitation for engagement open ended.

I felt that the strengths in the elevator pitch are that it has some attractive phrasing with keywords that really catch the listener's attention and maintain it throughout. There is a clear identification of market and the venture itself, and as the Executive Director, I believe that instilled confidence in the venture. In terms of weaknesses, I found it very difficult to keep it under one minute. I felt myself rushing through each attempt to record, and ultimately settled on a speedy initiation, with a more relaxed closing. I would have liked to have been in the video, but did not feel that my presence would enhance the video.

For the venture proposition, I am very pleased with the final product. I feel that it is a very engaging presentation that will attract the attention of my well-to-do friend. It is clear and highlights the need, which is directly followed by my proposed solution. I believe that it is well concluded with a call to action.

In the proposition, I believe there could be more information on the market as a whole. I cannot imagine how the researchers at Apple explored the market (perhaps 'created' is a better word) when proposing the iPad. It was challenging to find similar ventures to TAC that had the same combination of each required tool (primarily networking and collaboration team sites). I would have liked to include more concrete financial information, but as this is a fake venture, I didn't have the information available, and I wasn't comfortable formulating that myself.

This assignment is truly an example of product-based assessment. In order to truly complete the assignment, we, the learners, have to be familiar and comfortable with the concepts of a new venture.

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