

Focus on the Family Downsizes as Economy Slows

The nonprofit organization founded by James Dobson announced that it will lay-off 202 employees and the close of half of its print magazines.



[] Citing the economic slowdown, Focus on the Family announced earlier this week that it will lay off 202 employees and turn four of its print magazines into online publications.

Founded by James Dobson, the nonprofit organization will terminate 149 employees and eliminate 53 vacant positions—about 18 percent—of its 1,150-strong staff, company officials said. Focus previously announced in October that 46 employees would be reassigned or laid off in 2009.

Focus' Vice President of Media and Public Relations Gary Schneeberger said that most of the new layoffs will go into effect immediately, but some will be phased out through December and early next year.

“Tough economic times require tough decisions,” he said. “The worldwide economic downturn has had a negative impact on donations—which make up about 95 percent of our operating expenses.”

In a related move, Focus will suspend publication of four print magazines—*Plugged In*, *Brio*, *Brio and Beyond* and *Breakaway*—over the next several months. Aimed at teenagers, *Breakaway*, *Brio* and *Brio and Beyond* will be revamped into online versions, and their content will be targeted at parents not teens, Schneeberger said. “*Plugged In* (will also) continue, and is one of our most popular features online and via radio,” he added.

Focus will have four print magazines left—*Citizen*, *Clubhouse*, *Clubhouse Jr.* and *Focus on the Family*. *Citizen* will be reduced from 12 to 10 issues in 2009, while *Focus on the Family* will go from 12 to six issues a year.

Additionally, Focus' budget will be reduced from \$160 million in 2008 to \$138 million next year. “It's worth noting that Focus brought in a record donation amount (in the) last fiscal

year ending Sept. 30—\$146 million,” Schneeberger said. “That indicates that donors still greatly support what we do to ... but with the economic crisis affecting their budgets as well as ours, we have a responsibility to steward wisely what they give to us sacrificially.”-**Christian Retailing**