

## CUSTOMER STORY



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CUSTOMER SINCE

**August 2019**

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VOLUNTEERS

**700**

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FAVOURITE FEATURE

**Recruitment**

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### Scottish SPCA + Assemble

Volunteers are invaluable to Scottish SPCA. They help the mission to build a better world for Scotland's animals. The Society's main aims include championing animal welfare, the rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming of animals, promoting the benefits of animal companionship and eradicating animal cruelty.

In 2019, Lesley Toles joined the team as Volunteering Development Coordinator, responsible for the strategic development of Scottish SPCA's Scotland-wide volunteering programme. As well as growing the volunteer intake, her team facilitates volunteer support to frontline teams across ten nationally based animal centres as well to the Education team, Comms and Marketing team and other support functions.

The Scottish SPCA were introduced to Assemble by RSPCA, who have been successfully using the software to manage around 6,000 volunteers. Since implementing Assemble in 2018, RSPCA has been able to improve continuity in their volunteer journey, report volunteer contributions more accurately and keep their volunteer community connected.

It was evident that this success could be mirrored – albeit on a smaller scale - for the Scottish SPCA and marked the start of a new, exciting chapter that would involve digitally transforming the volunteering team.

### **Automating recruitment**

Prior to implementing Assemble, volunteer recruitment was managed internally by the Scottish SPCA's Human Resources department. As well as over 300 employees, the HR team were responsible for over 100 volunteers and were using a largely manual recruitment process.

The Scottish SPCA typically used application forms and email to collect and store volunteer information, with each candidate requiring a significant amount of administration and time to

move along the recruitment journey.

Since implementing the software, “Assemble has made recruitment smoother and so much quicker with a reliable, automated and ‘on-brand’ process that ensures nothing is missed. Every critical stage has a checkpoint and we have tailored our communications, so they are personal to the Scottish SPCA. We also love that volunteers are kept up to date at each milestone of the recruitment process”.

### **Connecting during Covid**

The introduction of Assemble in February 2020 coincided with the beginnings of Covid, which would soon lead to national lockdowns.

Against all odds and at a time when many felt very disconnected, Assemble, helped to bring the Scottish SPCA volunteers and staff together. Once the bulk of volunteer data was uploaded and people began to engage with the software, it was evident that volunteers felt connected to the wider Society and part of a much bigger team.

Regular updates, news and social media content was available through Assemble,

as well as important Covid related communications. Volunteers were also able to get a broader picture of the Society, which enabled them to explore other opportunities and roles within the Scottish SPCA. This was a huge benefit to those volunteers who were interested in upskilling or trying something new.

## **Overcoming engagement**

As with any digital transformation, there will be some human resistance. Reasons included reluctance to change, a lack of digital confidence or simply having no access to technology, so tackling this obstacle was something the Scottish SPCA knew would be important.

Lesley considered several approaches at this early phase of introducing Assemble which included becoming a real advocate of the software herself. Where possible, she would present training sessions, offer online tutorials on dedicated features – such as rotas or expenses - or at times, help on a 1-1 basis.

Engagement is currently at around 60% and Lesley is confident that going forward this will only improve. “We want to share the wonderful work that our

volunteers are doing with the Scottish SSPCA, so it's vitally important they understand why we are using Assemble and are on board with our approach. With our new volunteers, Assemble is now part of the package, which means engagement will continue to increase over time”.

## **Reporting the right data**

When it comes to recording volunteer data, Lesley is incredibly keen to understand the contributions that volunteers are making. Recording volunteer hours is helpful, however, she is far more interested in knowing about the activities that have been carried out by volunteers and what value that has given to both the Society in terms of outcomes, and to the volunteers themselves in terms of achievement, enjoyment and skills development.

The Scottish SPCA are encouraging volunteers to adopt an approach of using Assemble to log what time, tasks and activities have been carried out to paint a more holistic view of the volunteer programme and the impact volunteers are having.

“Being able to report to our board by

way of time spent on the number of 'animals rescued' or 'rehabilitation' can help justify certain aspects of our volunteer programmes. For example, this data might be used to help us to form strategies around growing our teams or budgeting for the future”.

## **Divide and conquer**

Following the introduction and success of Assemble, SPCA has grown the volunteer headcount significantly from 120 to over 700. Consequently, the Scottish SPCA are now in the process of growing the volunteer management team from one centralised manager to four regionally based coordinators.

The new structure means that volunteer coordinators will be responsible for animal centres and volunteers by area in Scotland. This provides volunteers with direct access to a dedicated regional champion that can provide 'on-the-ground' support. The volunteer coordinators will be there to assist centre managers with the resources they need, whilst supporting volunteers and recognising their efforts.

“We want to do all we can to support and prioritise volunteers. Improving the

experience and rewarding and recognising contributions will inevitably lead to greater satisfaction and retention”.

## **Room to grow**

With Assemble providing the operational backbone of the volunteer infrastructure, regional teams are now able to expand and scale with ease, knowing that the system will take the weight of the workload.

Across the ten Scottish SPCA centres, Assemble offers clarity and consistency in processes. It provides a space to find and share best practise information, training modules and other essential documents as well as uniting the animal centres as one organisation through news updates and other communications.

“Assemble has undoubtedly enabled us to grow at pace, creating valuable time to invest in other areas. For example, we are now working on attracting new volunteers, creating new roles, and adapting our current roles to make our equality, diversity and inclusion plan even more successful.”