Virtual Volunteering

A Personal Volunteer Experience

By Kyle J. McAdam
Research Objectives

• My objectives when I started this research project was to find out how to implement a volunteer program inside of an environmental organization.

• To determine what the Pros and Cons of virtual volunteering versus traditional volunteering are.
A Different Opportunity

• Time Limitations
  – Family obligations
  – Work schedule
  – Attending college
Online Opportunities

• **VolunteerMatch.org**
  – Helps people volunteer opportunities, both online and in-person

• **My Match:**
  – Web Content Writer for the NH Sierra Club
  – Completed application to VolunteerMatch, accepted by NH Sierra Club
Sierra Club

• A National Organization Founded in 1892

• Has a local Chapter in New Hampshire founded in 1992

• Mission statement is: to explore enjoy and protect the wild places of the earth;

• To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystem and resources

• To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the natural and human environment, and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives
Web Content Writer

Job Description:

• Working with other volunteers, I write the content for an assigned page.

• I post the content to the organization’s website.

• Research in content placement and display.
Web Content Writer

• Part of my responsibility is to write short articles on a particular subject that the NH Sierra Club is working on. My article is to briefly describe what the organization is doing and why. I am writing these articles in an attempt to educate the public.

• One of the difficulties with this is the fact the website was being worked on for several months throwing off the timing of the work I am performing.
Experience Required

- **Minimal**
  - Basic computer skills
  - Strong writing background
  - Works well independently.
Responsibilities

• Coordinating with web content manager on topic and context of the writing.
• Develop the necessary content, submit for formal review and publish
• Perform necessary research and bibliographical documentation
What I Have Done.

- Participated in Planning Sessions with Director and Lead Volunteer on Strategy.
- Working on establishing a webpage on website.
- In process of writing a summary article.
- Educating the public by writing letters to the editor of different newspapers.
Rewards & Challenges

• Helping to heal the environment
• Learning how to run a non profit organization
• Networking
• Sometimes it can be difficult to get in touch with people.
• Waiting for other people to complete their tasks
What I’ve Learned

• Organization is necessary
• Ensure everyone is working on their tasks
• As an executive director, having a basic knowledge of everyone’s job is critical
• Try to be prepared for the unexpected.
• Keep a positive attitude and don’t give up.
• I had a suspicion, but this experience confirmed that on-line volunteering is just as much work as traditional volunteering.
What I’ve Learned

I learned there are definitely pros and cons to volunteering virtually.

• Pros are
  – Work from home or from wherever you can.
  – You can work at any time during the day or night on any day of the week.
  – You can work at your convenience as long as the work is completed.
What I’ve Learned

I learned there are definitely pros and cons to volunteering virtually.

• Cons are
  – If there is confusion of what needs to be accomplished, it can sometimes be difficult to get an answer to your questions.
  – You need to be a self motivated worker because you won’t have a supervisor overseeing you every second.
  – It can sometimes be difficult to know when you are finished a project since it isn’t physically in front of you.
The Future in Volunteering.

- I feel that virtual is the up and coming thing in volunteering. It allows those people that would have trouble volunteering in the conventional system, the opportunity to volunteer for a cause and organization they believe in.
- Partnered with the conventional form of hands on volunteering, allows virtual volunteering to be a powerful tool.