

CUSTOMER STORY



CUSTOMER SINCE

March 2019

VOLUNTEERS

10,000

FAVOURITE FEATURE

Rota

Barnardo's: A digital transformation with Assemble

Introduction

Barnardo's mission is to protect, support and nurture the UK's most vulnerable children. The strategic plan is to build stronger families, safer childhoods and positive futures for young people. Barnardo's helps bring out the best in children – no matter who they are or what they have been through.

Every contribution counts

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting this frontline work with children, through income generation across Barnardo's retail estate. Barnardo's retail operation alone currently has around 10,000 volunteers, who, in 2019-20, gave over 2 million hours of their time to support their stores, that recorded a net profit of over £13.5m.

There are over 600 Barnardo's retail stores nationally across 4 regions, who are supported by 32 area managers. Retail spaces can range from a small village high-street store with one or two members of staff to a huge out-of-town warehouse, with a team requiring up to 40 staff and volunteers.

Like any successful ongoing operation of this size, it was important for Barnardo's to accurately measure the viability of its retail stores and ascertain the true impact of volunteer contributions.

Tools for a digital transformation

In 2019 the retail team at Barnardo's embarked on a huge digital transformation and adopted Assemble. The volunteer management software would be responsible for improving some of the fundamental recruitment, management and reporting functions of the organisation and provide a central home for volunteer data and communications.

Barnardo's knew the value of volunteer contributions was enormous, but without the right tools to harness this data, it was difficult to fully

demonstrate. Volunteer hours had previously been recorded based on an estimated projection of time, meaning it was impossible to determine how many 'active' volunteers the organisation had - and more specifically the real contributions that were being made. Any data Barnardo's did have was not easily accessible to manage or update.

Recruitment reform

The administrative challenges around recruitment were one of the first things that needed to be tackled. Retail recruitment had previously been fully managed in-store using paper application forms, so the success of this recruitment really depended on so many variables. In some cases, it was a very time consuming, administrative exercise and just one of many of the responsibilities expected of the store manager. It was also difficult to ensure the engagement experience for a prospective volunteer was consistent.

Bringing Assemble into the mix would enable some of the recruitment functions to be automated and relieve store managers of a huge administrative burden. Assemble would be used to help take a more centralised and cohesive approach to

advertising volunteer opportunities. Volunteering opportunities would now all be uploaded centrally and appear fully branded, neatly on Barnardo's website, with an easy search feature that could be filtered geographically.

Further to this, key metrics around applications could be gathered, such as how many volunteers were applying. Assembles automated recruitment milestones, such as reference checks ensure the status of a volunteers application can be monitored and unblocked where necessary. Using Assemble has meant better communication with potential applicants - keeping them informed and engaged with a consistent 'on-brand' voice, while allowing for personalised touches when necessary.

Capturing quality data

The second important role that Assemble would provide was a level of accuracy around volunteer numbers and hours recorded. Previously this data had been based on averages and assumptions, which meant it was unlikely to be a true representation of actual contributions. Better quality data would inevitably help inform Senior Management and Area Managers with

strategic decisions, so once Barnardo's committed to using the software, they took a diligent approach to recording each volunteer's shift and hours.

“The mantra now is that “if it's not on Assemble, it doesn't exist”, which has encouraged some healthy habits around recording data”.

One benefit is a reduced amount of physical time for Area Managers on-premise, freeing up essential hours to focus efforts where they are most needed. Barnardo's have also been able to overlay sales reports with volunteer data and drill down on individual store performances.

Communicating through COVID-19

In March 2020, we entered an unprecedented time with the first of Britain's national lockdowns. All Barnardo's retail stores were closed, staff furloughed and - with very little understanding of the virus at this point – there was an enormous amount of uncertainty amongst volunteers. Inevitably, volunteer numbers dropped and (although stores were temporarily closed) there was a need to continue

recruiting, which was now all being completely handled centrally by the UK Volunteering Team. The team at Barnardo's continued to process new applications and vet volunteers, ensuring that stores would be well prepared for when retail reopened.

During this difficult time, it was important to continue communicating with volunteers, staying as connected as possible. Communications, such as newsletters and updates were sent via Assemble to keep in touch with volunteers, as well as any information around making stores COVID-secure. Volunteers were invited to inform the organisation of their status on returning safely to their volunteer role, which provided a good touchpoint for managers and highlighted any concerns.

A lasting impact

Barnardo's Project Manager, Ben Hughes, comments, "Overall the impact of using Assemble has been huge. The digital process around each step of the volunteer journey from recruitment to rota's has been fully embraced by the team which was a big leap of faith but one that has really paid off. The data we now gather on a regular basis is

integral to support central and retail teams in important strategic decisions as well as keeping day-to-day operations moving forward smoothly."

