

C Virtual volunteering case study: Digital Receptionist (Volunteer Toronto)

Program overview:

- **Recruited two digital receptionists** in 2019 (**high school students in grades 11 and 12**)
- **Recruiting process took one month** and included emailing, calls, interview, selection and training
- Youth volunteers alternated weeks to **check Instagram direct messages at least once a day and document the types of messages**
 - Spent a minimum of 15 minutes/day responding to messages, but time can increase to a couple hours if volunteers decided to post stories
 - Volunteers were provided with a standard messaging document to use in their replies
 - Monthly check-ins with the Volunteer Manager

Virtual volunteering challenges:

- **Need to invest in on-going training**
 - Youth needed more coaching to feel comfortable representing an organization
- **Communicating frequent updates**
 - There was a delay in communicating updates to the standard messaging document, causing the volunteers to respond with outdated information
 - Volunteer managers must be mindful of communicating changes to volunteers
- **Need to identify opportunities to connect youth the with broader team**
 - Youth volunteers want exposure to strategy development and learning opportunities

Virtual volunteering benefits:

- **Youth volunteers are eager and willing to learn**
- **Great digital intuition**
 - No technology questions from volunteers despite minimal training
 - Youth are comfortable with smartphones, therefore it is easy for them to complete social media tasks (ex. one youth does their volunteering on their way to school)
- **Very reliable**
 - Accountable by filling out Google Doc on a daily basis

Lessons learned:

- *“If you’re a volunteer manager, you might just be thinking about service delivery, but **if you’re innovating new volunteer roles, talk to other departments. Talk to communications and see how you can supplement the work they’re already doing.**”*
- *“**Don’t be afraid of new technologies to enable [virtual volunteering] or setting boundaries around new technology**”*

For more information about this case study, contact:

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