

## ECFI Action Learning - Digital Transformation



Fondazione  
di Comunità  
del Canavese

### Community Foundation of the Canavese - Digitalising processes for remote work and engagement with the community

*'We have risen to the challenge and proved that we are adaptable and flexible, therefore becoming more credible with the community that follow us'.*

Antonella Enrietto, President, Community Foundation of the Canavese

#### Our digital transformation challenge

The foundation is a relatively new philanthropic body and, from its establishment in 2015 until 2019, the collection and distribution activity followed a fairly regular, upward, trend, and one part time secretary was able to manage most of the logistics and cope with the organisation of various functions and tasks. However, in 2020 the foundation became overwhelmed by the health emergency, which drastically accelerated our business, given the increasing number of people in need, also forcing us to change and innovate. This led to a dramatic upscaling of our fundraising, which was made possible by the extraordinary commitment of the organization and its staff, especially to maintain the momentum with our stakeholders. This progression happened in a new and unusual context for us dominated by digital infrastructure, remote meetings and innovative marketing tools. The whole team, including the secretary, board of directors and Chairman, have been working remotely since March 2020, managing activity, maintaining and building relationships from their homes.

The Community Foundation of the Canavese had an office shared with other non-profit organizations in the area, where its operational activities were carried out until February 2020, as well as meetings with the associations and the donors, the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. Since March 2020, our offices have been closed, despite the fact that the foundation's activity has increased and undergone an acceleration to face the requests for support and help coming from our community during the pandemic. Given the circumstances imposed by the health emergency and the lockdown triggered in this historical moment, the foundation had to adapt its internal and external communication, while the secretary transitioned to smart working supported by personal digital equipment. At the beginning, the workstation available was far from being adequately equipped to fulfil its desired functions. Each meeting call set up by the foundation was taking place on borrowed platforms and the connection was often weak, unstable and unsafe. Often Board members and stakeholders felt alone, insulated and distant.

Furthermore, due to the inadequacy of our digital infrastructure, the foundation was unable to organise and deliver the Giving Circle event, already planned for Spring 2020, then rescheduled for October 2020, and today postponed to a date to be defined. Finally, in order to organize the Annual General Meetings of its supporters, with over 150 people invited, the foundation had to commission an external company that would ensure the availability of a safe and stable platform under an expert "direction".

Continuing activities with our stakeholders as normal would have resulted in an asynchronous outcome and would have emphasized the distance. Instead, we have risen to the challenge and proved that we are adaptable and flexible, therefore becoming more credible with the community that follow us.

### **Our solution**

Internally, in order to keep Board members aware and informed, we spend a large amount of time on the phone, Whatsapp calls and other digital platforms. For several months, our meetings have been conducted via several different platforms including Whatsapp and Zoom, which was a challenge for some of our elderly Board members. Training was provided to ensure they would be able to communicate using new technology.

Externally, the pandemic heavily affected the relationship with the non-profit organizations of the network, which sometimes felt isolated and distant. This became an increasingly apparent issue, so, in order to reach out to them and maintain a close link with the foundation and with the territory, the portal "A network for emergency" was created. This is a digital showcase where local non-profit organizations present their services. Users have at their disposal an easy and immediate search tool to identify what they need and can link in directly with every organization.

However, in order to increase their sense of belonging, we established a calendar of remote meetings with groups of them, divided by area of competence and services rendered to the territory under the direction of the foundation. This served as a tool to facilitate their dialogue and discussion and to understand how they were dealing with the issues of the pandemic and how the foundation could support them. With the donors, the foundation kept the contact via email and phone call, even because most of them are old and with difficulties to use digital tools.

Thanks to ECFI contribution, we set up the office of our secretary in smart working and implemented our internal and external communication via zoom, establishing also a calendar of meetings with the non-profit organizations in small teams. We quickly realized that those measures were not enough to guarantee connection to our stakeholders, both beneficiaries and donors. Thanks to the intense course organized by ECFI "Collective Action Learning Digital Transformation" and to the exchange with the other participating community foundations, we learned about the efforts that community foundations in Europe were making to cope in the current situation. During 2020 we experienced communication's power through launching four new successful fundraising campaigns and realised that our community foundation was increasing its image and its reliability. We understood that the

pandemic had forced us to become familiar with distance and that only digital transformation could make us feel closer and connected.

Therefore, we decided to establish our communication activities, modified some plans already in process, and we made new products to get greater visibility and create more solid contact with stakeholders and donors. First of all we decided to use more visual and digital communication in order to be more efficient with elderly people as well as young people, target that we would like to increase and reach. Consequently, we collected pictures, videos, slogans from non-profit organisations working closely with us which were then used to create a professional video for our donors. That video has been projected during our AGM to present the projects that we are supporting through donations and contributions given by the community. Seven non profit organizations accepted to be interviewed and we prepared another video with their stories explaining why the foundation and community support is so relevant for them. Moreover, the material sent by the non profit organizations will be used for Facebook and Instagram posts during the year to continue the engagement of the community.

This will result in:

- greater visibility for the foundation
- greater recognition of its function in the community
- greater reliability among the beneficiaries for having interpreted the change and not having left them alone
- strengthening the network

### **Takeaways from the action learning process**

Two key takeaways are:

- awareness to be able to implement integrated fundraising and digital marketing actions
- visual and digital innovation can also be at the service of philanthropy: images and storytelling are powerful to engage people in remote meeting

### **Issues that remain unresolved**

A period awaits us in which we intend to consolidate the trend started, albeit with limited resources to be allocated to the internal organization, which instead would need increasingly competent and professional resources. Moreover, the challenge of shortening distances is not over yet and there is still much to do: our donors are mostly elderly and we are currently struggling to engage younger cohorts.

Find out more about the Community Foundation of the Canavese here:

<https://www.fondazionecomunitacanavese.it/>