Westside Central Office I.T. Committee's Recommendation for District 18 Hotline Request

4/6/2015

Introduction

Jack, the DCM of District 18 (Columbia County), visited WCO's business meeting on March 2, 2015. He pitched the idea of WCO providing hotline services for Columbia County. Currently, they have their own phone number and hotline volunteers. It sounds like they are doing just fine except the answering service is run on aging computer hardware. Rather than replace the hardware, Jack suggests that they piggyback onto our hotline service. One idea is that we provide them their own extension on our hotline. He says that they could possibly share some of the costs of the hotline. As a result, WCO may also receive some contributions from District 18 groups since we will be providing them a service. Right now, WCO lists District 18 groups in their meeting directories, but does not provide any other direct service to District 18. Jack also envisions District 18 sending a WCO Liaison to our monthly business meeting if we end up providing them coverage on our hotline.

Possible Solutions

Since the March 2nd business meeting, the I.T. Committee discussed this idea with other WCO trusted servants in email. Below is a summary of possible solutions for District 18:

1. WCO provide a separate extension for Columbia County that is answered by volunteers from District 18/Columbia County (i.e., District 18 switches their hotline number to our hotline number).
2. WCO Hotline Volunteers field the calls (i.e., District 18 switches their hotline number to our phone number and District 18 provides us with updated meeting schedules, 12th Step Call Lists, etc.).
3. Suggest District 18 use a web based phone service like www.freedomvoice.com for their hotline (i.e., this allows them to retire the old hardware but keep their existing phone number).
4. Suggest option 3, if District 18 declines, suggest option 2.
5. Suggest option 3, if District 18 declines, suggest option 1.
6. Take no action.

Our hotline uses a web-based service called www.freedomvoice.com. We pay $9.95+tax per month for 300 minutes per month (and 4.9 cents for each additional minute). We have never exceeded 300 minutes per month because our hotline volunteers are trained to have someone call back a hotline caller when the caller wishes to talk someone at length about recovery from alcoholism. If we go with option 1, we would need a similar agreement with Columbia County volunteers. Even with this agreement, we may still have to upgrade our system to the next level of service – 1000 minutes a month, $24.95+tax per month (and 4.5 cents for each additional minute).

Since District 18's main concern has been their aging hardware, it may be to their advantage to consider option 3. By going with option 3, they can keep their existing phone number, have complete control over their system, and retire the old computer hardware. They may also save money if they only require 300 minutes per month like WCO.

Recommendation

After discussing this matter with our Hotline Chair and others, the I.T. Committee recommends option 4 (i.e., suggest option 3, if District 18 declines, suggest option 2). Option 4 offers the most flexibility. Unless District 18 no longer wants to administer their hotline, going with a service like www.freedomvoice.com makes sense. They can possibly save money on their monthly phone bill, have direct control over their hotline, and they can retire their old hardware.

On the other hand, if District 18 wants us to administer their hotline, this allows us to not dedicate an extension for Columbia County. We currently have three out of four extensions in use. It would be nice to keep the fourth extension open for future WCO expansion. A dedicated extension could lead to additional administration by our I.T. and Hotline Chairs. A dedicated Columbia County extension could also lead to some confusion by out of town callers who are not familiar with Oregon Counties.

Some may feel that we should only offer options 1 or 2 because it could lead to group contributions from District 18. However, we would not be practicing "rigorous honesty" if we failed to mention option 3 (i.e., use a service like www.freedomvoice.com) as a possible solution. After they consider option 3, District 18 may still come back and ask us to administer their hotline.

Conclusion

Someone needs to make a motion during New Business (at this business meeting or at future business meeting) if they would like us to take any action on District 18's proposal. Depending on the action taken, approval by the voting members of both WCO and District 18 may be required (e.g., options 1 and 2 require approval by both parties).