



Voices Against Violence
Volunteer Recruiting Plan

The Client:

Voices Against Violence (VAV) provides rape crisis and domestic violence services to Plymouth and 18 surrounding towns. VAV helped 321 victims to safety in 2003.

Problem:

Domestic violence agencies provide a 24/7 Telephone Crisis Line staffed by trained volunteers. The volunteers had dwindled to the point that they could cover only half of the Crisis Line shifts. The Agency was forced to use Staff or paid advocates to keep the line open. The dearth of volunteers was creating morale, cost and **regulatory** problems. An outreach effort, in the winter of 2003, did not attract a single volunteer.

Engagement Description:

ESC approached this as a marketing project studying past recruiting efforts, recruiting and attrition statistics, and demographics. We interviewed volunteers, past volunteers, key board members, and staff. We attended volunteer, staff, and board committee meetings. We conducted a focus group with the staff and a second one with the volunteers.

We divided the problem into recruiting and retention. The potential pool of 10,000 volunteers was narrowed to a small target pool comprised of two segments: Plymouth State University (PSU) students interested in social work, and middle aged professional women. PSU recruiting was refocused from an intern experience for seniors to an opportunity for younger students to “try out a career”. The “message” to the core group of middle aged women was sharpened to emphasize the rewarding aspects reported in the focus groups. ESC made recommendations on direct mail, local media strategy, increasing PSU student’s productivity, volunteer recognition, public speaking, and internet strategy. The retention issues were addressed by moving the time from completion of training to first engagement with victims from months to days.

Outcomes:

The VAV Staff adopted the recommendations as the project progressed. The volunteer staff tripled. The recruiting goals were met in 8 months. Paid advocates were no longer needed. Volunteers not needed for the Crisis Line were assigned to help victims taking refuge their shelter to rebuild their lives.

Our fee was half the amount of an alternate consultant. The competitor’s work plan did not devote sufficient time for the level of in depth analysis needed to achieve our outcomes.

Consultants:

The ESC Lead Consultant had over 20 years of senior management experience, including marketing and recruiting responsibilities. The Number Two consultant had over 15 years of human resources experience. We were able to draw on the experience of two ESC consultants who had run domestic violence agencies.