Case study: Skills-based volunteering – Disability Equality Scotland and We Are Brass Tacks

Context

Skills-based volunteering enables professionals to share their expertise with voluntary organisations. For example, **Disability Equality Scotland** (DES) partnered with **We Are Brass Tacks** (WABT) to undertake a strategic review of its communications. The organisation wanted external support to develop a communications strategy that aligned with its mission and could be implemented effectively across the organisation.

Volunteering activity

Over a nine-month period, the team from WABT provided 179 hours of skills-based support, equivalent to approximately £35,800 in professional services.

The support included a series of online and in-person workshops, alongside follow-up tasks and resources. The process began with a discovery phase to build shared understanding and bridge organisational cultures. WABT introduced DES to new technologies and engagement techniques, helping the team rethink how they connect with members and grow their reach.

During this period, the organisation's communications lead was on long-term leave. As a result, staff from across Disability Equality Scotland stepped forward to take part in the workshops and co-create the communications strategy, creating a collaborative process across the organisation.

Rather than acting as traditional consultants, the WABT team took a hands-on and relational approach, providing clear roadmaps and tailored resources that enabled staff to develop and implement the strategy themselves.

Impact

The impact has been significant:

- Increased membership and social media following, especially on LinkedIn
- More coordinated and consistent messaging across internal and external channels
- A shift from one-way communication to two-way engagement with members
- Organisation-wide involvement in communications, from promoting Easy Read services to sharing research findings

DES continues to use WABT's templates and guidance, embedding the strategy into daily practice. DES said: "WABT were amazing, they spent time getting to know the organisation and gave us bespoke feedback and support – rather than a cookie-cutter template. This made it real to Disability Equality Scotland and linked with our work. The in-person day was fabulous and really enhanced the importance of internal communications, not just focusing on the external."

Key learning

Key insights from DES and WABT's ESV partnership include:

- **Invest time in understanding the organisation:** a discovery phase helps build shared language and ensures solutions are relevant and practical.
- **Focus on long-term sustainability:** Skills-based volunteering can strengthen organisational capacity well beyond the life of the project. Think about ways to support long-term working, such as templates, resources and roadmaps.

Knowledge Gateway

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