Lessons learned from creating a volunteer-based community from scratch

Lessons learned about building a community in general.

Know your personal limits: your health and well-being should always be the top priority.

Build a recognisable brand: use distinctive fonts, colours and a logo for clear presentation.

Word of mouth: the strongest form of marketing you will have.

Collaboration is key: working with like-minded organisations is pivotable to achieve success.

Document your impact: Statistics, annual surveys and testimonials on your efficiency is needed for funding and marketing purposes.

Fundraising is difficult: You will need to rely on your personal networks such as friends, family and your professional circles to raise funds initially.

Have a mentor: They can guide you to achieve your goals through their life experiences.

Lessons learned about volunteer management.

Finding volunteers is difficult: it takes a lot for a person to say they want to volunteer for your cause. It takes even more courage for them to actually volunteer.

The founder/leader will be the most devoted person to the cause: it's rare to find other volunteers who will match the founder's energy.

Provide training and development opportunities: volunteers will need to be up skilled to effectively carry out their volunteer roles.

Celebrate volunteer achievements: volunteers need to know they are valued and appreciated.

Be aware of burnout: volunteer roles need to be designed so they are sustainable.

The future of mental health service provision.

Development of peer support groups: there needs to be a shift from mental health awareness raising initiatives to grass roots peer support groups that provide practical help through people's lived experiences.

Peer support groups will find it hard to fundraise: from a corporate perspective, peer support groups aren't an "attractive" cause to support for their organisations.

A sense of belonging needs to be achieved: using Maslow's Hierarchy, we need to build a sense of belonging once physiological and safety needs of people are met. There's currently a lack of mental health organisations working in this particular "belonging" space.

Venue hire is critical to support groups: they need safe and secure places to operate from.

This factsheet was prepared by Rahul Seth CA, founder of Activate Mental Health. Scan the QR code to find Activate Mental Health on various social media channels. If you want further feedback, please email us at hello@activatemh.com.au.