

The one thing you must do when recruiting Digital Champions



Getting people to become Digital Champions can be tricky. In fact, amongst the 100+ organisations in our Digital Champions Network, enlisting Champions is cited as their most challenging aspect.

Knowing where to find willing people, understanding how to pull them into your digital skills project and how to grow and maintain this new Champion community are just a few of the challenges.

But, with Digital Champions proven to help more people online, the long-term digital inclusion gains are huge.

Lessons in recruiting Digital Champions

As part of our Network support, we ran a webinar about recruiting Champions earlier this month. We invited three members to share their experiences with other organisations about the best way to approach this task.

Between them, [Citizens Online](#), [Kent County Council](#) and [Digital Communities Wales](#) have recruited hundreds and hundreds of Digital Champions across counties and countries. Kent County Council enlisted over 400 Champions in just six months.

Amongst their wealth of advice was this common theme – keep commitment low.

Commitment with a lower case ‘c’

People can be resistant to becoming a Digital Champion, and volunteering in general, because they’re worried about the level of commitment. If you keep that level low and flexible, people are much more willing to get involved.

Catherine Dearden, Digital Champion Co-ordinator at Citizens Online said:

“We’re very mindful that people are often juggling busy lives so we are always realistic about what time Champions can give to the role. A key part of our induction is about having that upfront conversation and finding out what minimum hours volunteers can do. All we ask of our Champions is a minimum of four hours a month, which is just under an hour a week. We leave it to them to tell us what hours and days they can do. We find this approach means Champions tend to give more and they stay with you a lot longer as well.”

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“We don’t ask for any specific commitment from our Champions. We encourage people to just get started at home or with colleagues and use the training from Digital Unite’s Digital Champions Network. We send out a weekly bulletin with different opportunities that Champions can get involved in and we’ve found that those who seemed hesitant at first are now more likely to put themselves forward. Because we have a high number of people on board, we can spread the load more easily. Our 400 Champions, staff and volunteers, have helped over 5,000 people so far.”

The commitment doesn’t have to be just a time-thing either.

Laura Phillips, Programme Manager at Digital Communities Wales said;

“Some people were concerned they have to be IT experts and run technical sessions and this stopped them being Digital Champions. So we stripped the role right back and introduced our Digital Companions as a starting point. All they have to do is have a coffee and a chat with someone who would like to know a little more about the internet and how it might help them. This works really well as an introduction to digital championing. It’s low commitment and builds volunteers’ confidence, showing them that digital skills support is so much about people, rather than technology.”

And this wasn’t the only sage advice Catherine, Sam and Laura offered...

Ten top tips when recruiting Champions

1. As the adage says, if you want something doing ask a busy person. People who are already volunteering can be willing and active Digital Champions so go to where they might be.
2. The team at Citizens Online found that job centres are great places to recruit Champions, as people looking for work want to use volunteering to build connections, experience and their confidence.
3. Use stories to help people understand the role. Digital Communities Wales created this [fab video](#). Citizens Online included an interview with a local volunteer in a council magazine.
4. Volunteer websites like TeamLondon and [Do-it](#) can hit the mark brilliantly too. This [web page from Charity Catalogue](#) is super handy to find these sites.
5. Social media can work wonders. Kent County Council found social networking platform NextDoor was their best channel for recruiting older Champions, and advertising on Snapchat and Instagram got younger people involved. Citizens Online target local community groups on Facebook. If you tag Digital Unite in your social posts, we can share too!
6. Research the local area and adapt your recruitment approach depending on the area and demographic. A rural area might need different tactics to a town or city. Different channels will work in different places.
7. Canva is a top tool for creating engaging flyers and posters, and graphics for social media too, helping your call for Champions to stand out.
8. Having an online application form and informal interview process can avoid timewasters and make sure you’ve got enthused people on board.
9. Change it if you need to change it. Don’t be afraid to adapt your approach as you go along, whether that’s the wording on your advert, the onboarding process or what the role involves.
10. Run regular meet ups for your Champions to keep them involved. Citizens Online run regular Share and Learn sessions on different topics. Kent County Council is planning monthly face to face networking sessions, their first one kicks off in a pub.

Tools to deliver a successful Digital Champion programme

Our [Digital Champions Network](#) has stacks of advice and resources to help organisations build a successful Digital Champion programme. To find out more and how to become a member, [get in touch](#) with us today.