



Fondazione Risorsa Donna

FONDAZIONE RISORSA DONNA

Category of Good Practice: Service (e.g. IT & Innovation, Entrepreneurship, Advocacy, etc.)

Good Practice's title

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION TO REACH BENEFICIARIES

Main objective

The objective of the project is to make women aware of the initiatives promoted by the FRD, to contact them, communicate with them and to follow the project's beneficiaries through the development of their activities.

Key words:

Reach
Beneficiaries
Communication
Instruments

Type of organization: non profit

Country: Italy

Website: www.fondazionerisorsadonna.it

Address: viale Aventino, 36, Rome

Institutional profile

FRD is a non-profit charitable organisation created in 2001, run by a board and officially considered as an NGO by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The FRD's main areas of focus are research, training, microcredit, special projects, seminars and conferences on development, and the social and economic exclusion of women.

Microcredit, considered as an educational instrument for the responsible management of savings and social and economic inclusion, is implemented by means of direct management of microcredit programs in Italy, in addition to providing research studies, meetings and seminars.

Mission of the organization

FRD's aims are to support women who, for economic or social reasons, are excluded from the banking system. The Foundation aims to help such women by providing them with the instruments and opportunities to access money, information, technology and markets. The FRD identifies itself as a conduit for the development of a "savings culture", women's entrepreneurship and source of finance, particularly through specific action in the sectors of microcredit and ethical finance.

Governance structure

The Board of Directors is made up of the founding members of Foundation, and establishes the general guidelines for the Foundation's activities and its annual programmes. The Scientific Committee provides input to the president on the board on issues concerning the development strategy of FRD and its 11 members are university professors and experts in the field. The Executive Committee is made up of the president of the board and two other members and aims to provide support to the Secretary General in the day-to-day running of the Foundation. Other existing structures include: Microcredit Department; Training and Communication Department; Design and Research Department.

Good Practice

Introduction

Reaching our beneficiaries and contacting them is extremely complex. Indeed, most of them have difficulties accessing and using computers and they tend to privilege face-to-face interaction or communication by telephone (direct conversation or SMS). In order to increase awareness of the opportunities and resources available, a number of different communication methods and tools are used:

- Social networks: FRD has a Facebook page dedicated to the social microcredit project, and two other institutional pages. FRD also has a Twitter account.
- Smartphones and telephones: FRD has equipped all its offices and personnel with a smartphone and a fixed office telephone, allowing rapid and efficient communication.

Target group and accessibility

The activities of FRD are mainly aimed at women, Italian and foreign, intending to start training courses concerning employment or who intend to start a micro-business. Through ten years of experience, the Foundation has found the telephone to be more used by women, who tend to ask for information or receive additional communication, as opposed to using the computer. Consequently, this shows the use of smartphones by immigrated women over the past few years has strongly increased.

Innovativeness

The innovation lies in the approach whereby the telephone and other instruments are being used to communicative ends. The project was used as a tool for the communication of basic information, to inform on the activities organized and taking place, to provide technical assistance for the creation of businesses and to monitor business initiatives. The phone, for instance, is therefore not only used for establishing a first contact, but to help ensure the sustainability of a long-term, active relationship. As a result, the barriers created due to distance and family and working obligations/duties were lifted.

Relevance given the context

The difficulties in synchronizing professional and family life, particularly for women, make their presence and participation at meetings, very rare and difficult to organize. These difficulties are amplified once they start a micro-business, as most of them cannot close their business to participate in the activities carried out by the project. Smartphones and social networks allow these women to receive updated information without having to put their business aside.

Adaptability to other contexts

The use of smartphones is easily adaptable to other contexts, as the technology is widely used amongst women, is easy to use and has reduced costs.

Efficiency

To render these instruments efficient, constant work is required, both on the part of the Foundation to stay in communication with the beneficiaries (keep them updated on useful news, communicate information, activities to carry out, meetings to organize, etc.), and on the part of these women.

Outcomes

Increased female participation in training activities was observed when, for instance, instead of contacting the beneficiaries through e-mail, they were contacted through SMS.

Telephone communication has not replaced personal encounters, but rather, it has strengthened the dialogue with the beneficiaries, including one participant who will move to Spain in the next few months. Communication by phone has also reduced the time necessary for the organization to offer technical assistance (organizing personal encounters can be incredibly time-consuming and require a complex organization).

Sustainability

As communication instruments such as smartphones are continuously increasing in number and availability, they continue to allow complex and instantaneous communication. Concerning organizational costs, they fall under ordinary cost management, and therefore do not aggravate the initial costs.