



Inventory No: 6BW-0005B03

Title: "Are You OK with Y2K?" Public Outreach Program

State of Missouri Office of Information Technology Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center (MAMTC),
O'Connor & Partners, Inc. The Jerome Group, 2000, 2pgs

Summary: A program to make sure that all essential business were Y2K compliant and that the general public was confident that life would continue as usual.

Full Text: RESEARCH

The State of Missouri Office of Information Technology began assessing the Y2K readiness of the State's system in 1996. During 1998 the Y2K issue, began to gain worldwide interest and fear of possible Y2K disasters and panic became a common headline. The Governor's Y2K Council recognized that their role extended beyond remediation of State systems to assisting all entities within the State to be prepared. Initial efforts included determining the efforts underway in other states and by other organizations. Our research proved a number of states were using scare tactics to deliver their message. Our team's research, and experience in the workplace indicated that the majority of small businesses and small governmental entities were ignoring the need to assess their Y2K capabilities and wouldn't be prepared. A telephone survey assisted in establishing this baseline.

PLANNING

The State established an outreach program to inform the general public about Y2K issues and to assist smaller businesses, organizations and governmental entities in assessing their Y2K readiness. Two key needs were identified: 1) To raise public confidence that all State systems and infrastructure would be prepared for Y2K thus avoiding panic; 2) To urge businesses, organizations and governmental entities to take immediate action in avoid potential Y2K-related problems. This presented the difficult communications challenge of communicating the key messages simultaneously on a budget Missourians would consider responsible -without using "scare" tactics.

Our team met with State officials in late 1998 in assess their overall needs and objectives for an outreach program. Based on the findings, we prepared a comprehensive plan with strategies, budgets and tactical action plans. Our recommendations were adopted and the State contracted with us to manage and implement the total effort.

Our objectives included: 1) Inform over 200,000 Missouri businesses, organizations and governmental entities of the need to assess their risk as related to Y2K preparedness; then offer assistance through a free Y2K Assessment Workbook. 2) Drive requests for 10,000 State Y2K assessment workbooks 3) Avoid panic by raising public confidence that critical infostructure elements throughout the State would continue to function by reaching Missourians an average of 3 times each through documented publicity. 4) Monitor effectiveness of our plan through surveys throughout the program.

The campaign audience was segmented into four groups delivery to allow targeted deliver of key messages. 1)Small and Mid-Size Businesses Target industries included: Healthcare and Social Service Providers; Transportation, Communications and Utilities, Retailers, and Wholesalers; Manufacturers, Agribusiness. Message: Act now to assess your Y2K readiness. 2) Governmental Entities Target audience included: municipal, local and county governments. Message: Act now to assess your Y2K readiness. 3) Educational Providers Target audience included: schools, college, universities, vocational and support providers. Message: Act now to assess your Y2K readiness. 4) General Public Target audience included: Missouri population of 5.5 Million people. Message: "Don't Panic ... Be Prepared."

EXECUTION

To address the many needs of the various and separate target audiences, while also stimulating action by the business audience we developed a program designed to achieve both broad reach and a relatively heavy frequency of delivery. Each element of the program was designed to create special credibility for the message, through third parties, research and surveys - which then were utilized as media outreach tools.

The project was kicked off in late April with an awareness survey of Missouri businesses and initiation of the direct mail campaign to targeted businesses. Distribution of the initial press kits, a press conference at the Capital and numerous news releases and radio news actualities provided continuity of message to print and broadcast media. Initial distribution of display cards and "take-one" racks to high traffic public areas began in April and continued throughout the project as broader support was achieved with other public sector organizations. The seminar series began in March to October.

Businesses, Organizations and Governmental Audience 1) Targeted Direct Mail Campaign. Seven industry

groups were identified and a brochure was developed for each that addressed their needs. The brochures provided Y2K background, State assistance available and call in action to order the free Y2K Workbook. 2) Campaign Displays including posters and counter card display to disseminate "help is available" message displayed at all Government offices and select public locations including banks, grocery stores and libraries. 3) Y2K Seminars throughout Missouri. These one-day workshops, focused on utilizing the workbook to assess Y2K readiness 4) Presentations to Businesses and Organizations. A speaker's bureau provided information to a broad range of industry groups and organizations.(Chamber of Congress, Rotary, etc.) 5) Television and Radio PSA to deliver a controlled message via broadcast media, 6) Telephone Survey of businesses to determine effectiveness and level of preparedness -conducted during third quarter

General Public Audience 1) Campaign Displays. 2) Community Conversations and Presentations to address the concerns of the citizens directly in a on-on-one environment 3) Television and Radio PSA.

Multiple Audiences 1) Toll Free Information Hotline to request information 2) Y2K Assessment Workbook main tool to assess systems 3) Web Site online resource to track success of State compliance for the general public, business and media 4) Campaign Displays.

Media Audience 1) News Releases tailored to address the ongoing concerns, of businesses and the general public and to repetitively confirm that the State had assessment tools available. All releases were distributed to all media statewide and specialized Y2K and technology reporters. 2) News Conference to kick-off program. 3) Radio News Actualities to deliver our message directly to out-state radio markets that may not otherwise have access to our spokesperson. 4) Media Outreach to address the needs and questions of the media 5) "Zero Hour" Countdown to address the needs of the media on New Years Eve and to address public concerns about possible Y2K problems. An information center was established in the capital and manned by representatives of a range of state agencies

The original approved budget for the entire outreach program was not to exceed \$950,000 - only 17 cents per Missourian. The effectiveness of our strategy and implementation efficiencies allowed us to complete this project more than 25 percent under budget and exceeding performance requirements by an average of more than 200 percent.

The greatest challenge were in reallocating resources to handle responses that were considerably greater than planned. Response to the direct mail campaign was overwhelming. The strength of the package created a flood of calls to our toll-free call center -- requiring immediate tripling of the staff. The initial inventory of 10,000 Workbooks was committed two weeks after the direct mail targeted mailing. The first reprint of many, was initiated at that time. Requests for speakers also stretched our resources during the months of June and July, as some speakers made more then one presentation per day several times during that period.

EVALUATION

The client's key objectives were met and exceeded. By December of 1999, Missourians, the small business community and governmental entities had assessed their Y2K readiness and were prepared for the rollover.

There was absolutely no panic - or even reports of panic. Our program was, comprehensive enough to address the issues and to segment the audience appropriately to enable us in aggressively address each. Monthly reports to the Governors Y2K Council helped to insured results and accountability.