



GOODWILL OF THE GREAT PLAINS

ENGAGING THE DISADVANTAGED WITH ACCESSIBLE TECHNOLOGY

Goodwill of the Great Plains is one of 164 independent divisions of Goodwill Industries International. The client represents one of the largest territories of Goodwill in the United States, encompassing all of South Dakota and portions of Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota. They raise funds through sales at 22 retail stores and donation centers and in 2015 served nearly 13,000 people through a variety of services, such as job fairs, training and placement. The client, headquartered in Sioux City, Iowa, initially contracted with Train by Cell in 2016 for a pilot program initiated through Goodwill Industries International. An annual contract for expanded services, including Text Messaging and Mobile Websites, was signed in Q3 2016.



THE CHALLENGE

The client, like every chapter under Goodwill Industries, is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides job training, employment placement services, and other community-based programs for people with barriers preventing them from otherwise obtaining a job, such as lack of education, relevant skills and homelessness. "We were trying everything—we would call at all times of the day, we would email [and] we'd even try sending out letters," said Robert Walker, vocational services coordinator at Goodwill of The Great Plains. "It takes a lot of time. That's quite a commitment for our connection center reps. Some of us would chip in, too."

The client desired to improve communication with its "mission" clientele while relieving the time constraints of attempting to contact its job seekers.

Previously, after a job-seeking customer came to a job center, follow-up would be done by phone call. That didn't always work, because the client's audience frequently switched phone

numbers and had no permanent address. But Vice President of Community Engagement Joanne Haase and her team noticed that many job seekers owned text-capable, data-ready mobile phones. Goodwill pursued a text messaging-based mobile platform to disseminate information about employment openings, job fairs and educational courses. The client found its solution with Train by Cell.

THE SOLUTION

The client subscribed to a Train by Cell membership that included Text Messaging and Mobile Websites and met its need to more effectively disseminate information to job seekers.

Goodwill accomplished this goal with the help of Train by Cell by enhancing technology structures at its employment connection centers. The success of the pilot program directly influenced the organization's decision to expand services. As part of the expanded, Goodwill of the Great Plains will now offer two additional mobile sites to its clientele.



Only two people are needed to manage the communication strategy and mobile website development, saving the organization time when trying to follow up with job seekers. "We're able to send out information more easily regarding our job fairs," Haase said. "It's a different channel for letting them communicate with us about the status of their job-seeking activities."

Employment Specialist Jennifer Aery, who manages communication and mobile website creation for Goodwill of the Great Plains, said onboarding onto the Train by Cell platform took little effort.

"It was seamless to set up and easy to use and navigate," Aery said. "Maintaining it doesn't take very much time. And customer feedback has also been positive, with a high text message opt-in rate and engagement.

Aery and Walker are also quickly learning from their engagement experience and are able to modify the client's strategy quickly. They learned that clients often run out of phone data early in the month, placing more importance in the quality of the text message itself. "We're streamlining our messaging, so that if they want to reply by text, instead of visiting the mobile website, they can," Aery said.

THE RESULT

During a four-month pilot program, 120 users opted in to receive the client's updates, saving the organization many consuming hours by removing the need to call job seekers individually.

And that was just the start. "Our job fair attendance doubled," Haase said. When we compared the job fairs for which we used Train by Cell [to notify job seekers] ... to the job fairs for which we didn't, there were more attendees." Additionally, the client saw a 77-percent delivery rate on its text messages. That in-itself is a figure much higher than email open rates, but means even more to Goodwill, because a large percentage of its job-seeking customers routinely buy new prepaid phones after theirs run out of minutes. "We're reaching eight out of every 10, which is fantastic," Walker said.

"We have a lot of clients that ... change their phones, they run out of minutes, and sometimes it's cheaper to buy a whole new phone with minutes built in instead of buying a card to recharge a phone that has run out of minutes. But we're reaching eight out of every 10, which is fantastic."

-- Robert Walker,
vocational services coordinator

The client is in the process of expanding the Train by Cell offering to the remainder of its territory, and implementing a mobile website specifically for participants of a work training and education program. The users receive text microbursts of training, education and testing information, and the client is able to monitor their progress. Goodwill is also in the early staging of planning out how utilize Train by Cell for its marketing and human resource departments. "This was a fantastic tool to add to our toolkit," Walker said.

Contact us today, to schedule a **free demo**. We'd love to help you engage your visitors and members.

To register, visit: www.trainbycell.com/web or call us at **415.615.0150**.



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of the Great Plains