

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

Considerations for working
with volunteers





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Impact Evaluation Community of Interest

<http://digitalhumanitarians.com/page/volunteer-management>



Recruiting and Managing digital Volunteers for crisis response

Background

In 2011 a washup meeting was convened by OCHA to discuss the Libya Crisis Map and the Japan earthquake/tsunami response.¹ In that meeting, it was raised by many participants that general guidelines for managing large groups of volunteers was largely absent in the community. Such guidance was requested not to supercede existing V&TC materials, but to initially guide both traditional organizations who request support and newly established V&TCs.

Target Audience

This short checklist document is provided by the Digital Humanitarian Network (DHNetwork) as an informational guidance and intended for the below groups:

1. DHNetwork Solution Teams. By bringing existing V&TCs together to collaborate, this guidance may provide a common starting point for discussions about volunteer management.
2. Requesting Entity. As many entities who request the assistance of V&TCs do not understand the intricacies of managing volunteers, this document gives a quick introduction to the matter and provides links to supporting materials.
3. New V&TCs. A lot has been recently uncovered about managing distributed digital volunteers during an emergency. This document can act as a quick introduction and source for relevant links, and as a set of suggestions on which V&TCs may build individually tailored workflows. Hopefully, it will enable the new V&TCs to become more effective in a shorter time frame.

Relation to Existing V&TC Guidance and Resources

This document is only intended to be a starting guide for groups. Therefore, in no way should it be considered to replace or supercede any guidance developed by existing V&TCs. In actuality, the DHNetwork encourages each V&TC to develop its own material to best suit its particular setup. This document aims not to replicate known material, but to provide as many links to relevant materials as possible. Data Scramble is the process of searching for data that will be needed to facilitate and inform disaster response work. It is usually started at the beginning of an emergency, and often carries on throughout the emergency response. It is generally most intense at the beginning of an emergency, especially if there has been little data preparedness work done for the area in which the disaster has occurred. The Data Scramble involves both the identification of common datasets required for all emergency response situations (e.g. CODs and FODs), and the identification of data/information needs that may be specific to each individual response scenario. This is then followed by the discovery, acquisition and configuration of datasets from a range of sources.

Whilst individual organisations can run their own Data Scrambles, it is a process that will benefit from collaborations between organisations. Therefore the ultimate aim of running a Coordinated Data

¹ OCHA Lessons Learned - Collaboration with V&TCs in Libya and Japan - 29-June-2011 <http://bit.ly/15dwWJ4>

Scramble is to enhance the availability of data at the onset of emergencies through collaboration between the partners typically scrambling to find/create datasets, and to continue to assist aid organisations to find additional data to support new information requirements as their work progresses from a response focus to the recovery phase.

Volunteers management checklist

1. Recruitment and Resources²

- Network with V&TCs in your particular area of work;
- Develop relationships with V&TCs before an activation and situate their field of activity and capacity;
- Determine what type of support you are looking for before contacting other V&TCs [think of it like outsourcing];
- Specify the functions and roles that need to be present within the team to succeed in case of deployment/activation;
- Determine the number of volunteers you need and the different position types you are looking to fill; (repeated below)
- Employ the most adequate method of recruitment depending on the numbers needed and the specific position types;³
- Determine the reporting and communication channels you will use to keep the volunteers and communities updated;
- Make sure the volunteers understand the degree of commitment and participation you require from them;

2. Organisation

- Draft instruction guidelines and workflows for desired tasks;
- Orient volunteers to the work required and the processes to be used;
- Develop role descriptions for different volunteers;
- Specify the tasks to be accomplished and set an estimated timeline for the requested participation;
- Maintain an open and transparent relationship with volunteers;

3. Coordination

- Designate a volunteer coordinator;
- Define and use communication structures and coordination mechanisms to communicate with volunteers;
- Designate a point person within the volunteers' group available to answer questions and inquiries;
- Conduct a full and thorough scoping of available resources and provide this information to volunteers to prevent duplication of effort;
- Provide volunteers with a roster of the dates, hours and times their contribution is required;
- Coordinate regular updates and meetings to encourage volunteers to feel part of the team;
- Communicate regularly with you volunteers about their role;

² For further information on how to recruit and manage volunteers please refer to this website - it provides a 14 steps' list to recruit efficiently volunteers: <http://www.movements.org/how-to/entry/how-to-find-volunteers-to-help-your-organization-cause/>

³ Three approaches to recruit volunteers with many links to other resources - <http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/recruitvols.htm>

VOLUNTEERS COORDINATOR⁵

S/he will be responsible:

- To keep track of the new volunteers and coordinate the division of volunteers in different groups
- To gather volunteers' opinions and feedbacks on the management of the platform
- To keep track of the project (i.e. saving important milestones, keeping diary, saving screenshot of critical conversations, doing brief interviews with team members) -- to help for the lesson learned and evaluation
- To Monitor signup data to keep track of volunteers and to collect data in order to be able to keep track of them and know what skills they can offer and which role best suits them.

- Address problems of behavior⁴;

4. Communicating with volunteers⁶

- Give space for constructive two-way discussions on improving workflows;
- Cultivate a sense of ownership and accountability within the V&TC team;
- Provide training and capacity building opportunities for volunteers;
- Provide ongoing development advice to volunteers;
- Generate a feeling of inclusivity based on a system of collaboration, partnership and sharing with volunteers;
- Tools:
 - Use free and accessible tools such as a Google Group, Google Docs, Skype and Blogs to communicate and interact with each other. Doing so will start building the team and make the volunteers feel part of something bigger than their individual work.
 1. Google Group can be used to coordinate the volunteers - allows for sharing docs, for posting schedules, contact info and instructions.
 2. Google Docs and Skype chat can be used to communicate between the team members, share documents, upload information and organize schedules and shifts.
 3. Google Spreadsheet and Forms can be useful to keep track of the volunteers. YOU may want to ask for their name, location, email address, Skype ID, Twitter account, phone number, languages spoken and skills.

5. Volunteer Support during & after deployment

- Provide appropriate risk communication and training regarding the probability of trauma exposure;⁷
- Provide psychosocial support during and after emergency deployment;
- Be aware of potential liability for digital volunteers.⁸

⁴ Handling Volunteer Performance Problems PDF Document available at: http://www.cancervolunteer.ca/atf/cf/%7B7CAEA3C6-14F9-4679-9D85-7D486DBDBEDB%7D/Handling_Performance_Problems.pdf

⁵ More info on the role of a Volunteers' Coordinator can be found in a word doc available on SBTF website under the name: Information and Project Management Guide <http://blog.standbytaskforce.com/ourmodel/>; or here

⁶ 5 tips for better communication with volunteers <http://messagecom.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/5tipsforbettercommunicationwithvolunteers/>

⁷ To learn more about Trauma Exposure for Humanitarian Staff: "Trauma Exposure and PTSD Symptoms in International Relief and Development Personnel" by Eriksson (need access to read the whole article): <http://rd.springer.com/article/10.1023/A%3A1007804119319>

⁸ Virtual responses can subject digital volunteers to tort liability. The following report evaluates the precise contours of potential liability for digital volunteers. It can be found here: http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/responding_to_liability_0.pdf

6. Feedback⁹

- Assess performance;
- Conduct debriefing sessions to collect volunteers' input and develop a set of lessons learned
- Acknowledge volunteers directly (say thank you and get to know their names);
- Give feedback recognition, appreciation and gratitude
- Recognize volunteers (Celebrate team performance Report achievements);
- Thank volunteers before, during and after the event;
- Acknowledge the work of volunteers in all forms of communication, including Annual Reports, newsletters and other organisation documents;

⁹ 14 Creative ways to Thank Volunteers blog post
<http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/14CreativeWaysToThankVolunteers>.

Reference and Resources

1. Recruitment and Resources

- How to manage and recruit volunteers in 14 steps
<http://www.movements.org/howto/entry/howtofindvolunteerstohelpyourorganizationcause/>
- Volunteer Management Project cycle Graphic from serviceleader.org
<http://www.serviceleader.org/sites/default/files/images/VolMan.png>
- Three approaches to recruit volunteers with many links to other resources from nonprofit.about.com
<http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/recruitvols.htm>

2. Organisation

- Geeks without bounds' Code of Collaboration
- GISCorps Volunteer Deployment Handbook

3. Coordination

- For volunteers' coordinators a wealth of information with links to various websites and documents <http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html>
- Volunteer resource management provides practical informations about Volunteer's management
<http://www.serviceleader.org/leaders>
- Handling Volunteer Performance Problems from the Canadian Cancer Society
http://www.cancervolunteer.ca/atf/cf/%7B7CAEA3C614F946799D857D486DBDBEDB%7D/Handling_Performance_Problems.pdf

4. Communicating with volunteers

- 5 tips for better communication with volunteers from Message Communications' blog
<http://messagecom.wordpress.com/2010/01/04/5tipsforbettercommunicationwithvolunteers/>

5. Volunteer Support during & after deployment

- Humanitarian and Trauma Introduction document drafted by the Headington Institute <http://www.headingtoninstitute.org/Default.aspx?tabid=2070>
- Trauma Exposure's article "Trauma Exposure and PTSD Symptoms in International Relief and Development Personnel" by Eriksson (but need accessto read the whole article): <http://rd.springer.com/article/10.1023/A%3A1007804119319>
- Professional Standards for Protection Work form the ICRC Whilst individual organisations can run their own Data Scrambles, it is a process that will benefit from collaborations between organisations. Therefore the ultimate aim of running a Coordinated Data <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p0999.htm>
- Digital volunteers to tort liability. http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/responding_to_liability_0.pdf

6. Feedback

- 14 Creative ways to Thank Volunteers blog post <http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/14CreativeWaysToThankVolunteers.htm>

7. Additional resources

Research documents published on UNV online:

- Acevedo, Manuel. 2005. Volunteering in the information society: Solidarity@Network_Society.Int.
- Amichai-Hamburger, Yair. 2008. Potential and promise of online volunteering. Computers in Human Behavior 24 (2): 544562.
- Murray, Vic et Yvonne Harrison. 2002. Virtual volunteering: Current status and future prospects. Toronto: Canadian Centre for Philanthropy.
- Draft from Volunteer Technical Community Summit (Original Document from VTC Summit hosted by Geeks without Bounds and the Wilson Center), as adopted by Ushahidi.

