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September 1, 2010

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**The New Age Of Volunteering Can Take Less Than One Minute**

By Kate Rogers

Dana Srither knows the survival rate from sudden cardiac arrest is low. Few people know how to properly perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or how to locate public automatic external defibrillators (AEDs), said Srither, founder of Singapore-based First Aid Corps.

"AEDs are a vital link to the survival of victims," Srither said. "We felt that if the public knew where these AEDs were located, they would be able to respond better with the AEDs to cardiac arrest cases in public."

Srither sought to turn the numbers around this past November, by coupling technology with crowd-sourcing tactics. First Aid Corps teamed with The Extraordinaries, a social business platform in San Francisco, and asked people around the world to send photos, location descriptions and GPS coordinates of public AEDs.

First Aid Corps also created free Smartphone apps for the iPhone and Android called "AED Nearby" and "ShowNearby AED" that help the public locate the nearest AED.

In a sense, those who send in the pictures are volunteering for the cause, on a micro-level, and thus are participating in a phenomena known as micro-volunteering. It's an act that takes seconds or minutes but helps toward the greater good. These good acts are helping organizations deliver mission in a volunteer's available free minutes.

First Aid Corps called upon the public to take a few minutes to help locate these life-saving machines, and in turn, created a public registry for AEDs. It has mapped out more than 200 public AEDs around the world. The organization has another app in the works for the Blackberry.

It takes a few seconds to snap a picture and email it but that still qualifies as an act of volunteerism. In a world where impatience and attention deficit are rampant, the micro-volunteering concept is starting to spread. Web sites like Yelp, Wikipedia, and iStock photo are entirely crowd-sourced, meaning they rely on independent users to provide their content. In 2008, the Obama campaign raised \$500 million online, all with an average donation of \$80 from individuals, demonstrating crowdsourcing at its finest.

Jacob Colker, CEO of The Extraordinaries, said micro-volunteering has caught on because many people believe they don't have the time to be a full-fledged volunteer. Taking a few minutes out of their day to help a charity they care about is a win for both parties.

"We have hundreds of billions of hours of spare time, but it comes in 20 or 30-minute spurts," Colker said. "We have kids, errands, 60-hour work weeks, so it's very difficult to actually go out and engage. If there were more opportunities for people to volunteer, through an introduction of something like micro-volunteering, that is easier for them to get involved with, maybe they will come back."

The Extraordinaries is beta-testing a skills-based micro-volunteering model in which corporations and individuals enter their expertise into a profile on the site [www.beextra.org](http://www.beextra.org) and are matched with nonprofits. Nonprofits can sign up for free and get help with specific tasks from a worldwide pool of volunteers. In a few minutes of free time, volunteers can help translate sentences from Spanish to English, or design a logo for a charity that is seeking to revamp its image.

"Nonprofits all around the world are posting challenges they face, and high expertise professionals are helping them get their work done," Colker said. "There are so many things throughout the day that organizations need, so this is a real advantage."

During the past year, 40,000 new members signed up to volunteer and the platform has more than 100,000 members, Colker said.

Indianapolis, Ind.-based School on Wheels uses micro-volunteering as a way to inspire and educate the homeless youth its organization tutors daily. Aside from its 500 tutors, the organization

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goes online to engage volunteers in writing study tips, quotes and encouragement for its students, according to Nathan Hand, vice president of development at the charity.

"In 60 seconds you can log in and share a song about prepositions, something about flashcards or a favorite quote about the value of education," Hand said. "You can send it through your phone, from anywhere in the world, and impact a child who is homeless in Indianapolis. In a matter of seconds you can impact a child."

After posting three tasks on the app, School on Wheels had more than 30 people volunteer in less than a week. Hand said School on Wheels hopes to expand its crowdsourcing efforts, and have volunteers help with grading and editing the students' work. The more people who interact with these children in need, the better their self-esteem will be, he said.

"If a fourth-grade kid gets a note or tip, or encouragement, and that comes from one extra person besides their case manager, parent, teacher or tutor, they will realize 'Hey, someone cares about me.' If we can grow that list even more, that is the payoff and a huge piece for them."

Micro-volunteering tactics can also be employed to turn around low email rates. 1 Sky, based in Takoma Park, Md., began using micro-targeting with its email lists this past year after noticing its action rates had slowed, said its Internet Director Garth Moore. The charity began sending small, segmented emails to be most effective with its asks and get the highest action rates.

"It's knowing that not everyone on your supporter file is going to attend an event -- that is a high-bar ask," he said. "Many people will fill out online forms, or 'Tell A Friend' forms, and that is as far as their advocacy goes. You are targeting with a more specific message and getting a more actionable rate here."

Through its micro-targeted messaging, 1 Sky began crowdsourcing for local events and specific actions, such as signing online petitions or going to community rallies. All messaging was done online through email, Twitter and Facebook, Moore said, and action rates quickly turned around. Its recent "Hands Across the Sand" crowdsourcing helped drive 57 events of its almost 800 nationwide. Crowdsourcing also drove 37 events in 22 states for 1 Sky's April "Senate Storm" events, and it gathered 229 photos from 25 states for its "Dirty Energy Hunt/No More Drilling" photo petitions, Moore said.

Open rates for high-action emails went from 16.5 percent to 30 percent during the past year and the charity's followers and fans on Twitter and Facebook nearly doubled with its new targeted approach.

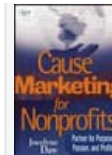
"We only succeed at this if the people we are targeting succeed," he said. "It's a ramp of engagement, you have to start them off slowly. We try to identify our coordinators and supporters online, to get the right ask to the right people who will take it and run."

Right now, 1 Sky has nearly 16,000 high action rapid responders online, who will spend time micro-volunteering and taking some form of action online. The next tier is 4,000 Climate Precinct Captains, who take action both on and offline; followed by a third tier of 3,000 people who are more likely to take action offline.

Moore said he is not convinced micro-volunteering and crowdsourcing will be the only way things are done. However, he predicts they will certainly be a part of the mix.

"I think there will always be the handshakes, the phone calls and the local organizing. This is not a means to an end," he said. "If you keep the end in mind, the means come about pretty easily. You can get your message in the right hands of the right people (with micro-volunteering), so I think it will be a big part."

Srither has a different view. He believes things are headed in this direction full-speed, although his organization is still waiting for the first life to be saved with the technology it has mapped. "Our motto is 'Mass Collaboration through Technology.'"



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