

Increasing and Diversifying a Client Base: Trainer's Guide

Overview: This trainer's guide is designed for college students intending to help community-based organizations and programs increase and/or diversify their client base.

Level: Moderate

Type: This workshop is designed for groups of students to work together, combined with some individual activities.

Goals:

- ❑ Students will understand the term "client base"
- ❑ Students will think about different types of organizations and be able to identify their current and potential clients
- ❑ Student will leave the workshop with ideas of how the organizations they currently serve might increase and/or diversify their client base

Materials:

- ❑ Handout
- ❑ Copies of newspaper article (see pg.)
- ❑ Flip-chart, blackboard, or some other similar writing surface and appropriate markers, chalk, etc.

How to Prepare: In preparation for the activity, the trainer should review all of the handouts. Ideally, the trainer will know something about the service sites and partnerships already in place and can reference those places throughout the workshop.

Brief Outline: This activity begins with introductions of the participants. Participants review a short article to introduce them to the topic. This is followed by instruction and discussion of key concepts. There is time at the end for participants to apply what they've learned to their own projects and service sites.

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Opening Activity
- 3) What is a "client base?"
- 4) Increasing clients

- 5) Increasing numbers of clients
- 6) Expanding your client base
- 7) Wrap-up

Part 1) Introductions

Suggested time: 3 minutes

Introduce yourself. Have participants introduce themselves by going around the room and asking for their name and the name of the primary organization they are currently serving.

Part 2) Opening Activity

Suggested time: 5 minutes

The purpose of this activity is to engage the participants in thinking about the idea of clients, market share, and innovation.

For the activity:

- (1) Ask participants to read the article
- (2) Ask one participant to recap the article in his own words
- (3) Ask participants what they think this article has to do with the workshop topic
- (4) Review some basic similarities between the nonprofit and business sectors in terms of clients/customers, market share/client base, product innovation/program innovation.

Key themes:

- Regal needs to attract new customers.
- In order to do that, they must innovate by adding 3-D screens to certain theatres.

Other things to point out:

- They need to partner with another company to accomplish this.
- They are piloting this on 1500 screens.

Part 3) What is a client base?

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Using a flip chart and marker, make a chart. You will eventually be writing in four columns and at least five rows (see below).

Ask if anyone can describe what we mean when we talk about an organization's "clients?" For example, who are the clients of:

A middle school?	Students who attend the school
This college/university?	Students enrolled at the college
A supermarket?	Shoppers who patronize the store
A homeless shelter?	Homeless people who receive services at the shelter
The local humane society?	The animals rescued by the society
<i>Feel free to add your own example here.</i>	

You may need to ask participants to be more specific (i.e. not just “students” but “students who attend this college.”) Also, with the final example, make the point that sometimes “clients” are not necessarily people. They can be animals too!

Say something like, “Now, let’s go broader. What is an organization’s ‘client base?’”

Definition of client base: service company's prospective clients: people regarded as potential customers by businesses that provide services rather than retail products¹

Ask participants to use the above examples again and this time describe the organization’s client base. Put these answers in the third column. Again, push students to get more specific.

A middle school?	Students who attend the school	All students, ages 11-13 who reside in the school's catchment area
This college/university?	Students enrolled at the college	Any college ready students in the world (though more realistically any students from the geographic area that the college tends to draw from)
A supermarket?	Shoppers who patronize the store	Any person who needs food and/or basic household goods (more realistically anyone within a 20 minute driving distance)
A homeless shelter?	Homeless women who receive services at the shelter	Homeless women in the City of Philadelphia
The local humane society?	The animals rescued by the society	Any stray cat, dog, etc. in the greater Johnstown area

Compare to the business world. In nonprofit, social service settings, we often talk about “clients” or “populations served.” In business, we might talk about “customers” or “market share.”

More on clients vs. client base (i.e. market share)

Huntingdon Middle School has an enrollment of 450 students. However, the number of eligible children in the school’s catchment area is 600. What percent of the school’s client base actually attends the school?

Answer: 450/600 or 75%

The Acme Supermarket on Park Street has 3500 customers per month on average. (Let’s assume that generally speaking, most people don’t travel more than 20 minutes by car to the supermarket.) There are 15,000 people within a 20 minute driving distance of the store. What is this Acme’s market share?

¹ MSN Encarta Dictionary. http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_561546592/client_base.html

Answer: $3500/15000 = 23\%$

Explain to the group that this type of analysis helps us decide whether organizations are meeting the needs of the groups of people they are trying to serve. There are certainly other factors, but the number of people involved, expressed as a percent of the potential whole, is one indicator of program success.

Part 4) Increasing clients

Suggested time: 15 minutes

One way to increase the effectiveness of an organization is to increase the number of clients the organization is serving. It is important to make sure this is done with the capacity of the organization in mind. For example, Indiana University may want to enroll 20,000 students next year (let's say they currently enroll 15,000 students). However, if they do not have classroom space for 20,000 students, it would make no sense to add those 5,000 additional students. In fact, it would be a disservice to not only those additional students but the other 15,000 that were already enrolled.

However, for various reasons many nonprofits are under-enrolled. To put it another way, many programs have additional capacity to serve more clients. Distribute the handout with Example 1.

Give participants a few minutes to review it and then ask questions. If you have a group larger than 8-10, you may want to split them up into smaller groups.

Questions to ask the group?

- 1) What is the program's clientele?
- 2) What is their client base?
- 3) What is their capacity?
- 4) In terms of numbers, how effective are they?
- 5) Under the overarching goal of increasing clients, there are two objectives that this program might strive for. What are they?
- 6) What are some ways to accomplish these objectives?

Answers/Examples

- 1) *25-30 consistent attendees, plus 10-15 casual participants*
- 2) *125 youth at the school*
- 3) *90 youth (6 adults * 15 students per adult)*
- 4) *50% on their best day (i.e. 45 youth divided by capacity for 90 youth); 39% at their worst (35/90)*
- 5) *Two objectives:*
 - a. *Increase number of regularly attending students*
 - b. *Increase number of casual participants*
- 6) *Unlimited number of answers (moving up in terms of sophistication...)*
 - a. *Put signs up around the school*
 - b. *Ask all 5th & 6th grade teachers to announce the program in their classes*

- c. *Survey the casual participants and ask why they don't come more often (perhaps they need newer and more creative programming)*
- d. *Survey students who don't attend at all and ask why (perhaps many students have transportation problems and they need to strategize around this)*
- e. *Do more analysis of who the participants are as compared to who are not (i.e. perhaps most of the students who participate are 5th graders. This would tell you to do more outreach among the 6th graders. Or, maybe most of the students who come get help with math, but students who primarily need help with English are not coming.)*

Part 5) Expanding your client base

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Sometimes increasing your numbers is about increasing your market share. Sometimes it's about increasing the number of markets you're targeting in the first place.

Review Example 1 again.

To use business jargon:

What is Brightside's market?

5th & 6th graders at Brightside Elementary

What new markets can Brightside enter?

Grades other than 5th & 6th

Students from other nearby schools

Anything else?

Issues and complications

Mission-drift: Expanding to clients that you're really not trying to serve. Brightside could start serving high school students, but if they're really trying to serve early adolescents, by serving high school students they are diverting attention and resources from their main target population.

Assumptions about clients: Never assume you know why people are not taking advantage of a service. Maybe it's not a quality afterschool program and the children know it. Maybe the issue is transportation and you think it's a lack of knowledge about the program. You could spend hours devising a new flyer or outreach campaign and it still won't work because you haven't addressed the transportation issue. Always ask people directly about their situations.

Renegade volunteers: Once you've identified a potential problem and solution, it is difficult not to move forward. But as a volunteer, you must work with the program staff on any solutions to problems. If the staff does not support your efforts to increase or diversify the clientele, your efforts will backfire. Furthermore, they may impact the relationship you have with that agency and wind up negatively affecting all of the service you provide to that agency and its

clients. As a college student volunteer, it is likely that you will only be providing service to that agency for a short time. The program staff is likely to be there after you leave. If they do not support your efforts, they will not keep them up after you are gone. Always seek feedback and support for your ideas before you implement them. And be gracious about the way you present solutions to problems. Some program staff could be offended by the implication that everything isn't perfect with their program in the first place.

Part 6) Wrap-Up

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Have participants split into groups of 2-4. In small groups, ask participants to discuss their own service sites and the potential ways for those organizations to expand the numbers or types of clients served.

Modifications:

Depending on your setting and time available, you may break this workshop into 2 or more parts. For example, the wrap-up section could actually be given as homework and then discussed in a future session.

This trainer's guide was developed by Hillary Aisenstein, Director, Philadelphia Higher Education Network for Neighborhood Development (PHENND), as part of the Scholars in Service to Pennsylvania AmeriCorps Program, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service. Please feel free to distribute it widely and use it in any setting you feel is appropriate. However, if you do, please contact Hillary Aisenstein, Director, PHENND to let her know. 215-573-2379 or hillarya@pobox.upenn.edu. This trainers guide as well as all associated materials and handouts are available on the PHENND website at <http://www.phennd.org>.

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Regal Plans to Add 3-D Movie Screens

By BLOOMBERG NEWS

The [Regal Entertainment Group](#), the world's largest cinema operator, has reached an agreement to equip 1,500 screens to show three-dimensional films.

The accord, with Real D, will allow Regal to show 3-D movies in most American markets, the company, based in Knoxville, Tenn., said in a statement on Tuesday.

Regal will install the technology once Digital Cinema Implementation Partners, a group of theater exhibitors, completes plans for an industry conversion to digital projectors.

Studios are producing more films in 3-D. [DreamWorks Animation SKG](#) and [Walt Disney](#)'s Pixar unit pledged to make 3-D versions of every film starting next year.

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Example 1

Brightside AfterSchool program, located in Brightside Elementary, wants to attract 5th & 6th graders to its afterschool programs. There are 125 5th & 6th graders at Brightside; however, the program only has six adult supervisors and they desire a 1:15 ratio of adults to students. Currently, the program only draws 25-30 youth consistently. About 10-15 other youth have come to the program at least once in the past academic year. How can we help increase the numbers of youth being served?