

THE INDISPENSARY CLIENT CASE STUDY

TEENAGE CANCER TRUST



About George's role and The Teenage Cancer Trust

George Crockford is the Chief Operations Officer (COO) of the Teenage Cancer Trust - a charity focused on offering unique care and support, designed for and with young people with cancer.

He decided to work with The Indispensary when they needed some support on specific admin tasks, which had no dedicated resource.



Working with The Indispensary has helped them to scope out how their administration should be managed and to get access to specific skill sets when they have short-term projects - like the Teenage Cancer Trust Gigs at the Royal Albert Hall.

Life Before a VA

“When I started, there was a business manager doing the job of the CEO’S Executive Assistant (EA) and also doing administrative tasks like putting together board agendas and packs. This was **just too big a job for one person.**”

“It meant **the Chief Exec wasn't getting all the EA support they needed**, because often that person would have to prioritise the business cycle stuff - like getting the performance and risk reports together, and therefore wasn't staying on top of stuff coming into her inbox, or taking minutes in meetings and distributing them.

“The end result was that the outputs slowed down due to people not being clear on decisions that had been made and it slowed down the delivery of some of those decisions and actions. This meant the organisation was not running as smoothly as it should.

“We first got in touch with The Indispensary to basically break that role in half. So that someone could focus on the performance and governance side of the business and the EA support would be a separate activity.”



Why Us?

“We decided to work with Joanne and The Indispensary, because she had people with the right expertise, who were knowledgeable about the charity sector and we had the option to scale up and scale down the support as we needed it. As a team, they’re really flexible, and as a charity that’s really important to us because it means we can make sure every penny of our donations goes as far as it can.



George explained how The Indispensary made the onboarding process really easy

“The process of sorting out admin support could easily end up taking a lot of time and headspace from our senior leadership team, away from the stuff that we should really be focusing on. It made such a difference that I could trust Joanne to sort out the details without having to get too involved.

“I trusted Claire and Mel straight away because they were obviously knowledgeable about their work and the charity sector and they always kept me informed and anticipated things before they happened.

“For example, Mel would give a breakdown of what activities she'd been doing, so we could see what had been done and how much it's possible to do in that time. Being able to trust your EA and just let them do their thing is invaluable to me because it means [as a COO] I can get on with the other stuff I need to tackle.



“We could very quickly put Mel in place to work in the new role we'd created, which immediately helped clear the backlog. It also meant we could test out how the role worked, before we decided to make it permanent.”



He explains how the team's knowledge and processes immediately gave him confidence they knew what they were doing

“Joanne and the team at The Indispensary are very responsive. If you drop Joanne an email saying, “Actually, we've got this thing coming up”, or, “Is there someone available that provides some support?” she's very prompt coming back to you and this really helps as we could then make a decision quickly on what we were going to do.

“And I really liked how they thought about a lot of stuff ahead of time. For example – how the computer access would work if someone's on a very short-term project. You don't want to send out a laptop and set up an office 365 account and email address, for someone to do a week's work and then have to shut that all back down again. But Joanne and her team already knew how to manage that and had a process in place.

“Data security is also really important to us, because we need to make sure young people are kept safe. But again, they already had a process for that, so we didn’t have to ask: “How are you going to do it?” They’d already thought about it.

“Working with them took away some of the immediate concerns I had around the practical details of working with a Virtual Assistant. They’d obviously encountered these sorts of issues before, and had a clear approach. And they had their own policies and procedures ready to share, if we needed them, which gave me a lot of confidence that they knew what they were doing.”

He explains how valuable it is to be able to ‘dial up or dial down’ admin support where needed:

“Now that Mel’s helped us scope out the EA role, and we know it works, we’re recruiting our own full-time member of staff for that role. And what I’ve found really useful about The Indispensary, is that **we can dial up or dial down their support**, depending on what we need.

“This has been **especially useful for when we need a specific skill set** for a short period of time – for example when we put on our annual shows at the Royal Albert Hall – one of our biggest projects. Now that we have a relationship with The Indispensary we can just contact Joanne and get some extra help with things like booking travel for young people coming to the show – who are coming to London from all over the UK. Lisa was a great help with this, this year.

“This **takes the pressure off the rest of the team**, who can then focus on making sure the young people have a really amazing experience. The Royal Albert Hall concerts are their chance to meet other people that have been through the same sort of cancer journey they have been through and important lifelong connections to support them. It’s important we have enough time to focus on making this a brilliant event for them.



“Working with The Indispensary has been a great way of finding people who are very good at doing a particular activity. You might be really good at running an event for young people, but that doesn't mean you're good at doing travel logistics and hotel bookings. You might as well get someone who's good at doing that specific thing. But there's no point in us having a permanent member of staff for travel booking, because it's only something we do once a year.”

GEORGE CROCKFORD
TEENAGE CANCER TRUST

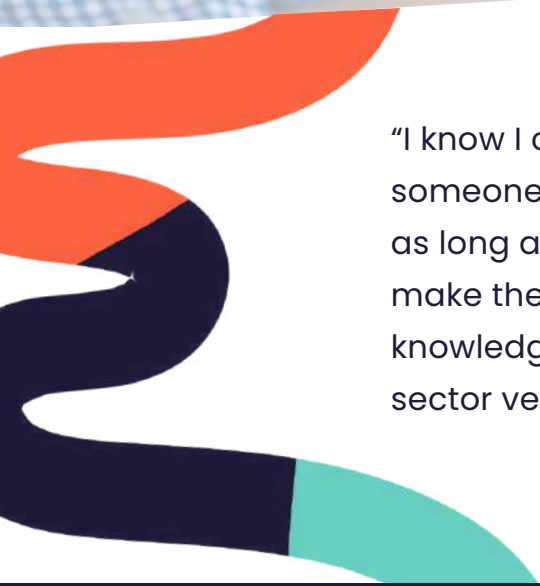


George says working with The Indispensary is a great way for charities to help their donations go further

“Working with The Indispensary is a good way for charities to test out a role in a lower risk way or get some additional support in a specific expertise you only need around particular projects - as they don't always have a regular source of income, and have a responsibility to make the best use of the donors' money.



Helping Donations Go Further



“I know I can just pick up the phone to Joanne and ask if there's someone available to help us, and that person will support us for as long as we want, in whichever way we need. It helps us to make the most of every penny that we have. They're not only knowledgeable about their roles, they also know the charity sector very well and work in a way which supports this.

"In fundraising there can be quite a lot of fluctuations sometimes, especially for charities like us, who are 100% donation led. So, having that flexibility around finding administrative support is really useful, and means we don't have to make permanent hires. Or go through an agency to find somebody to put in a temporary contract - which can also be time consuming and complex.



"Working with The Indispensary allows us to just bring in that resource for as long as we need it. And because they've worked with us before, they understand us and how we work already."

Ready to use a Virtual Assistant?

Contact Joanne now.



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