

Case Study: Using Technology to Help Voices Be Heard

Lifetrack Resources, St. Paul, MN
Customer Service Training Program
1.02 Full-Time Equivalent Employees

For more than 60 years, Lifetrack Resources has provided employment assistance and other services for children and families. The organization focuses on high-risk populations, especially those facing multiple barriers, including poverty, lack of education, exposure to abuse and neglect, language issues, or disabilities.

As part of its employment and economic opportunity services, Lifetrack offers people seeking jobs various training opportunities, including in the area of customer service. Job searching has evolved with technology, and staff works to keep program participants abreast of the changes. Some members of the staff were learning to use social media for their own work, and recognized the opportunity to share what they were learning with program participants.

“The trainer came up with the idea of having a blog to present an opportunity for students to practice their writing skills, learn about the internet, and work on networking,” said Communications Director Kimberly Mills. She invited program participants to contribute to the blog, named “At Your Service,” by sharing their own experiences in the area of customer service. Guest bloggers from outside the program were also invited to share their expertise in the field.

“If there’s a class, the trainer asks those students to write about the experience, or she’ll write something related,” Mills said. “The goal was to have students learn to do this—to give them experience in the social media world, and updating web sites. Trends are changing, and you need to have computer skills, so it’s a nice opportunity for them. There was a recruitment element to it, too, because we could show what we’re doing in the program, and it allowed us to further business development—the program gets a lot of volunteer hours from local businesses, and we wanted to show our appreciation to them.”

The blog is open to comments, and that feedback is helpful to participants to gauge the effectiveness of their posts. “One of our business partners would watch the blog, and provide feedback to what they were writing,” she said. “If the students want, they can attach their resume to their guest post, too. We’re providing them with opportunities.”

Executive Director Trixie Ann Golberg said the organization “continually looks at how we use technology to help us do what we do better, with fewer resources, and so had been learning ourselves about social media.” Including program participants in the experience was a natural extension of those efforts, she said.

The solution came about through an organizational planning process, initiated by staff and endorsed by leadership. “We do provide a lot of autonomy for innovation and technology, a culture for it,” she said.