

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence Australia (BSL)

BACKGROUND

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is a social justice organisation that works to prevent and alleviate poverty across Australia. Originally named after St. Laurence, the patron saint of the poor, BSL was founded in 1930 by Father Gerard Kennedy Tucker, a social reformer and activist. Over the years, BSL has assisted in the formation of numerous organisations dedicated to social change and care.

BSL counts on a workforce of more than 2,500 staff and volunteers (of which 40% is representative of volunteers), with 54 volunteer roles across 49 volunteer programs.

Since 2020, Tracey O'Neill, CVA, has led the volunteer program as Senior Manager of Volunteer Engagement. That's also the year she received the Exemplary Leader award from Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE). In this role, she leans on her 20 years of experience as a leader of volunteer engagement in the not-for-profit, social justice, health, disability, and government sectors along with her leadership involvement with the Australasian Association for Managers of Volunteers (AAMoV) and national and state volunteer strategy development.

With **spreadsheets** and **paper** in play as the primary methods for managing this large pool of volunteers, Tracey recognised that a change in tools needed prioritisation to overcome the significant challenges being experienced.

CHALLENGES

BSL was using 50 different spreadsheets across the organisation. Additionally, paper-based application forms, volunteer agreements, confidentiality forms and training records were employed. From time to time, neither spreadsheets nor paper were used, which led to volunteers or corporate groups unexpectedly showing up.

Key Pain Points:

- Managing paperwork, hunting for records, and duplicating information from paper to spreadsheets was **too time consuming**.
- **Unreliable information** for reporting became more common than desired.
- **Undervaluing the contribution of volunteers** by relying on the data that they had.
- **Inability to provide evidence** of program's effectiveness and potential led to requests for extra staff and resources not being approved

The lack of proper tools to manage volunteers made the program prone to risks and gaps. "There was a feeling of embarrassment, for example, of sending the wrong correspondence to people, continuing to send information to volunteers who had exited the program, or rewarding the wrong Years of Service to volunteers," recalls Tracey.

It was evident that a change was needed.

*"Using **spreadsheets and paper** reduced our ability to **demonstrate the significant contribution of volunteers**. This impacted our success with gaining buy-in from Board and Executives with budget requests."*

– Tracey O'Neill, CVA

JOURNEY

Tracey's organisation required at least three different quotes from prospective vendors. The BSL Volunteer Engagement Team devoted a lot of time to **researching various systems**.

The team was quite certain about what they were seeking from a volunteer management software solution and vendor. The system **needed to be customisable** to their program, provide great **customer support**, and be **secure**.

Tracey remembers learning that "Volunteer Impact allowed for unlimited administrators and almost 24/7/365 support due to having a global team as well as easily accessible online training videos and FAQ support materials. Whereas with another vendor, we had to pay for more than 2 administrators, was USA-centric, and support was only available 10pm-9am Melbourne time."

After further exploration of Volunteer Impact via a product **demo** and scenario testing in a software trial account, the BSL Volunteer Engagement Team submitted a list of more than 60 questions. "Better Impact had a quick and easy solution to every single one!" praised Tracey.

With data security being a significant factor in selecting a system, "Volunteer Impact was taken to [our] Technology Governance Committee who looked at where data is held, privacy policies and practices, legislative adherence, etc.," recalls Tracey.

Although it was important to BSL Engagement Team to choose the right volunteer management solution, great value on was also placed on the **vendor** with which BSL would **partner**.

Better Impact's **values** resonated with Tracey. "The CEO – Tony Goodrow – has first-hand experience with the impact of volunteers. The story of Better Impact's beginnings is one that demonstrates the core values of the organisation, its leaders, and staff."

Tracey appreciated that Better Impact not only provided "exceptional customer service from a team who is committed to great outcomes for volunteer involving organisations," yet also created a community with which to connect via "ongoing support of users through the implementation of the Buddies system (a place for users to network with one another), connecting organisations who are researching the product with those who are looking into it, regular user group meetings and opportunities to learn how other organisations use the platform, and the training they offer the sector (e.g. Here to Help conference and the annual Volunteer Management Hybrid Conference)."

"Choosing Volunteer Impact (the product) and Better Impact (the company) was an easy decision!"

Why Volunteer Impact

Some of Tracey's favourite Volunteer Impact features include:

- Volunteer Impact is an exceptional **customisable** product that we can continue to update as our needs change, or we refine processes
- Exceptional **customer service** from a team who are committed to great outcomes
- Better Impact's ongoing **support of sector professionals**
- **Easy reporting**
- Clear privacy policies, **data security**, and adhering to Australian legislation

RESULTS

The entire volunteer management process at BSL has been **transformed thanks to Volunteer Impact**.

Tracey boasts that the greatest benefit being realised is the **amount of time saved** in each step of the volunteer lifecycle and what she and her team are now able to accomplish using that time.

Onboarding & Training

"We are shaving weeks off our onboarding for volunteers. The previous communication that had to go on between volunteers, programs and the Volunteer Engagement team meant it took up to 6 weeks for volunteers to be onboarded as we waited on updates of what parts of the process had been completed. With Volunteer Impact our process is quicker as we can see everything in real-time and follow up with those who are yet to complete training or need to be re-screened. With the time saved, we're working on developing training modules for volunteers and leaders of volunteers."

Communications

"I've been able to engage more with volunteers, spend more time on newsletters, and collect stories."

Reporting

"We are likely saving up to a week a month on reporting to start with!!"

*"Volunteer Impact is an exceptional **customisable and adaptable product** that we can continue to update as our needs change, or we refine processes."*

– Tracey O'Neill, CVA



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