



Substance Abuse Publication Works to Become Self-Sustaining

Information resources for substance abuse prevention practitioners

SUMMARY

Between 1997 and 2001, the Alcohol Research Information Service, a nonprofit organization in Lansing, Mich., undertook a project to increase circulation of its publications, develop a Web site and become self-sustaining.

The Alcohol Research Information Service delivers news and information on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to prevention practitioners in the field.

It collects information published in journals, trade publications, news reports, the Internet and other sources, and makes it available in a reader-friendly format through two publications:

- *Monday Morning Report*, a four-page bi-weekly newsletter.
- *The Bottom Line on Alcohol in Society*, a 96-page quarterly journal.

Key Results

The Alcohol Research Information Service:

- Published 86 issues of *Monday Morning Report*. Approximately 4,000 extra copies of a double issue covering the May 1998 Alcohol Policy Conference XI in Chicago were also distributed.
- Published 14 issues of *The Bottom Line*, including several single-topic issues, such as one that addressed alcohol industry marketing strategies toward minorities.
- Surveyed 600 readers in January 2001, with 200 responding. Among the findings:
 - Ninety percent of readers work in the substance abuse field, either in research, education, treatment, prevention or public policy.
 - Most would prefer that alcohol issues remain the primary focus of the organization and its publications.

- Implemented a business plan in January 2001 designed to render the organization financially self-sustaining.

Funding

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) supported the project with two grants totaling \$306,958 between October 1997 and August 2001.

THE PROBLEM

The Alcohol Research Information Service, a nonprofit organization in Lansing, Mich., delivers news and information on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to prevention practitioners in the field.

It collects information published in journals, trade publications, news reports, the Internet and other sources, and makes it available in a reader-friendly format through two publications:

- *Monday Morning Report*, a four-page bi-weekly newsletter.
- *The Bottom Line on Alcohol in Society*, a 96-page quarterly journal.

The publications had a combined circulation of 1,000 (500 paid, 500 complimentary).

THE PROJECT

The Alcohol Research Information Service received two grants to help it:

- Expand circulation of the publications, including providing copies to grantees of one of RWJF's national programs focused on substance abuse, *A Matter of Degree: Reducing High-Risk Drinking Among College Students*, and to communities working with one of RWJF's resource centers, *Join Together: National Resource for Community Substance Abuse Initiatives*.
- Conduct a reader survey to determine the publications' strengths and weaknesses.
- Develop a business plan to broaden the current subscription base and render the organization financially self-sustaining.
- Develop a website.

RESULTS

The Alcohol Research Information Service:

- **Published 86 issues of *Monday Morning Report*.** Approximately 4,000 extra copies of a double issue covering the May 1998 Alcohol Policy Conference XI in Chicago were also distributed.
- **Published 14 issues of *The Bottom Line*, including several single-topic issues, such as one that addressed alcohol industry marketing strategies toward minorities.**
- **Surveyed 600 readers in January 2001, with 200 responding.** Among the findings:
 - Ninety percent of readers work in the substance abuse field, either in research, education, treatment, prevention or public policy.
 - Most preferred that alcohol issues remain the primary focus of the organization and its publications.
 - Readers valued the publications for their content, clarity and succinctness.
 - About half said they would subscribe to an online *Monday Morning Report*.
 - Readers use the organization's information for a variety of purposes, including newsletters, op-ed pieces, staff training, testimony for legislative hearings, news conferences and high school classes.
- **Implemented a business plan in January 2001 designed to render the organization financially self-sustaining.** The plan included:
 - Combining the two publications into one, a new, six- to eight-page version of *Monday Morning Report*.
 - Raising the subscription rate to \$100 a year and eliminating most complimentary subscriptions.
 - Using direct mail to obtain at least 300 paying subscribers to the new *Monday Morning Report*.
 - Moving operations to space in the project director's home.

AFTERWARD

As of July 2002, initial work toward website had been completed, and the organization had 350 paid subscriptions to the new *Monday Morning Report*. The project director continues to contribute substantial in-kind support to the organization, providing unpaid time, free office space and paid utilities.

Prepared by: Jan Hempel

Reviewed by: Richard Camer and Molly McKaughan

Program Officer: Joan Hollendonner

Grant ID# 31593, 37925

Program area: Addiction Prevention & Treatment

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Current as of date of the report; as provided by the grantee organization; not verified by RWJF; items not available from RWJF.)

Journals

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Articles

Hammond RL. "U.S. Anti-Drug Priorities 'Wrong'." *The Globe Magazine*, 3: 18, 1999.

Hammond RL. "Fighting Back." *The Globe Magazine*, 2: 2, 1999.

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Newsletters

Monday Morning Report. Lansing, MI: Alcohol Research Information Service. 24 issues annually. Until January 2001, 1,000–1,200 copies mailed per issue, with 4,000 additional copies distributed for a special issue. After January 2001, 300–350 copies mailed per issue.