

ebase[®] Case Study

Using Technology to Mobilize



TechRocks has worked extensively with state-based organizations through a collaborative with the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. TechRocks provided assessment, training, and consulting services to over thirty affiliates in 1999 and 2000. As a result of this work, one affiliate, who has fully realized the benefits of integrating the internet into their organizing, achieved a profound success in late 2000.

Minnesota NARAL is a small affiliate that, through its visionary leadership and hard work of leaders, staff, and volunteers, has utilized technology to profoundly expand their organizational impact. Late in 2000, the Minnesota legislature passed a bill requiring a 24-hour waiting period before an abortion could be performed. Minnesota NARAL had led the opposition to this bill. Undaunted by its passage, Minnesota NARAL, in coalition with Planned Parenthood of Minnesota and South Dakota and other women's health clinics, leapt into action, with the internet playing an invaluable role in their ultimate victory. This is what they did:

- An hour after the bill passed they put out a mass e-mail to more than 1,000 members of the action alert list asking them to both contact Governor Ventura and urge him to veto the bill and pass the message onto 10 other people in Minnesota.
- With every workstation in the office linked directly to high speed internet access (an outcome from the technology assessment and plan done earlier), Minnesota NARAL could maintain a constant flow of information to their list of cyber activists, coalition partners, friends of the cause, and the media. In short, even with a small number of hands on deck, each person could communicate effectively with a large number of people utilizing the Internet.
- Using email, Minnesota NARAL was able to contact members of the media quickly and personally. Minnesota NARAL prompted interested reporters to check-in with the governor's staff and inquire about the rate of phone calls, faxes, telegrams coming in. Minnesota NARAL staff was also able to provide the media stories that kept the story alive and put substantial pressure on the governor. Media reports during the 72-hour period cite that 12,000 calls came into the governor's office and that they were evenly split between those calling on him to veto the bill and to sign the bill (a tremendous victory for the complacent pro-choice Diaspora.)

Minnesota NARAL effectively integrated online communication tactics to prompt off-line action by its constituents. Minnesota NARAL's initial 1,000 email activists spread the word and generated 6,000 phone calls to Governor Ventura in 72 hours. Using the Internet, Minnesota NARAL created a fast, viral, efficient campaign that met the ultimate test. They were victorious: Governor Ventura vetoed the bill.

ebase[®] Case Study: Using Technology to Mobilize TechRocks' Role

Prior to the introduction of the “Women’s Right to Know” legislation, TechRocks’ Infrastructure and Web Site Expansion Plan developed specifically for Minnesota NARAL was the technological underpinning of this success story. After conducting a technology assessment, TechRocks’ consultants created and implemented a technology plan that called for significant hardware and software improvements to Minnesota NARAL’s existing technological infrastructure. After extensive training, Minnesota NARAL also adopted ebase as the organization’s database program. This choice allowed them to integrate their Web site, telephone and email campaigns. Our consultants also trained the staff on “Campaign eActivism,” “Creating an Online Organizing Plan,” and “Activist Web Site Development.” When the “Women’s Right to Know” bill was introduced months after the TechRocks’ system was put in place, Minnesota NARAL was able to mobilize its activists at a moments notice and defeat the legislation.
