ROBIN HOOD ARMY CHECKIN PROJECT

ROBIN HOOD ARMY CHECKIN PROJECT

The Robin Hood Army (RHA) is a volunteer organization in which thousands of professionals and citizens collect surplus food from restaurants and distribute it to the less fortunate. The idea is not just to mobilize meals, but in the process get to know local communities whilst sharing the food and make a difference to their lives, with the bonds created.

In 8 years, the RHA has served 114.4 million meals to the underserved across 13 countries globally. The team has a zero funds approach, and scales impact through passionate Robins, social media, and partnerships.

Primary Challenge
The RHA runs in a decentralized manner hyperlocally. For example, in a city like Mumbai, there are 32 neighborhood chapters. In the Andheri chapter, food comes from restaurants in Andheri, the Robins (volunteers) are residents, and the less fortunate are communities such as homeless people, orphanages, old-age homes. Every Robin does this in their free time and is expected to contribute 3 hours a week.

RHA Volunteer Retention Challenge - Motivation to serve is correlated to city leadership
Through consistent social media and press partnerships, 211,946 volunteers have signed up to be Robins, however, like any growing organization, retention is inconsistent. We have observed that retention/Robin's motivation to continue serving over time is directly proportional to the quality of leadership at the city level.

This is coachable to a certain level, but standardized recruitment, training, and supporting in ~300+ cities is difficult, especially when every member of the Robin Hood Army is doing this part-time.

ROBIN HOOD ARMY CHECKIN PROJECT

Building RHA CheckIn with FOSS United

- Multiple brainstorming sessions with FOSS United volunteer team (Shridhar Patil, Nikhil Ponnuru on development, Krutika Thakkannavar on design) to understand what are our core issues solvable by tech - narrowed down on volunteer motivation.

-

- The FOSS United volunteer team developed a web-based platform using Frappe through which:
    - Robins could "Check In" after every food drive and earn badges and shareable certificates at specific milestones (10 Drives - Robin Ninja, 50 Drives - Robin Gladiator, 100 Drives - Robin Centurion).
    - Every Robin is ranked on recent activity and has a City and a Global Rank. They can also see their journey of serving on a unique profile page.
    - Robins can view and be inspired by photos/moments of CheckIns from different parts of the world.

- We did a gradual ramp-up: **5 Cities → 15 Cities → Full Launch**.
- In every stage of the ramp-up, the FOSS United volunteer team and RHA worked closely to identify critical bugs and refine features to make the experience intuitive for the Robins on the ground.
- We run periodic training with the RHA team on the "why" of the mission. The simple narrative is "CheckIn is insurance for the Robin Hood Army, if we do this diligently we have a much more sustainable shot at serving as a team over the years to come."
- In the process, the RHA team has learned how to manage the system and tweak it to our needs using the Frappe-based "low code" admin dashboards.

ROBIN HOOD ARMY CHECKIN PROJECT

Impact
- 240 Cities are currently using the CheckIn tool – we are confident of ramping this up to 300 by the end of 2023.
- Weekly meals served have grown 68% from 373k meals → 628k meals pre and post CheckIn. While some of this growth is due to multiple efforts, a major part of the delta can be attributed to CheckIn tool usage.
- Sample cities that track 6-month retention report an increase from 20-30% to 60-65%.
- ReapBenefit is adopting elements from the project to build their own volunteer dashboard.

The most memorable impact is obviously not in the data:
"The bonds we create as we serve our communities are priceless."

Next Steps
- Sharing CheckIn on social media is still a laborious process – make it simple so that Robins can inspire their networks to join RHA and/or use the CheckIn tool.
- Review design, flows, and features periodically to understand what can make the CheckIn process more seamless for the Robin community.

Check out the portal here: https://checkin.robinhoodarmy.com
Project repository: https://github.com/fossunited/robinhood

Volunteers who worked on the project: Krutika Thakkannavar, Shridhar Patil, and Nikhil Ponnuru.

**-Written by Neel Ghose,
Founder of the Robin Hood Army.**