



Recruitment Through Marketing and Outreach

A major challenge confronting Welfare-to-Work (WtW) administrators is recruiting enough participants to fill programs and services. The first three issues of *Ideas That Work* address this challenge. This issue, Issue #2, looks at strategies for marketing to individuals directly and through community outreach. Issue #1 focused on understanding the customer and Issue #3 will look at developing arrangements with partner agencies to identify and refer participants and document their eligibility.

Looking for WtW Customers "Outside the Box"

While it makes sense to recruit as many WtW customers as possible through referrals from the local welfare system, many program operators doubt that approach will yield enough customers to reach their WtW program participation goals. Some sites are taking to heart the message of Roberto Goizueta, CEO of Coca-Cola, who said, "If you think you are going to be successful running your business in the next 10 years the way you did in the last 10 years, you're out of your mind. To succeed, you have to disturb the present."

This issue offers examples of how sites are going straight to the customer with their message and partnering with community organizations to reach people who may benefit from WtW services.

Rural Marketing Strategies: Texoma, Texas

WtW recruitment in sparsely populated areas presents

unique challenges. The Texoma Workforce Development Board in northeastern Texas has used a variety of methods to reach potential clients—some tailored to rural settings, others useful anywhere.

Anecdotally, movie ads and billboards have been the most effective.¹ Silent, still ads shown on movie screens before the previews reach large audiences at low cost. Billboards advertising the Workforce Centers are rented in two different locations each month, and up to six have stood at a time due to low advertiser turnover.

The Board also experimented with distributing 5x7" notepads, printed with contact information for the local Workforce (One-Stop) Centers, to all Center customers and at welfare offices, job fairs, resource fairs, and special events at shopping malls. The notepads' popularity has been a pleasant surprise. "We see a lot of them around town," says Executive Director Janie Bates. "People hang onto them because they are useful."

In addition, Welfare-to-Work and Workforce Center brochures are placed in local welfare offices, laundromats, and Wal-Mart lobbies. The Board also co-publishes a biennial resource directory for distribution to libraries, schools, Workforce Centers, and social service agencies.

The Board's marketing efforts extend to the local media. It regularly sends press releases announcing grant awards and other events, and will soon publish a weekly column in two of the area's larger newspapers.

Movie screens, billboards, bus shelters, laundromats, and notepads are some highly visible places for your message to potential customers.

Urban Ad Campaign: Philadelphia

Greater Philadelphia Works² is conducting a comprehensive radio, television, and print campaign to encourage WtW participation among both welfare recipients and employers. The advertisements were developed *pro bono* by McAdams, Richman, and Ong, a local advertising agency.

Ads targeted to recipients provide encouragement and publicize available support services. The slogan is “You can do it, Mom.” Ads targeted to employers feature pictures and “factoids” about successful local WtW clients, e.g. “Hasn’t used one sick day in two years.” They emphasize that mothers leaving welfare are motivated and hard-working and publicize available tax incentives. For employers, the slogan is “She’s already got the hardest job in the world.” Both kinds of ads display an easy-to-remember local hotline number, (215) 567-JOBS.

The TV and radio ads and the hotline debuted on September 8. By September 20, the hotline received 2,256 calls: 2,103 from prospective clients, 138 from employers, and 15 from prospective service providers.

Starting in November, the print ads are appearing

on strategically located billboards and bus shelters, in daily and weekly newspapers, and in trade and business publications. Direct mail drops to every TANF household are beginning at the same time.

Partnering with the Religious Community: Detroit’s Work Place

Detroit’s Work Place³ developed a marketing and community outreach strategy in which the city’s religious institutions have played a pivotal role since November 1997. First, staff used maps and contacts provided by Michigan Employment Security to strategically identify an initial set of churches. Detroit’s Work Place then held a meeting with the pastors to educate them about services available to their congregations and to request their assistance with Welfare-to-Work recruitment efforts.

The pastors help publicize Detroit’s Work Place in several ways. They incorporate the message of “work” into sermons and announce upcoming Detroit’s Work Place meetings. Sometimes, clients speak to congregations about how the program has changed their lives. The churches

News Media Coverage: CHARO Community Development Corporation

CHARO (Community Human And Resources Organization) Community Development Corporation has served the Latino community in Los Angeles since 1967. Employing an entirely bilingual staff, CHARO responds to customers’ needs by targeting job placements where monolingual Spanish speakers can succeed or bilingual Spanish speakers are valuable assets.

For most of its history, CHARO marketed its services through word of mouth, flyers, and public service announcements. Then in August 1998, the Spanish-language network Univision included a brief segment on CHARO in a story educating viewers about Welfare-to-Work and its impact.

The story triggered an overwhelming response. Following the broadcast, CHARO received 300 phone

calls in the first week and about 100 calls in each of the following two weeks. Once the callers were screened for eligibility, CHARO estimates that close

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to 100 of its current clients resulted from the Univision broadcast. Call volume fell back to normal levels after several weeks, but since then CHARO has been contacted by other news outlets.

Reflecting on this experience, CHARO’s Employment Services Manager Marvin Ron advises, “Go after media coverage—it got us great results—but then be more prepared than we were to handle the volume of calls.”⁴

also provide space for distributing Detroit's Work Place information and applications. Through these outreach efforts, the organization has established relationships with over 50 churches, synagogues, and mosques, helping to recruit an estimated 8,000–10,000 new clients.

Involvement with Detroit's Work Place benefits religious institutions and their members. Like anyone else who meets program criteria, members of a congregation or their friends and relatives can benefit from the organization's employment and support services. In addition, Detroit's Work Place offers to help church leaders write grant proposals for funds to offset the costs of offering social services at their churches.

Welcoming Orientation: Project LIFE Louisville, Kentucky

When Project LIFE (Learning Independence From Employment),⁵ spearheaded by Jefferson County Human Services, found that the number of enrollees in job readiness training fell short of its target, it refocused its approach to recruitment. An intense media campaign and direct mail generated several hundred calls from potential clients and enhanced community awareness of local welfare reform efforts.

Another recruitment strategy for Project LIFE transformed monthly orientations into a form of community outreach. Invitations to eligible TANF recipients, sent out by the local (state) welfare office, are now written not as bureaucratic notices, but in plain, positive language. Invitations note that assistance with child care and transportation is available and that refreshments will be served. Recipients are also invited to bring a friend.

Orientations are planned to be “festive” events. Instead of being held in government buildings, they are conducted in private settings, such as local hotels or downtown auditoriums, with easy access to public transportation. Employment opportunities are highlighted, and company representatives—some of whom are former welfare recipients—and Project LIFE graduates share their experiences with the audience. Caseworkers meet with small groups of attendees to answer questions.

As in Boston (see Issue 1), Project LIFE is conducting focus groups to strengthen its recruitment strategies. In addition to current and former Project LIFE participants, separate focus groups are planned for TANF recipients who received invitations but did not attend orientation and for those who attended orientation but did not enroll in the program.

Recruitment Tips

Participants at the July 1998 conference of USDOL WtW Competitive Grantees learned these strategies for effective recruitment from Demetra Smith Nightingale of the Urban Institute:

- Know what motivates your clients. (See *Ideas that Work*, Issue 1.)
- Use welfare time limits as a hook to recruit participants who would otherwise not come in on their own.
- Connect with participants where they live—send staff into neighborhoods or locate them at community sites.
- Develop the reputation of listing real job openings, updated regularly, at a particular spot.
- Keep hopes alive by describing upward mobility potential.
- Adults, especially men, usually want jobs rather than training and may never be interested in stand-alone training.
- Programs with real opportunities for advancement will get a good reputation “on the street” and attract participants through word of mouth. The reverse is also true.

Word of mouth can help or hinder recruitment efforts, depending on a program's reputation “on the street.”

NOTES

- ¹ To gather more systematic feedback, the Board is surveying its WtW customers on how they learned about the program. For more information, contact Janie Bates at (903) 465-7408.
- ² For more information contact Kristen Rantanen, Director of Public Affairs, at (215) 963-2110.
- ³ For more information, contact Christine Ellis at (313) 962-9675.
- ⁴ For more information, call (323) 269-0751.
- ⁵ For more information, contact Joe Spalding, Program Manager, at (502) 574-6421.

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For More Information

National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) publishes a 90-page Job Developer's Marketing Kit. It provides practical tips and sample materials that can be customized to target and recruit employers and participants. To order, call (202) 887-6120 or print and fax the order form from the Web at <http://members.aol.com/nawdp/pdfbookstore.htm>. (Costs \$24.95 for members and \$29.95 for non-members, which includes shipping and handling. Use order code JDMK.)

About *Ideas That Work*

Ideas that Work is a series of issue briefs designed to provide practical and innovative technical assistance to the local practitioners who are implementing the U.S. Department of Labor's Welfare-to-Work grants. Anticipated topic areas include recruitment, job retention and labor force attachment, and serving families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency.

The ideas presented in this series are intended to spark innovation and to encourage peer networking. Replicability may depend on individual state and local guidelines. Any activities carried out by a State or local welfare-to-Work program, using WtW grant funds, must also comply with the Federal WtW law and regulations.

Ideas that Work is offered through the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Welfare-to-Work, and produced by Technical Assistance and Training Corporation (TATC). We want to hear your comments about this issue and your suggestions for specific topics or programs to include in future issues. To share your views, contact TATC via e-mail at ITW@talc.com, or call (202) 408-8282 (ask for *Ideas that Work* staff).

Other Issues in this Series

Future topics:

- Working effectively with agency partners to recruit participants
- Serving families with multiple barriers to self-sufficiency
- Job retention and labor force attachment

Previous issue:

- Getting to Know Your Welfare-to-Work Customers

For current and previous issues:

- Read *Ideas that Work* on <http://wtw.doleta.gov/ideasthatwork>
- Printed copies are distributed through Regional offices within 4–6 weeks after publication on-line. Additional copies are available from your Regional WtW representative.