

## A Contribution from the Heart, Not the Wallet

Dan Bassill was leading a terrific tutor/mentor program in Chicago, but he struggled to spread the word about his organization.

David Golder wanted to give back to his lifelong community, but he didn't have the bucks to make a big cash donation. So when Golder approached Bassill offering his company's services to create a marketing CD-ROM for Cabrini Connections, it was a match made in interactive heaven.

Bassill was trying to create neighborhood infrastructures to help support and nurture kids "from first grade through their first job" in one of the nation's poorest housing projects. Cabrini Connections provides an organized framework that makes it easy for adult volunteers to give their time, effort, ideas and advocacy for children living in educationally and economically disadvantaged environments.

Of course it's an excellent cause, but with a small staff and budget, Bassill had an uphill battle communicating his mission to business and religious organizations. Word of mouth and a monthly newsletter reached some, but as the organization expanded – from supporting seven kids in 1992 to more than 110 by 1999 – Bassill knew he needed more sophisticated marketing to draw volunteers and donations.

"We were a nearly nonexistent nonprofit with no major connections talking about the needs of an entire community," says Bassill. He founded Cabrini Connections after the 1992 drive-by shooting of 7-year-old Dantrell Davis in poverty-stricken Cabrini Green captured his attention. "Not too many people knew all of what we were doing. They'd see bits and pieces – a conference or a directory – but not the whole picture."

### Getting Together

Golder, the owner, founder and president of Lightfall Interactive, had heard of Bassill's work and wanted to help. While the small company was a little light in the checkbook, Golder knew he had the tools to make a significant difference for the organization and the community.

"We sat down with their leadership and asked, 'What do you want to say?'" Golder says. "We approached this the same way as a corporate client – except we didn't send them a bill at the end of the project."

Together, the organizations determined corporate decision-makers wouldn't have time to sit through a lengthy plea, so they kept the interactive

presentation to about 10 minutes. The resulting CD-ROM has a quick introduction about the crisis of American cities, followed by a synopsis of what Cabrini Connections is doing to solve it.

It outlines the organization's four-pronged strategy of research, public awareness, resource building and training. Using compelling audio, video and easy-to-follow graphics, facts, charts and maps, the fundraising application reaches out to potential donors for response and action. "We needed a short, precise, motivating message," Golder says. "And with audio and video, it's very powerful and memorable."

### Reaching Out

Cabrini Connections made 1,000 copies of the CD-ROM, "One Child at a Time," with a duplication fee of about \$1.20 each. About 400 have been given out since late February to executives and others who are willing to donate their time.

"At first we had about 20 senior executives around the region spreading the word to others in the community, but they were uncomfortable making pitches to their friends and family," Bassill says. "Now that they can pop in a CD-ROM and let it run, they are much more comfortable."

Bassill says he isn't able to track the direct effect of the CD-ROMs, however, "We expect this interactive marketing application to turn out to be far more proactive for our cause than other marketing avenues and result in larger contributions of time, talent and money from many companies," he says.

The CD-ROM is designed to raise funds, increase exposure throughout the corporate community and help expand the program. It's already starting to grow beyond the Windy City limits. Similar organizations in other cities and towns are using the program as a model. Down the road Bassill envisions a national network of the tutor/mentor connection.

In all, Lightfall contributed about \$25,000 worth of company time, an amount Golder would not have been able to pay in cash.

"I feel like we actually made a difference," Golder says. "I'm glad we had the opportunity to be a little creative about how we could contribute."

Says Bassill, "What they gave was more valuable than any check they could have written. This proves you don't have to give money directly; knowledge and expertise can be more useful and more powerful."

(Dan Bassill, Cabrini Connections, 312/467-2889; David Golder, Lightfall Interactive, 847/424-0500.)

### ▷ Appealing to All the Senses

Cabrini Connections and Lightfall Interactive believe that adding sights, sounds and interactivity will make donors more responsive. And they have some reasons to believe it will make a difference.

According to the *Journal of Technical Communication*, people retain about 25 percent of what they hear, 45 percent of what they see and hear, and 70 percent of what they see, hear and do.

### ▷ Big Donors

Corporate and foundation donors to Cabrini Connections in the past year:

**\$40,000 and above**  
– Montgomery Ward Foundation

**\$20,000 and above**  
– Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation  
– The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust  
– WGN TV Children's Charities  
– Anonymus

**\$10,000 and above**  
– Bank of America  
– GATX Corp.

www.lightfall.com  
www.tutormentorconnection.com