

Social Recruiting for a Social Enterprise

Case Study - The Challenge Network

“38 referral hires in six months from a base of just 40 employees – average cost per hire £250”

Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011

In November 2010 The Challenge Network, a charitable organisation running civic service programmes for young people, was selected to be the largest provider for the first National Citizen Service projects. For a young organisation this presented opportunities and challenges on many fronts, not least recruitment.

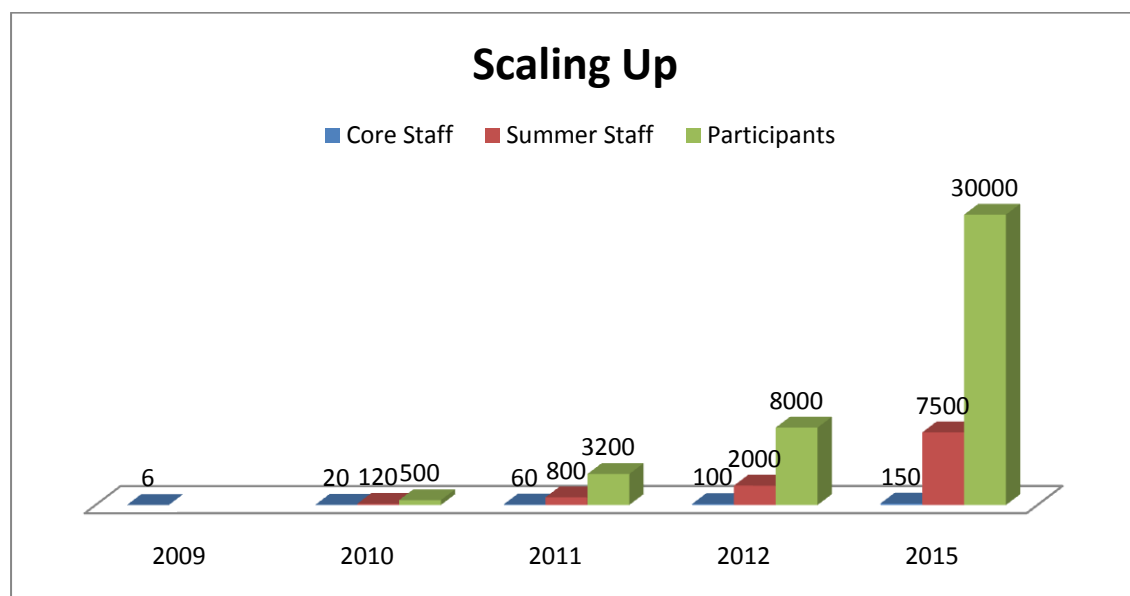
The Challenge Network

The Challenge Network runs 3-week summer programmes with community action projects in September. The project connects 16 year-olds from different backgrounds, helps them develop skills for adulthood, challenges them to make a difference in their community and invites them to become part of a movement.

“Helping young people in the UK to improve their communities, changing the brand of youth” – Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011

Scaling Up

In 2010 The Challenge had delivered programmes for 500 participants. This was now projected to grow to 30,000 in 2015 with an immediate jump to 3200 in 2011. Supporting the 2011 programmes would require a core team of 60 plus 800 seasonal staff (up from 20 and 120, respectively, in 2010).



Recruitment of the seasonal staff presented its own set of complexities. Not only were the numbers expanding rapidly but the entire staff would be stood-down in-between summers, so each year the recruitment would begin again from scratch. Because of the nature of the work the selection process had to be very comprehensive, and include CRB checks, which increased the timeline significantly.

As if that wasn't already difficult enough, the entire recruitment campaign had to be managed on a tight "charity" budget that precluded some traditional channels and development of a wider employer brand. The plan was for the total cost per hire to be less than £250 per head.

Building the "Staffing Machine"

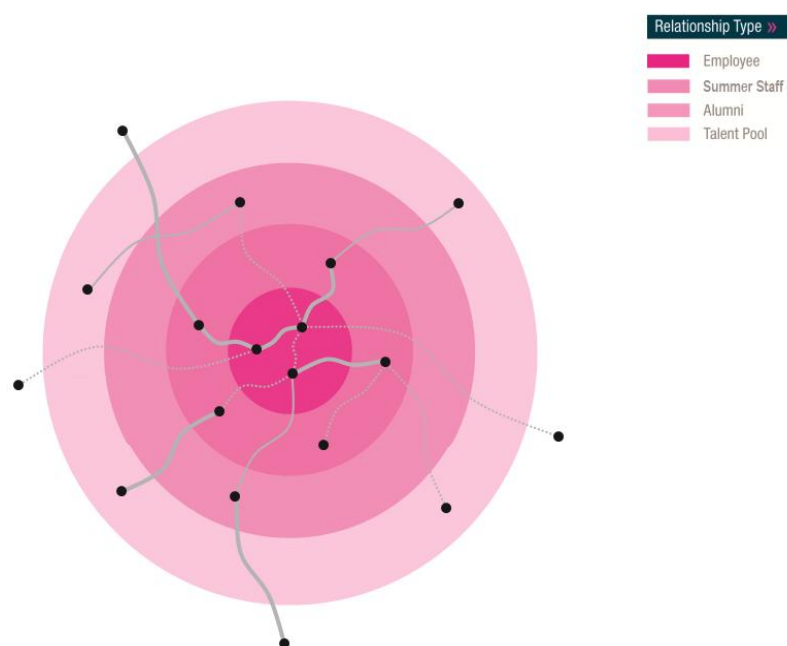
The person responsible for delivering the campaign was Doug Fraley, Director of Talent and Marketing at The Challenge. With previous experience heading up staffing teams at McKinsey & Co and Google Doug appreciated the size of the task ahead. He set about building a small recruitment team, creating a strategy and selecting the tools they would use.

What Doug realised early on was that in order to deliver the required results The Challenge would need to use every asset at their disposal. In particular the networks built around their existing staff and the seasonal staff alumni from the previous year were seen as a key component of "the staffing machine".

"Use your network as an asset for creating the organisation" – Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011

The Social Network

Like any company, The Challenge naturally sat at the centre of a social network developed through community circles with an affinity to the organisation. In this case the community circles were the core staff, seasonal staff, alumni and a talent pool of people interested in joining.



As well as the community relationships, individuals also had personal networks that crossed the community boundaries. Doug realised that these networks could be used to attract and engage with potential recruits to The Challenge.

Building a Movement

In order to build and leverage the networks built around The Challenge three key components needed to be in place: the right people, with the right culture and attitude, equipped with the right tools to facilitate the process.

Fortunately two of the components were already in place. The Challenge process itself proved an excellent bonding catalyst for participants and staff alike. It also naturally created a pipeline of participants who could progress on to more demanding roles. In addition many social events were organised to maintain engagement with the staff and alumni outside The Challenge process itself.

All that remained was to provide everyone with the tools to turn networks and connections into potential recruits through information sharing and referrals. The platform chosen to manage the network was a trusted social network built by Employer Connections.

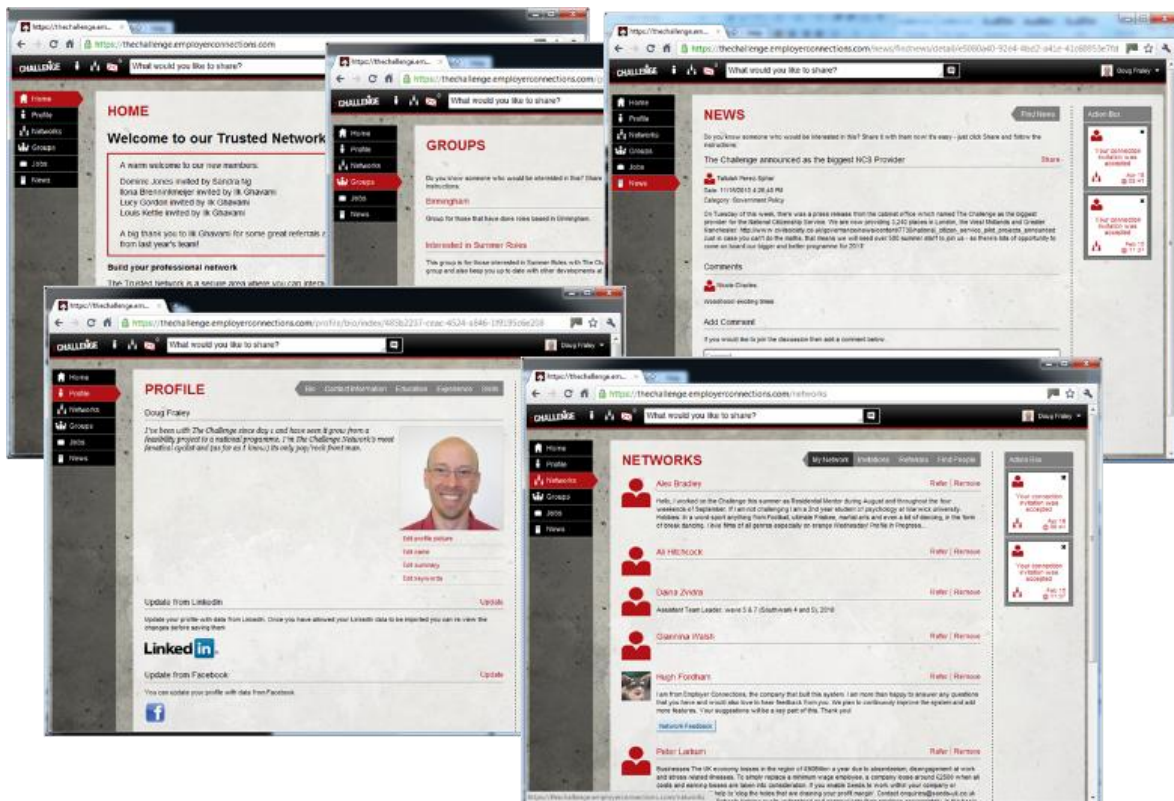
The Trusted Social Network

The Challenge already had a presence on public social networks but, because of the nature of the organisation and the need to build on already high levels of trust and engagement, it was felt that a private social network would deliver better results.

“We wanted to manage the candidate experience and the employee experience all the way through, that is crucial” – Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011

The Employer Connections platform gives organisations the ability to manage multiple communities within the same network, giving each community different access to content and people. This, coupled with complete control over branding and messaging (“no advertising”), led to a very high take-up from the original invitations to the network.

Over 85% of the invitations sent to core staff and previous seasonal staff were accepted.

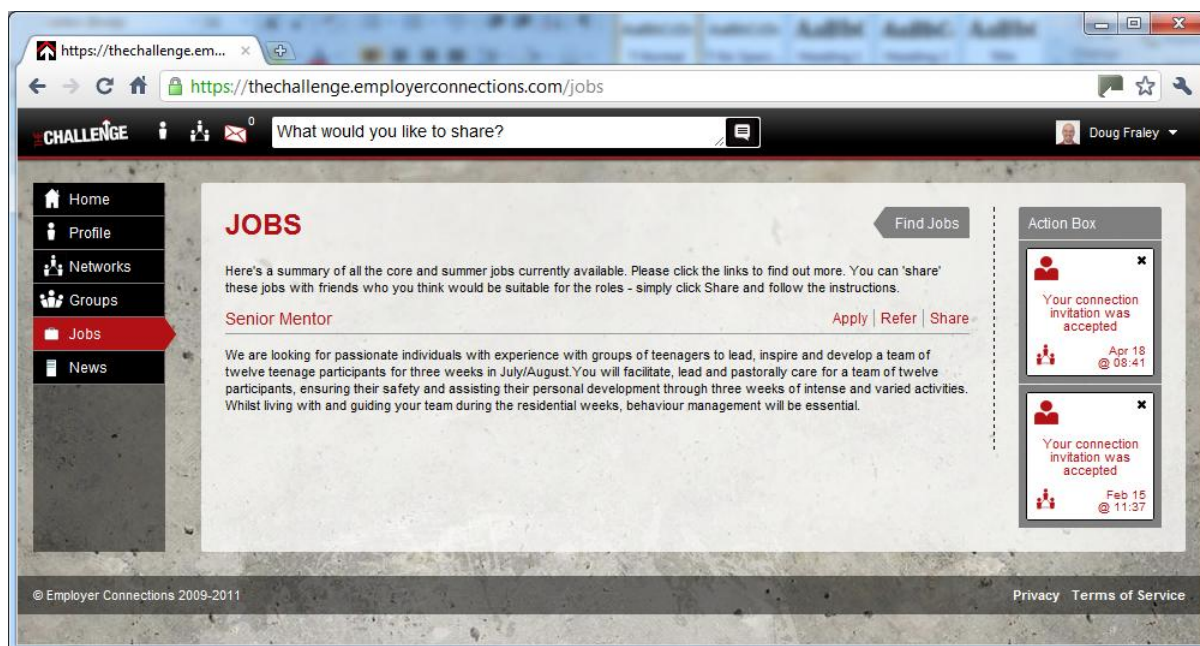


Once in the network users could maintain profiles, organise into personal networks and groups (both designed and organic) and remain engaged through sharing, communication and discussion. Although the technology enables profiles to be synchronised to existing profiles on public networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, an interesting observation was that **most users preferred to maintain a distinct profile on the private network.**

Referrals

The short term goal for the trusted social network was to help build a talent pool of seasonal staff through referrals. The various roles were posted within the network and members were encouraged to invite contacts to join the talent pool community through sharing jobs and other information.

“Having made initial contact...bring these people closer” – Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011



As well as simplifying the referral process and making it easier to track activity, the trusted social network provides a number of other ways to promote and encourage referrals:

1. Widening the net

As well as encouraging referrals from core staff and alumni, The Challenge also allowed people invited to the talent pool community to make referrals themselves. These “second-degree” referrals widen the reach of organisations beyond their immediate communities.

2. Don't wait for the jobs

The trusted social network was active in autumn 2010, before staffing requirements had been finalised and, therefore, before any job opportunities could be advertised. Members were, therefore, encouraged to invite potential talent pool members to join by sharing groups and news instead. These groups were built around roles and locations, so group members could be precisely targeted once the specific job opportunities went live.

3. Use feedback to encourage others

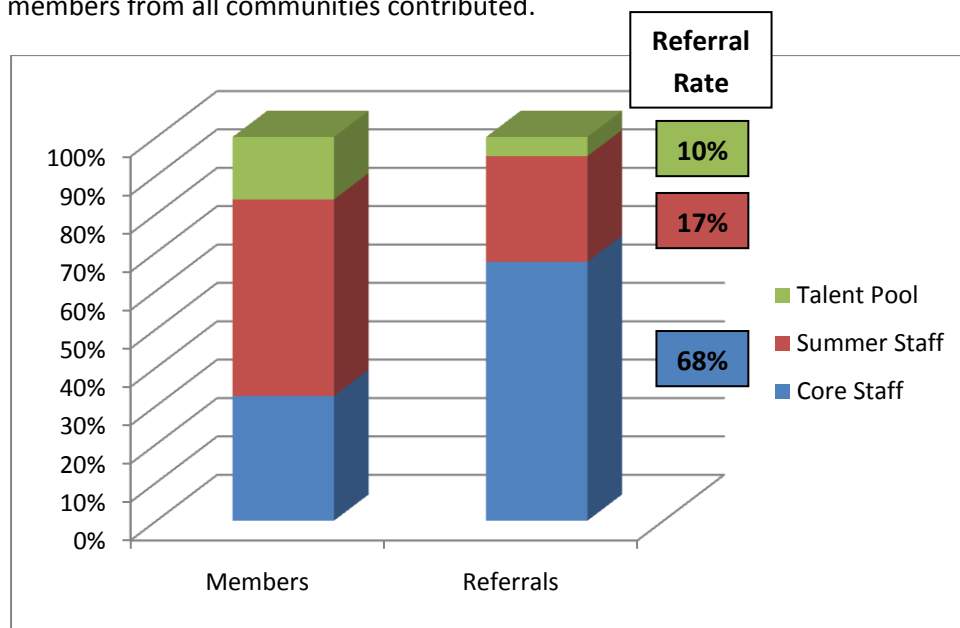
As referrals began to be made and new members joined this valuable activity was fed back to the membership. This constant feedback on activity and success generated interest and enthusiasm for referrals.

It should be noted that financial incentives were not required in this first phase of recruitment, as ***all referrals came without any monetary reward being offered.***

Results

In the first six months of use 40 referrals were generated by the 103 members of the trusted network.

As expected the referral rates (number of referrals per person) varied by community although members from all communities contributed.



The strongest performance came from the core staff with a referral rate of 68% but even the talent pool had a rate of 10% for second-degree referrals.

In six months the trusted social network delivered a total of 38 hires.

The conversion rate from application to hire was three times higher than through other channels. This resulted in further savings through lower selection costs in addition to the reductions in attraction costs.

Conclusions and Future Plans

The first phase of the trusted social network deployment has been hugely successful. A small starting network of just over 100 people delivered 40 referrals and 38 hires at an extremely low cost per hire. As membership grows to over 1000 and beyond, the network will contribute even more significantly to recruitment in the years to come.

More broadly the project has shown that the right people with the right culture and the right tools can deliver very high referral rates. With those components in place it was possible to build a pre-qualified, motivated and engaged talent pool equivalent to 68% of the employee base in six months.

For The Challenge, this project is just the start of using the trusted social network to support the wider concept of a social business.

Social Business

Communities

Programme partnership
Volunteer provision
Professional visits
Programme roles
Industry leadership
Policy implementation

Participants

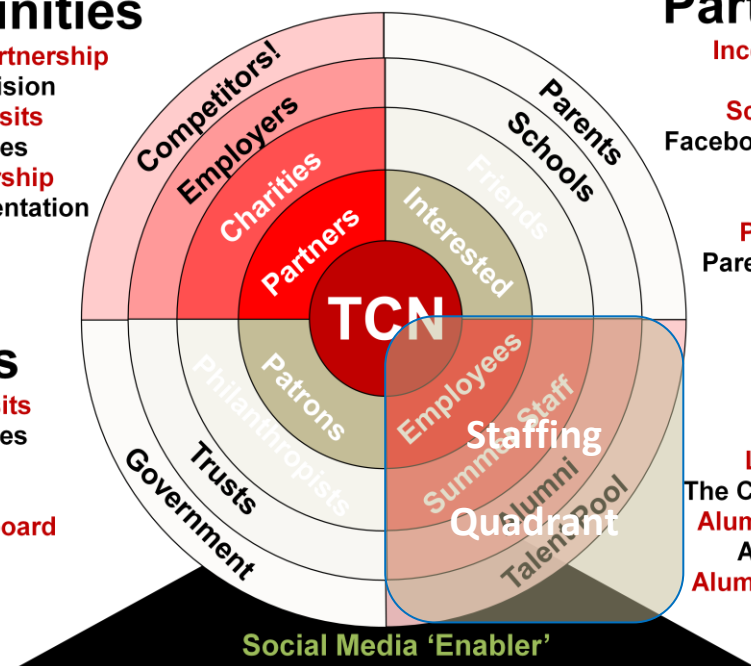
Incentivised referral
Pizza lunches
School assemblies
Facebook page & group
YouTube videos
Text campaigns
Parents' evenings
Parent sponsorships

Funders

Programme visits
Programme roles
Policy input
Donor events
Development board

Staff

PIGs
Skill-sharing
Learning lunches
The Challenge Society
Alumni ambassadors
Alumni assessors
Alumni spokespeople
Alumni trustees



So far the focus has been in the staffing quadrant and specifically for recruiting summer staff. In phase two the staffing quadrant will be developed to use the trusted social network as an engagement tool, particularly for the summer staff as they deliver the 2011 programmes and beyond.

After that the plan is to extend membership to participants, funders and other communities, putting The Challenge at the hub of a wide network delivering the vision.

*“The power of social, the power of networks, expands beyond recruiting” –
Doug Fraley, Social Recruiting Conference, June 2011*

Employer Connections technology enables organisations to build trusted social networks that allow them to realise the value of their connections through sharing knowledge, talent and relationships. More information can be found at <http://www.employerconnections.com>.

More information on The Challenge Network can be found at <http://www.the-challenge.org>

To find out more please contact Peter Ward:

Email: peter.ward@employerconnections.com

Tel: 01727 811132

Mobile: 07907 817126