

News

## Virtual volunteering, an easy and effective way of collaborating with nonprofit organizations



12/27/2017 - 10:47

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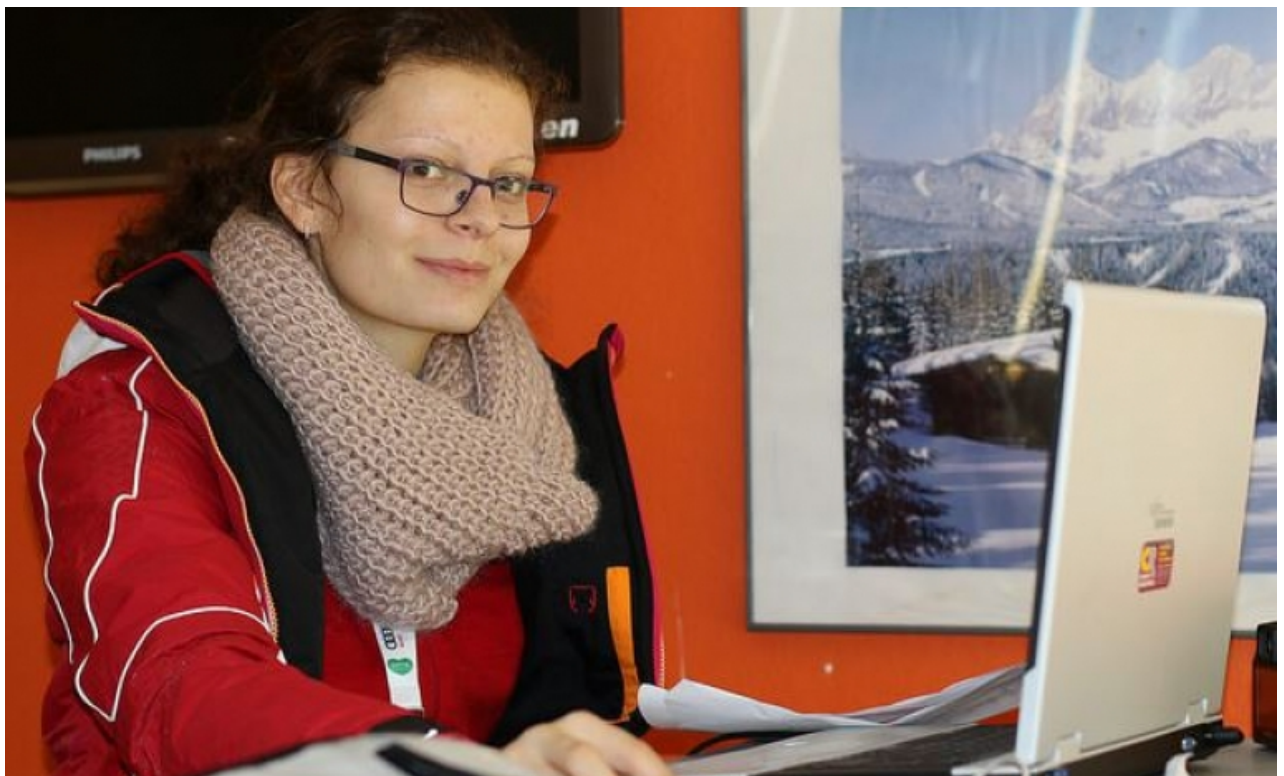


Workshop of virtual volunteering. Source: E-volunteering / E-wolontariat & TuDu (Flickr).

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Virtual volunteering data. Source: [onlinevolunteering.org](http://onlinevolunteering.org).



Special Olympics volunteer. Source: Special Olympics 2017 (Flickr).

Volunteering is possible even when we don't have much time or we find it difficult to physically go to an organization. How? Thanks to technology, the Internet and collaborative tools that make virtual volunteering possible.

Until recently, when one thought of volunteering, you would imagine going to a physical space to collaborate with a concrete project. Now, making your **online time** and **skills** available for a cause you defend is also a way of volunteering. **Technologies** have changed the way in which we interact and also the way in which we can engage with third-sector organizations and their actions. We're talking of virtual or on-line volunteering.

**Virtual volunteering** allows us to dedicate time and services without actually being in the physical space of an organization, campaign or project. It is quick, easy and effective. Designing and developing a website, translating texts, offering advice, providing data, editing a video, disseminate a cause...All of this and much more can be done sitting in front of a computer or mobile phone, and benefits both the organization and the volunteer alike.

Virtual volunteering was already discussed back in the 90s'. With the evolution of ways to **collaborate on-line**, however, the ways in which we can collaborate with organizations and society has gained greater recognition.

## Advantageous for all!

On-line volunteering can bring many benefits both for the volunteer and for the organization hosting them. It is advantageous for the volunteer since it makes it easier to organize one's time based on their needs or, in other words, offering flexibility. It is also an opportunity to help support a cause without having to go anywhere, and even those that are in a far-away place.

Organizations, in turn, can gain access to people who are trained and qualified in concrete fields they may need; professionals with a motivation to help. The rhythm of work in organizations means that it is often difficult for them to find time to physically host volunteers. Doing this virtually, together with communication using instant messaging programmes and collaborative work tools, makes this easy and quick.

## Near or far

Designers, web developers, journalists, economists, translators, community managers...they all can contribute their know-how to organisations by collaborating occasionally or through stable collaboration, but virtually. There are platforms that post **calls for virtual volunteering** and put people wishing to help and organizations in touch.

Another possibility is to go directly to an organization you'd like to support and offer your services. With on-line volunteering, it is easier to match causes and tasks with the interests and skills of volunteers, regardless of whether the NGO is next door or miles away.

The UN Volunteers online web portal, for instance, offers opportunities to collaborate in projects from all over the world, in many different ways ranging from translating to dissemination and promotion actions.

## Micro-volunteering and digital activism

Acting as a loudspeaker for the causes we defend can be a way of collaborating. Disseminating a **campaign**, signing manifestos, explaining in a blog that you've contributed funds or energy to a cause, participating in a call to action on Twitter...it all helps!

There are many organizations that launch **campaigns** on Twitter to **raise awareness** on a specific issue or to attract donations through **crowdfunding**. Helping them **spreading the word** and participating in these calls is another way to contribute to their cause.

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