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# Managing Virtual Volunteering During the Corona Pandemic

**In light of the current situation, many organizations are shifting their volunteer activity to online virtual channels. What does this mean? How can it best be done? We are here to help!**

**Click on the following to choose the subject you are interested in:**

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roles

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tools



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# Designing Virtual Roles

The following table outlines two primary options:

	Transforming a routine role into a virtual role	Creating new virtual roles volunteers can perform virtually
Impact and meaning	<p>How can you adapt volunteers' routine tasks to virtual roles? To maintain the organization's functional continuity, as well as contact with beneficiaries and provision of services, consider enabling volunteers to perform at least some components of their role via online channels.</p>	<p>Are your volunteers staying home? Are they looking for something to do with their time? During this unusual and difficult time, how can organizations create new roles that volunteers can do online? This is an opportunity to tap into volunteers' special capabilities and bring them to fruition, by enabling them to assist with a variety of tasks that are not part of the usual routine, but can help the organization advance its goals</p>
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mentoring – online instead of face-to-face sessions and meetings</li> <li>✓ House calls – replace weekly home visits with phone calls or online chats daily or multiple times per day</li> <li>✓ Group meetings – workshops, training sessions and support groups can be held via Zoom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Translation of documents</li> <li>✓ Data mining and location of information and articles</li> <li>✓ Writing articles, blogs or website posts</li> <li>✓ Writing position papers</li> <li>✓ Statistical data analysis</li> <li>✓ Management of online focus groups</li> <li>✓ Constructing training protocols</li> <li>✓ Writing briefings and procedures</li> <li>✓ Assisting organization beneficiaries with online shopping</li> <li>✓ Assisting organization beneficiaries who are in quarantine with workshops or stress relief via online channels</li> </ul>



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## Designing Virtual Roles



People's attention span for tasks performed on the computer or phone tends to be limited. At the same time, when performing volunteer tasks from home, the boundaries between regular home activities and volunteering may become blurred. People may find themselves "sucked into" an increasing number of volunteering tasks. Therefore, it is important to observe these ground rules:

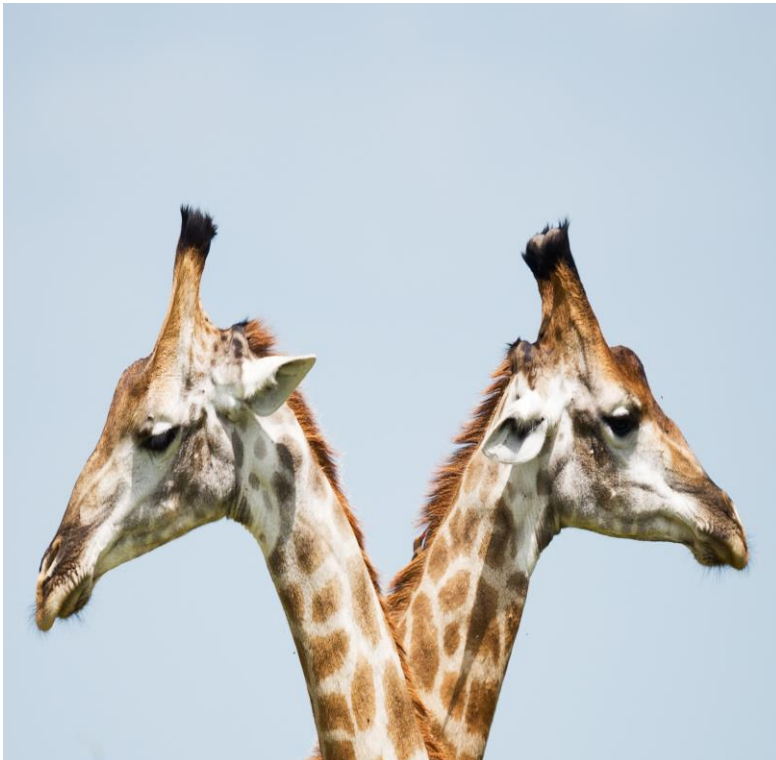
- Formulate a clearly **written role definition** for volunteers, outlining the tasks to be performed via online platforms. Even if you adapt a current role to a virtual one- a new role description and definition is needed.
- Define the **time frame** for each role and specific task. Each task should last a relatively short period of time. Priority should be given to individual tasks not exceeding half an hour and virtual meetings of up to one hour.
- Advocate volunteers **working in shifts** in order to frame their work, timetables, and obligations. Its easier to volunteer from home and to commit to a task when I know I am doing so during a specific time and day.
- Ensure that **suitable technological tools** for performing new tasks are available, convenient, accessible, and familiar platforms that do not require complex volunteer training (Skype, Zoom, or WhatsApp).





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## Volunteer-Task Compatibility



Change is not easy for anyone at any time. It is especially difficult in this period of uncertainty. When trying to adapt current volunteers into virtual roles you might encounter some challenges, including: Fear of technology, feeling of Isolation and seclusion, fear of being undervalued, feeling of loss of community.

The key to dealing with these challenges is the application of **basic volunteer management standards**. All volunteers, whether online or not, need training, support, feedback, guidance, and recognition - today, maybe more than ever. **By clear management and leadership you will create a counterbalance to fear and uncertainty**

Therefore, It is important to make sure that the adapted role is suitable for the volunteers, that they have the knowledge and tools required for the adapted or new role being offered to them, and that they are not suffering from anxiety regarding using the necessary technology. A written role-description clearly outlining short and specific tasks and good training will help reduce anxieties!





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# Training for Virtual Volunteering



Prior to the introduction of each adapted or new role, volunteers should receive training that will enable them to fulfill it. It is recommended to use an online platform for such training.

## During training you should:

- Provide a detailed description of the role, expectations, and its special attributes as compared to the routine role.
- Include training on the use of technological tools to be used in online volunteer tasks- including hands-on guidance and experience.
- Review the sensitive issues involved in adapting face-to-face modes of communication into phone or online communication.
- Provide tools for handling technical difficulties and professional difficulties during a phone or online conversation.
- Provide clear guidelines regarding the way volunteers are expected to represent your organization- rules, regulations, procedures and ethics.

**Use online tools for online training.**

**Give volunteers the [checklist for volunteering using virtual channels](#)**







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# Management and Supervision of Virtual Volunteering



The greatest challenge of virtual volunteering is maintaining regular contact with the volunteers from a distance. Below are tips for management and supervision of these relationships:

- **Create an interactive online workspace and meeting space for the volunteers.** If volunteers cannot arrive at the office or community center, create an online platform to enable them to continue meeting, sharing experiences, and consulting with each other. These may include a closed Facebook group or a Google Classroom.
- **Provide technical support.** It is important to offer volunteers technical support in using the new platforms they are being asked to use. It is recommended to have on call technologically savvy volunteers who can provide support to others in these new endeavors.
- **Open and close shifts.** When operating in shifts, it is recommended to open and close each shift with a briefing via video conference. You may discuss expectations, and what has been done in previous shifts. This creates a framework for the activity and maintains contact.



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## Management and Supervision of Virtual Volunteering- con.



- **Manage the ongoing communication.** To avoid an unmanageable surge of telephone calls and WhatsApp messages, it is important to structure the ongoing communication. Schedule a weekly online group conversation or a weekly phone call with each volunteer. Notify volunteers of the communication processes and expected times. Consider a platform that will be convenient for volunteers to report their activities. These can be created with basic tools such as Google forms/questionnaires, joint documentation, and Excel files.
- **Make technical support available.** Make sure to recruit some tech-savvy volunteers who can provide volunteers online technical support. If you work in shifts, have a tech-support volunteer available for each shift, so volunteers can contact them.
- **Take interest in the safety and welfare of the volunteers.** Offer volunteers daily or weekly online sessions to express their concerns. Volunteers are also in a stressful situation. It is essential to check how they are doing and how they are coping.
- **Offer online support and recognition.** Remember to mark birthdays, births, and other happy occasions. Convey to volunteers your appreciation for what they are doing and the impact they make. Send messages of thanks and support, such as specially designed WhatsApp stickers.





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# Relevant Technological Tools

Tool Name	Key Functions	Link to the Tool	Link to Tool Training Tutorial
<b>Skype</b>	Remote calls of up to 50 people that enable participants to see and hear one another and to share screens and files.	<a href="https://www.skype.com/he/features/calling-and-instant-messaging/">https://www.skype.com/he/features/calling-and-instant-messaging/</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW2D1EPLSXE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW2D1EPLSXE</a>
<b>Zoom</b>	The free Zoom account enables unlimited calls between two people and calls of up to 40 minutes among up to 100 people.	<a href="https://zoom.us/">https://zoom.us/</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leMiho1VORg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leMiho1VORg</a>
<b>Google Classroom</b>	Virtual space for group meetings that enable educators to upload materials in an orderly fashion and hold active conversations.	<a href="https://edu.google.com/intl/iw/products/classroom/?modal_active=none">https://edu.google.com/intl/iw/products/classroom/?modal_active=none</a>	<a href="https://ecat.education.gov.il/google-classroom">https://ecat.education.gov.il/google-classroom</a>
<b>Facebook Group</b>	Closed Facebook groups enable simple, convenient, and natural communication among large numbers of volunteers.	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/">https://www.facebook.com/</a>	<a href="https://he-il.facebook.com/help/167970719931213?helpref=about_content">https://he-il.facebook.com/help/167970719931213?helpref=about_content</a>
<b>Google Forms</b>	Free and simple creation of surveys and forms.	<a href="https://www.google.com/intl/iw_il/forms/about/">https://www.google.com/intl/iw_il/forms/about/</a>	<a href="https://www.google.com/intl/iw_il/forms/about/">https://www.google.com/intl/iw_il/forms/about/</a>







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**Would you like to know more?**

**If you have additional ideas or remote-management tools to share, please contact us:**

**The Israeli Volunteering Council**

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