

## **Is Anybody Out There?: Communicating With Your Volunteers When You're Not Onsite**

Regular communication can go a long way in maintaining volunteer engagement during a prolonged break like the one that many museums have faced over the past year. We know it can feel a little intimidating though if you're used to communicating primarily in person. If you're not sure where to start, we hope some of the tips and suggestions below can help!

### **Things to Consider:**

Goals-- What are you hoping to achieve via this communication? It could be any or all of the following:

- Communicate important information regarding institutional status
- Reassure your volunteers that they're still part of the team
- Keep volunteers engaged with institutional content

Frequency-- You want to make sure something like this is as regular as possible. That means being realistic about your workload; you don't want to overcommit and then realize that the schedule you've set isn't sustainable. You also don't want to overload your volunteers' inboxes-- everyone is getting a lot of emails right now, you don't want your missive to slip into the void! Weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly can be a good place to start depending on your situation.

Content-- This is the one that can be the most intimidating! Once you commit yourself to regular communication, it can feel inevitable that you will eventually run out of things to say. Fortunately for you, the possibilities are endless! Here are a few that we've had success with:

- Institutional status updates-- even if it doesn't affect them directly, it's nice to keep people in the loop!
- Public facing content already being created by your institution (blog posts, social media, etc.)-- why reinvent the wheel?
- Virtual performances-- If your institution has any kind of performing arts programming, go ahead and share with your volunteers! What about other local institutions?
- Introductory bios highlighting institutional staff from other departments
- Relevant content from other museums/institutions-- this can be educational, regarding a relevant topic to your museum/museum pedagogy in general, or just for fun! So many museums have been getting creative online over the last year-- share the love!
- Acknowledging current events/holidays-- nothing happens in a vacuum! What would you be discussing if you ran into these folks at the office?