

4C - 231030

From: WRowan [REDACTED]
Date: Friday, October 27, 2023 at 9:34 AM
To: Adrian Haro <[REDACTED]>
Cc: [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER], [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER]
Subject: Re: Resend: Central Time Platform

October 27th, 2023

Adrian, [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER], [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER],

Throughout last summer TWL has been voicing desire for a Central Time version of our platform. I have been pushing back; pointing out the recklessness of adding extra installations to an already thinly resourced operation to enable activity [in Chicago] that doesn't meet standards we believe are required for viable launch and has had little of the operational preparation we regard as vital.

This has now come to a head. Adrian said in our meeting yesterday that he has told TWL's Chicago partners they can expect to start transactions on November 30th. This appears to be based on my prior response that it would take about two weeks of our technical architect and then a further two weeks of our software tester to get a new platform instance running.

Developers work in 3-4 week cycles, the next currently due to start on Monday morning, Oct 30, (UK time). If there is to be even a chance of honoring Adrian's unilateral commitment, planned work for the next cycle will have to be parked to create a new version and that decision needs to be irrevocably confirmed to me by the end of Sunday [Pacific Time].

In a stronger position, I would be telling TWL that, because of our existing responsibilities, M4A nonprofit refuses to double our operational platforms without additional resource. But, for reasons documented elsewhere, we are currently financially dependent on TWL. That funding is already destabilizingly precarious, and Illinois launch, rather than more solid accomplishments on the west coast, appears to be at the heart of your next stage fundraising strategy.

There will be no insurrection from us. That would simply plunge this already fragile operation into chaos. If TWL, as funder, tell us we must allocate funds to an ill-conceived launch that increases risks to the overall project significantly, we will reluctantly comply. But I need you to be formally warned of the dangers of this path, the apparent shakiness of some of your assumptions, and the ringfence we have to put around protecting our core Pacific Time operation. I will also suggest a more measured path to Chicago launch.

Sadly, my expectation is you will disregard my concerns. To protect our reputation at this end I need instructions in writing. If I don't get unequivocal e-mail instructions to build a Central Time version by 11:59 PM this coming Sunday, it will not happen in our November cycle.

What follows needs to bring you into the tech side of our complex operation. We have never concealed this from you, TWL has had logins to our developers' workflow tracking system since early in our relationship. Fresh logins to different parts of our demonstration platform have been shared on multiple occasions. A cursory check of system logs suggests these logins have been barely used at your end.

That disinterest has been welcome until now. TWL's potential value-add for this program was always in the door opening and relationship building you could accomplish, not dabbling in software. The methodical, hyper detailed, inevitably logic driven, world of coding does not seem a good fit with TWL's workstyle.

But, assuming we are instructed to proceed with this build, you will shortly be taking control of a complex platform handling sensitive, regulated, data with multiple variants in its configurations, some of which could permit illegal operations. As I have already explained, there can be no resource from this end to support a further operation. As stakeholders and partners, I want to have one more go at shooting down what may be over optimistic, or simplistic, thinking before you commit.

First step in your crash course in technology management is a well-worn analogy, trotted out at virtually every IT conference I have ever attended:

Non- techies assume acquiring a sophisticated platform is like buying a fridge. You plug it in, then forget about it for the next 10 years. In reality, it is more akin to buying a dog. Your new asset needs constant attention, feeding, and is prone to getting sick, and erratic behaviour.

In our case, the analogy stretches to: TWL will be gaining an unusually frisky, not yet trained, puppy. That's because our system is inadequately documented, and has to operate below recommended ratios of technologist time to complexity and value of the code.

We manage this with a culture of caution, and by recognizing that currently too much knowledge about the system sits in my head. I have to commit this winter to building a library of documentation that makes us fully replicable anywhere. That is one reason you need to develop the inhouse awareness to manage the machine we will hand over to you without me.

Here's the key points:

1) The Chicago launch lacks solidity

- The key determinant of a viable launch, we have learned, is a prominent local body, ideally a public agency, financing and driving take up of the new market. So, we have Long Beach City Hall, the [REDACTED] regional workforce board, and the [REDACTED] joint powers authority funding launch activity in their regions while each actively pushing their stakeholders to adopt our platform.
- It is not impossible to start with a small number of workers from an engaged CBO and grow organically. But it is a much harder challenge, requiring more work, and involving higher levels of risk.
- Adrian has made the point that the numbers [REDACTED] will likely put through the platform in Chicago are comparable with the numbers in my memos to our funders in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. But it is a false equivalency. My memos are a report on the first people to engage following outreach from the public authority. I am using them as a spark to get the already coming together pipeline of further transactions going.
- It takes months of meetings to get a public agency from initial interest to actively transacting. You may break this rule but it will be a miracle if you do.

2) Having a live platform may not be as transformative as you appear to think

- I know there is a belief at TWL that if public agencies around Chicago hear the new market is real with CBO transactions going through, they are more likely to put their demand and supply into the platform. That is again possible. But so is a scenario where, for instance, the Chicago [REDACTED - CITY HALL DEPARTMENT] say "let's watch this new marketplace and see how it develops, it obviously doesn't need us to get it launched".
- They may then want to speak to some of the [REDACTED] workers about their experience of your market. That is likely to be underwhelming. As I have said on multiple occasions, sophisticated marketplaces are more irritant than benefit when they have very thin volumes of transactions. Any new system requires people learning its structure then trusting it to deliver their needs. There is always a risk of early users deciding it is just easier to pick up the phone to make a booking as they always did in the past. Overcoming this inertia requires compelling evidence of wider momentum.

- You risk a paralysis where everybody is waiting for the market you have launched to demonstrate an upward trajectory, but because they are all hanging back it won't. That is why we did not set up a [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] market, even though it would only have taken an hour to do so, until a contract was in place. Until then, focus was on exciting everyone about the possibilities, documenting the likely impact, and configuring the demonstration platform to illustrate what was possible locally.

3) A more measured plan for Chicago

- I haven't seen any evidence of serious operational ground laying in Chicago. I have been doing proposal memos for each CBO and department around Long Beach, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. You have seen the content; configurations of badges, roles, system settings, and market rules, that I think will work for that entity based on exploratory conversations with them.
- This inevitably all gets fine-tuned in follow up meetings. I then create a sandbox version of all their configurations in our demonstration platform. Fictitious workers get entered, and patterns of bookings start rolling. This creates a tangible marketplace with events happening each day, timesheets progressing, and so on. This is when the real fine-tuning starts; figuring out for instance, how platform pay data - now being generated weekly for the fictitious workforce - transfers across to each CBO's payroll and accounting systems.
- You appear to be shortcutting this entire process. If you expect transactions to start on November 30th, a day or so after the earliest possible delivery date for your demonstration and live platforms, you are going to end up doing all sorts of inevitable fine tuning in the Live platform. That will be disorientating for users at all levels. System logic will stop some of your intentions, for instance the platform will not allow badges to be withdrawn or edited after they are applied to a first worker to protect the integrity of badging. Expect to have interfaces clogged with confusing arrays of slightly tweaked badges.
- As you know, I have another meeting with [REDACTED] that are moving towards launch our platform next week. If their numbers are as solid as I hope, I will build them a demonstration platform configured for their needs and realistic in every sense, except it will be running on our Pacific Time installation. That is easily managed in demonstrations by avoiding same-day bookings. Everybody can get a sense of the market, develop their views on how it needs to be structured for them, and be sold on its value; without major infrastructure investment from us.

- You already have logins to a Chicago section of our Pacific demonstration platform and could do the same at any time. That would allow you to excite stakeholders around Chicago, while making clear they needed to put skin in the game before they could have the real thing.

4) Assuming you instruct us to deliver a CT version, you need to be aware:

- We cannot guarantee any delivery date. Everything has to be prioritized for the developers' time. If an emergency issue appears on the core platform, work has to be paused to address it.
- You can track the progress of the CT version through ticket 2727. [There are multiple tickets for different aspects of the work, they are linked to that one.]
- On delivery, you will get two empty platforms, each with their own URL, locked to Central Time, and plugged into a Twilio gateway for sending and receiving SMS messages. They will need to be populated. You can of course copy what is in the Pacific platform, but I do not recommend it. We are learning a lot and already working to streamline some of the settings you would be replicating.
- We will advise you when you need to put a first deposit down on the three accounts that will support your operation: Amazon Web Services, Twilio, and Google Geocoding. Failure to keep these accounts in credit will result in parts, or all, of your system not functioning.
- The software will be provided as seen, with no warranties from us of any sort.
- The maximum capacity of a CT installation will be 20,000 users.
- You will see on the back office pages that some of our functionality was privately funded by [REDACTED] Inc. I have permission to use that at no cost for capped launches until August 2024. Consider that permission extended to your Chicago operation.
- A first back office super user account will be set up in each platform and we will give you the password. That should be changed immediately to one we don't know. That account can then be used to create other users, agencies, clients, and worker accounts. There will be back office user accounts for the developers and for me. Any access will be according to the datasec [data security] regime we impose on the Pacific platform. If you wish us to become signatories to your datasec agreement, please advise. You will be able to see on your back-office user report screen when we last logged in, and if you wish, to deny us access by forcing a reset of our passwords.

- There are oddities in the system. With lack of resources, we have had to prioritize functionality harnessed by our current users. Other journeys for users are possible, but they may require workarounds, be poorly signposted, or in worst case scenarios, trigger an error page. We manage the above by lavishing a lot of attention and support on our users. This is unsustainable which is why I have to get off this treadmill in coming months to write everything up.
- There are some possible journeys for superusers that we have never tested. One example : We do not know how our system would handle a drop in the minimum wage. You may think that is an unlikely scenario, but it would be easy for a superuser to carelessly add an extra digit to the system's minimum wage setting, which would need to be corrected, with unknown consequences. There are scenarios like this throughout the system, they require careful handling from your end.

5) Intellectual property

- There is to be no transfer of our code or other intellectual property to TWL or anyone else as part of the CT instance operation.
- The CT instance will have TWL's logo, not ours, bottom of each screen. It will unfortunately have to be a standalone operation. That is bad for America's workers, who badly need a unified set of badges, roles, and other features. But your system's unique identifiers will be structured such that the two platforms could later be merged easily. If at any point we think the CT version meets our standards of robustness, we reserve the right to swap to our logo and operationally merge the two versions.
- There are some external sources that are linked within the platform. You will need to set up your own versions of a privacy page, a source for uploading fictitious workers, and clients, for your users. You can of course copy our content, substituting TWL for our brands. To save time I will arbitrarily assign TWL URLs that we will use in the CT platform. Those pages then need to be created on your site.
- Our comprehensive platform lacks the thorough documentation users will expect. You can copy what documentation we have, but be aware in all documentation any reference to a URL that includes "uflexi" should be amended to the core URL for a CT instance, currently planned to be "goodflexi3".

6) We cannot risk offering support to a Chicago operation at this end

- I, and our developers, are maxed out. The plan for M4A has always been to get enough proof-of-concept activity going in America to attract a

partner organization that supports us in the tightly focused work we need to do, while relieving us of fundraising and relationship building work which is not our forte. Absent that relationship, we now have to triage functionality builds, operational support, and other tasks around limited capacity. We prioritize robustness of the system and take that responsibility extremely seriously. But everything else is now being done well below the levels we would like. We cannot degrade our operations further by diluting them with another two platforms (Chicago Demo and Live), a launch that looks like it's going to need a lot of help, and another wave of virginal users.

- We have to prioritize our West Coast launches, built on principles we have learned the hard way. So, for example we are encouraging the launch manager in each of our three regions to meet regularly for shared learning, feedback, and news about the tech. [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] is invited to those sessions but we cannot allow the Chicago launch which is based on different assumptions, and lower levels of readiness, to hold back the understanding we hope to see developing among teams on the three main launches.
- Obviously, we will support your efforts in Chicago in any way that does not take time or resource out of the core operation. Over coming weeks, I will be rewriting and uploading a range of operational and training documents. You can use them as you wish. But I ask that you replace our logo with yours. It would be misleading for any of your Chicago stakeholders to believe they can turn to us for clarification or for help, there simply is no time for more firefighting at this end.
- If any Chicago users reach out to me for help, I reserve the right to just send them this email as explanation of why they need to turn to you. Nobody but me should talk to the developers. Their time is our most expensive outgoing, they need to work in a very concentrated way with clear objectives and consistently written specs.
- We can of course build additional functionality for Chicago users if it is fully funded and also extended to the main instance.

7) Some operational advice if you are going to launch in the Midwest

Everyone at this end would love to be proved wrong and see a hugely successful Chicago launch. I have long wanted a very large urban area in our mix. (That is why I was so persistent in my requests for help from TWL in expanding out of Long Beach to the rest of Los Angeles County last year.) To improve your chances of getting to critical mass in Illinois, I suggest:

- Someone at TWL needs to spend November immersed in the Pacific

demonstration platform. They should set up demo versions of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at least, with the badges and roles each organization will require. This will build understanding of system quirks, potential, and logic as they will pertain to your launch partners.

- A key task for that person should be understanding how to shut down various parts of the market if ever required in a hurry. To take an extreme example, if you discover a rogue manager at [REDACTED] is approving axe murderers for childcare work, you need to immediately understand how to pull the report on who they have vetted, how to freeze those accounts pending re-vetting, and how to identify everyone that has previously been served by those people.
- As you gain more understanding about how your stakeholders will use the market, anticipate their transactions in the demonstration platform. So, if you become aware they are planning to enter very large bookings, perhaps three months of work assignments at a time, go into your part of the demo platform and set up a range of such bookings. That will equip you to support them.
- Never allow anyone to enter real people's data in your demo platform. You want to be able to hand out logins freely without breaching datasec.
- You may want to pull together your own training materials from the documents I will be putting into Dropbox for our launch managers. There is one document that is particularly sensitive it is labeled "System Manual" and reflects ongoing attempts to comprehensively document the platform in layman's terms. Parts of it are incomplete, parts of it need to be rewritten after upgrades, parts of it are much more detailed than you will need. But you could usefully pull together a manual on the basics around badges, roles, registration, messaging, and so on from some of the content in each section. Please do not pass on the unfiltered document to anyone else, it could be dangerously misleading as I struggle to keep it updated.
- We add new functionality to the main platform typically once a month, in the early hours of Monday morning. A build goes first to the demo platform for additional checking then, when everyone is happy, to the live platform. We will continue doing this and will advise you when we are happy with a build in Pacific demo and that it is going to Pacific live. At that point we can simultaneously release it to Chicago demo, where you will need to do final checks of your own before authorizing release to your live system.
- In theory there should never be a scenario where a fault occurs on the Chicago platform that is not also present on the Pacific system. In reality, the underlying enabling technologies are so nuanced, that something can change in one part of AWS and not the other. We have seen issues occurring in our live platform but not in our demo system, even when code in the two is identical. If this occurs, we rely on you to let

me know, and the problem will be triaged like every other one before going to the developers. Ultimately, we have to prioritize their work based on where the maximum value to the maximum number of users will be found.

- A more likely scenario than the above is that your users will be doing things in the platform that our users aren't. In other words, functionality that we are not paying attention to because it's currently little trafficked becomes critical for users in Chicago. In this scenario, we will apply the above rule. Wherever the most users are will be what gets the attention.

But I continue to reiterate: We are unfortunately operating in an environment with no margin for error or capacity for extra work. The advice from this end continues to be: build a convincing Chicago demo on the Pacific platform, show demos structured to downplay the time zone disparity, use that to build buzz about the possibilities for Chicago and focus on building relationships that contribute to this project's overall operation.

There hasn't been time to think through every possible issue with your Chicago launch. So, this e-mail should be seen simply as articulating a few concerns, rather than any exhaustive list. If you are still determined to proceed, I need an e-mail by close of play on Sunday from one of the three of you, or a TWL director, stating clearly that you have read this e-mail but are instructing us to override current plans for the next software cycle with delivery of a Central Time instance regardless. If the e-mail is hedged in its instructions, or pushes responsibility back on us, we will clearly need more time to discuss this, and the option of a CT instance will be bumped into the cycle of development after this one.

Wingham

EXCHANGE ABOUT POSSIBLE NON RECIEPT OF THE ABOVE EMAIL REMOVED FOR BREVITY

From: Adrian Haro <[REDACTED]>
Date: Monday, October 30, 2023 at 9:36 AM
To: WRowan [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER], [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER]

Subject: Re: Resend: Central Time Platform

Thanks, Wingam. This email serves as confirmation / approval for the work to create the central time version of the platform. [REDACTED - TWL STAFFER] anything to add here?