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Shelter Helpers

Volunteer Scheduling Software

Introduction

Volunteer organizations often struggle with managing and organizing their volunteers' schedule due to its dynamic nature. Consequently, several companies have developed software designed specifically for part-time volunteer scheduling at an affordable price. These programs are also very user friendly, allowing everyone to access and use the software despite lack of technical savvy. This review focuses on analyzing the contemporary software available on the market today and identifies the pros and cons of each software package.

Commercial Products

Three of the most effective volunteer software scheduling packages includes WhentoHelp, Droster, and ScheduleAnywhere. WhentoHelp was specifically designed for volunteer-based organizations due to its ability to cross-match volunteer availability and preferences with the organizations needs [2]. The program is then able to determine an optimal schedule for both parties which is then submitted to volunteers for minor updates and changes [2]. All the information is stored on a secure website, providing easy and safe access to staff and volunteers [1]. In addition, the software can keep track of the number of hours worked by a volunteer as well as several other statistics [1]. Since the schedule is maintained online, there is a maintenance fee ranging from \$100 to \$600 a year depending on the number of volunteers per day; however, there are no setup charges [1].

Droster allows for extensive customizing of volunteer scheduling based on task, person, and time [3]. Furthermore, Droster uses a non-proprietary database to store all the volunteer information, meaning it can be integrated with the volunteer organization's current database [3]. In addition, Droster has a rule engine that allows the user to establish specific rules for a given task or on a given day, restricting the number of volunteers that can sign up for that activity [4]. Droster is free for up to 300 shifts, but beyond that, the package will cost \$249 [3].

ScheduleAnywhere allows the organization to track specific skills and certifications associated with particular volunteers [5]. Furthermore, both the organization and volunteers have the ability to write notes on the schedule regarding a particular activity, either to express skills needed or other concerns dealing with the specific activity [5]. The schedule data is stored virtually on a website and

can be accessed at any time through a web browser [6]. The program can also store statistical information on volunteers regarding time, skillset, and preferences [6]. There is a recurring maintenance fee of \$19.95 per month regardless of how many volunteers are working and no initial setup fee [5].

Underlying Technology and Implementation

The majority of volunteer scheduling software provides an online user interface and allows volunteers and organizations to easily access all the necessary data [1]. By storing data on the maintained server, the exchange of information between volunteers and organizations can remain dynamic. The data storage also allows the program to calculate statistical data on the volunteers, such as total hours worked. However, due to the ease of access, the server and software have additional security measures to ensure that the schedule is not tampered with or that any sensitive data is protected [5]. These security measures include password protection, data encryption, as well as routine server backups.

Implementation for the majority of volunteer scheduling software is simple and convenient. The system requirements for most products are minimal, usually only requiring Windows XP and an internet connection. The majority of the data storage occurs online; therefore, not much disk space is needed to use the software. As a volunteer organization, purchasing the software, installing the program, and registering online are all the needs to be done. If any issues persist, there is usually support available to help solve the problem [3].

Sources:

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