

# Tech Tools for Virtual Volunteering

## Here's how to choose software for virtual volunteering.

- First, assess the needs of the project – sometimes teleconferencing may be add you need!
- Determine what features team members need to communicate
- Choose simple solutions before going to full-fledged solutions

### In general:

- Look for software that supports not for profits. Software geared towards non-profit needs is more considerate of the way non-profits are structured, and will also fit their pricing accordingly.
- Fits your budget.
- Is easy to use. Software use should be intuitive, and if not intuitive, should be easily grasped during training. If software is difficult to use, it's less likely to be adopted.
- Has access to support and training. Of all the criteria, this item is very important. While some companies provide personal advisors to guide you through entire use of the product, others will provide a training period. Try to avoid purchasing software where the only support is via online forums, or where the support is limited to pay per use.
- Has a trial period. Some software companies will allow for a 14 to one month trial period. Others will allow you to use a less featured version of the software until you need their more premium features.
- Allows you to see a demo. The trial period can act as a demonstration where you get to use the software in its full configuration, or you can be allowed access to a demo version where you can play around with the features.

## Software you may need

Basic	Advanced
Teleconferencing	Collaboration/workspace software
Meeting schedulers	Online meeting software/web conferencing
File sharing/transfer	

### Basic software

#### Teleconferencing:

Teleconferencing is pretty standard across all organizations. Given the myriad of solutions on Google, here's how to pick the best:

- Ensure that you are able to record calls
- Must provide personal login/access code for your meeting
- Allow for unlimited participants
- Good audio quality
- Recommend paid solution over free. This will reduce the advertisements and ensure that the company provides a quality experience.

#### Meeting schedulers:

Examples: Doodle poll; Tungle.me

Have you ever tried to schedule meetings with multiple people over multiple dates? Meeting schedulers are essential so that all participants can choose a meeting date by seeing the dates listed in a table, and seeing what dates others have picked. Consensus is provided by technology!

#### File sharing/transfer

Examples: Dropbox, Box.com, We Transfer

You can't always send files with email. Dropbox provides 2GB of space, and gives users access to file folders, where all parties are given access to files. Box.com provides a similar service. WeTransfer allows you to send files of up to 2GB to anybody for free, and will store the files for about a week, allowing users to download when needed.

### Advanced software

#### Collaboration/workspace software

Examples: Google Docs, Huddle; Trello, Basecamp, Asana

Workspace software gives teams a centralized place in which to share files, have discussions and work jointly on projects. It kind be likened to a virtual office where your documents are organized, tasks are assigned, approvals obtained, and all emails are stored for viewing of all team members. Some software also includes a project management feature, which saves money and reduces the need work with separate software.

The examples provided go from simple to more sophisticated solutions. The free or basic versions, such as Google Docs will require basic knowledge of how Google works and a need to self-train. Software such as Asana or Basecamp are paid solutions which provide a greater suite of options.

What you should look out for:

- Ease of use
- Ability to assign and manage tasks
- Keep track of files
- Search and organize information
- Cloud based software – so all can have access
- Use of calendars
- Ability to share content
- Ability to track documents, and see approvals
- Ability to see different versions of documents, so you are all working on the same version
- Focus on software built for non-profit collaboration

See: How to collaborate with Google Docs

<http://mashable.com/2016/03/18/collaborate-google-docs/#8qX3FBSaU5qY>

### **Online meeting software/web conferencing**

Examples: Google Hangout, Facebook Live, Join.me, Adobe Connect, GoTo Meeting, Webex

One of the disadvantages of virtual volunteering can be the lack of interpersonal contact. Web conferencing software provides a way for remote teams to have real time conversations, and also facilitate non-verbal communication using video.

What to look out for:

- Secure access
- Ability to record
- Ability to turn video off and on
- Clear audio
- Ability to share screens
- Ability to change lead speakers
- Desktop and mobile versions
- Unlimited number of attendees (this can vary depending on your needs)
- Not locked into contract (can vary)

**Enjoy your virtual meeting!**