



Introduction and Overview

My participation in the LiA initiative was driven by an innate desire to cultivate leadership skills in real-world contexts, to bring about change, and to immerse myself in unfamiliar terrains. The challenge? To collaborate with a community in need, thereby gaining different perspectives while working towards a transformative vision.

As I planned my LiA experience, I was motivated to bridge the gap between local businesses in Barcelona and their target audience, leveraging digital strategies and fostering sustainable collaborations. My overarching goal became clearer as I met my team and organization: to apply my skills and bring forth positive change in the lives of individuals afflicted by deafblindness. For this, I volunteered and worked with two NGOs, APSOCECAT and FESCOE, in the vibrant city of Barcelona. These organizations are pillars of hope and resilience for those with deafblindness, ensuring equal opportunities and an improved quality of life. The setting was a melting pot, with Barcelona's rich history, combined with the modern-day challenges faced by the organizations and their community.

From my very first day, I was immersed into a melting pot of diversity, both within the organization and in my living arrangements. As I found myself surrounded by individuals from different parts of the world, each with a story, each with a mission, I realized the immense opportunity and challenge before me: not just to work towards my initial SMART goals, but to adapt, evolve, and respond to the unique needs and priorities of the organization.

Through this report, I will elucidate on my experiences, challenges, achievements, and the profound lessons that defined each week of my engagement with APSOCECAT and FESCOE.

Project Objective and Goals

The primary objective of this project was to collaborate with the aforementioned local organization in Barcelona to amplify the reach and impact of their support for the deafblindness community. I would leverage my skills in website development, digital marketing, graphic design, outreach, email marketing, and social media management to provide robust and sustainable solutions to a FESCOE and APSOCECAT in Barcelona, fostering community involvement, environmental awareness, and support for charitable causes. In specific, I would also spearhead a "Candy Cane Initiative" - a broad scale social media campaign and physical campaign across Barcelona and other parts of Spain. This would involve all of the steps from setting up the campaign,

creative developments, databases, creating partnerships with local shops, and more to sell Candy Canes to fundraise for all of FESOCE's core organizational objectives and work.

Initial Goals

- Develop a comprehensive website by the end of the LiA program for a specific NGO charity initiative in Barcelona. This website would utilize my web development skills to promote the cause, showcase its impact, drive donations, and engender a feeling of community involvement and empathy.
- Create promotional videos to promote environmental awareness projects
- Design a minimum of 15 posters and flyers using my graphic design prowess to bolster support for the NGO's various charitable (environmental and philanthropic) drives.
- Employ my web development skills to revamp and enhance existing sites offering resources for NGOs

The Curveball

While the goals above were initially set, the true essence of any project lies in its unpredictability and the adaptability it demands. Upon my integration into the organization, I was introduced to a landscape of different priorities and was entrusted with unique projects that did not strictly align with the above goals.

However, while the tangible goals shifted, the underlying skills I sought to hone and the impact I aimed to make remained consistent. For instance, instead of solely focusing on website development, I devised and conceptualized an email marketing campaign, laid the groundwork for a technological platform to track it, and focused on improving branding across digital channels. These initiatives tapped into the same skill set but applied in varied dimensions.

Adapted Goals:

- Lead the conceptualization and groundwork for a robust email marketing campaign by the end of the LiA program, aiming to bolster the NGO's initiatives and foster community engagement.
- Champion the cause of improved branding across digital platforms, tapping into the potential of paid advertising, boosted posts, and organic strategies to increase audience engagement.
- Create a comprehensive step-by-step guide for all aforementioned strategies and other solutions or strategies the organization seeks to leverage, ensuring long-term, sustainable adoption
- Employ my web development skills to revamp and enhance existing sites offering resources for NGOs through ensuring brand consistency, and technical assistance
- Offer support for all day-to-day administrative and organizational related initiatives

Immersion & Cultural Integration

In my weeks with APSOCECAT and FESCOE in Barcelona, I have not only supported an NGO but also submerged myself in an ocean of cultural diversity and immersion. Each day became a lesson on the Spanish way of life, the resilience of the deafblind community, and the harmonious symphony that defines multi-cultural living.

Living in a Hostel and Embracing Diversity

Living in a shared hostel space, with individuals each representing a world of their own, has been a journey marked with understanding and accommodation. Every night, I shared stories and laughter with my fellow residents. While the lifestyle and schedules were vastly different, what stood out was the underlying respect and the mutual drive to learn from each other. Every evening spent in the Spanish streets, enjoying late-night dinners, and adapting to siestas taught me the value of open-mindedness. But the real challenge, and subsequent learning, arose from sharing close quarters with 8-14 diverse individuals. Here, I was taught that respect and patience aren't just key attributes of leadership but are vital life skills.



Understanding the Underserved: APSOCECAT and FESCOE's Role

Navigating through the first week at APSOCECAT and FESCOE, the real depth of the organization's impact began to surface. The deafblind community, a niche yet profound group, required tailored approaches that resonated with their experiences. Through my work, such as auditing the organization's marketing and formulating social media strategies, the balance between macro initiatives and detailed tasks became evident. While the larger objective remained crucial, I had to understand the importance of the micro-level tasks. The key was in understanding the narrative. Overtime, I moved from feeling a sense of detachment from the NGO's primary goal to appreciating the extensive backdrop against which each task mattered, the weeks offered lessons in alignment.

The Barcelona Community & The Essence of Adaptability

While the organization's team went on vacation, leaving me to manage projects with limited support, it became a period of independent navigation and deep reflection. The task of revamping the organization's website, for instance, became an avenue to dive deeper into its vision, operations, and outreach. Crafting Spanish content, designing promotional strategies for partnering businesses, and navigating the challenges of digital campaigns in a foreign language were all lessons in adaptability. More than ever, local context mattered. Each brand, each translation, and each promotional idea was not just a task – it was an opportunity to connect deeper with the community and understand the essence of partnerships.

In this, I understood the nuances of leadership in varied settings, and realized that effective leadership isn't just about outcomes but about shaping perspectives, fostering resilience, and leading with empathy. It was a lesson in how the unexpected avenues, such as the shift in my SMART goals due to organizational changes, became opportunities in disguise, teaching adaptability, and the real essence of leadership.

Project Details and Key Focuses

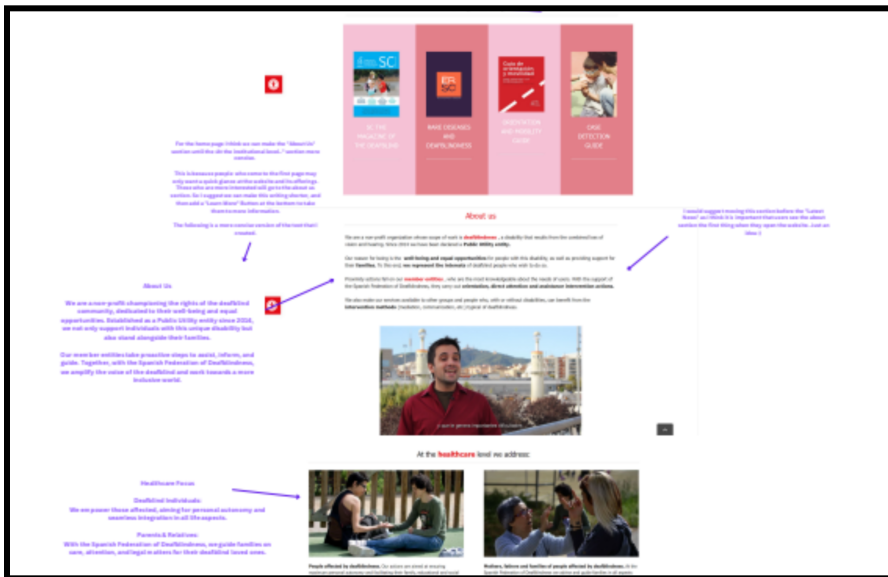
Initial Involvement and Research

- **Brand and Marketing Audit:** Upon my arrival in Barcelona, my immediate task was an in-depth audit of the organization's brand and marketing strategies. A primary focus during this week was streamlining the website for mobile users and devising an effective social media strategy. I realized that, although these tasks may seem minor, they play a vital role in upholding the organization's vision.
- **Fundraising Initiatives:** Concurrently, I was involved in conceptualizing various fundraising initiatives ideas. An array of ideas emerged, the most prominent being the Candy Cane Initiative which would resonate with the color of the canes of the deafblind community and the team agreed I should proceed with

- **Use of Hashtags:** Implement specific hashtags that align with your organization's mission and the deafblindness community. For example, #DeafblindAwareness, #APSOCECATMission, #DeafblindSupport.
 - **Holiday Celebrations:** Show how your organization or people you support celebrate different holidays. For example the vacation that you are going on next week.
 - **Partner Shout-outs:** If you collaborate with other organizations or sponsors, give them a shout-out in your posts to show your appreciation and to possibly engage their followers as well.
- Some other fundraising ideas (maybe for the future) for APSOCECAT**
- **Challenge Campaign:** Start a social media challenge campaign related to deafblindness awareness. Participants must donate to join the challenge and nominate others to do the same. (Can Share videos and photos of people taking part in the challenge)
 - **Art Sale:** Encourage artists in your community to donate a piece of work which you can sell online to raise money for the initiative?
 - **Matching Gift Campaigns:** Collaborate with a corporation willing to match donations over a specific time period. Can create social media posts to support this.
 - **Birthday Fundraisers:** Encourage followers to dedicate their birthdays to a cause by asking their friends to donate to APSOCECAT instead of buying gifts. Can set this up through Facebook?
- Potential Recommendations or Improvement to the website: <https://fesoce.org/>**
- The website works on both computer and mobile phone. However, maybe on the mobile phone there can be less words and long form content as some phone users do not usually like to see/read too much text (just my opinion). Maybe the formatting or layout

Revamping the Website

- **Web Design and User Experience:** My second week centered around redesigning the organization's website. This included tasks such as writing copy, optimizing accessibility, and enhancing the aesthetics. Utilizing tools like Canva, I created UI/UX prototypes while also annotating potential changes on the existing platform.
- **Research and Insights:** Deep-diving into the organization's environment, legal constraints, and surroundings provided valuable context. A significant aim here was to augment monetary donations by refining the website's copy and creating distinct CTAs, leading to a simplified donation process.



Candy Cane Initiative and Content Creation

- **Planning and Calendarization:** By the third week, my focus intensified on the Candy Cane Initiative. I meticulously planned a calendar for September, filled with contextually relevant guidelines crafted in Spanish.
- **Guidelines for Partnering Businesses:** Beyond just preparing guides, I furnished partnering businesses with illustrative examples to simplify the process of supporting our cause, ensuring a user-friendly experience.

Guía para Negocios Locales: Apoyo a la Iniciativa Bastón de Caramelo

Introducción:
Queremos agradecerles inmensamente a todos los negocios que se han unido a esta noble causa. Vuestra colaboración nos ayuda a hacer un cambio significativo en la vida de muchos. Esta guía les ayudará a compartir su apoyo a través de fotografías en Facebook e Instagram.

POR QUÉ:
Vuestra participación no solo es una forma de mostrar vuestro apoyo a una buena causa, sino que también sensibiliza a la comunidad sobre la misión de FESOCE y la simbología del bastón de caramelo. ¡Gracias por ser parte de este cambio!

Cómo Tomar Fotografías:

1. Elijan un lugar representativo de vuestro negocio (ej: mostrador, entrada, junto al producto estrella).
2. Colocar visiblemente el bastón de caramelo o cualquier material promocional de la iniciativa.
3. Pueden incluir a miembros del personal o al dueño del negocio sosteniendo el bastón de caramelo, o junto a un cartel de la iniciativa.



Email Marketing & Outreach

- In the fourth week, I introduced an email marketing strategy, emphasizing its potential to advance the NGO's objectives. Using detailed data mined in the fifth week, I crafted an extensive database tailored for potential partnerships. Over 450 entries, including store names, emails, websites, and Google reviews, were meticulously curated.

- For the Candy Cane Initiative, due in September, personalized emails were the primary mode of communication. I developed drip email marketing campaigns targeting various businesses, ensuring each resonated with their specific ethos.
- However, the outreach was not without its roadblocks. Many businesses preferred direct calls over emails, an avenue where my Spanish proficiency posed a barrier. To address this, I collaborated with my team to draft a Spanish phone pitch, optimizing our outreach strategy.

Digital Strategy and Branding

- My role significantly revolved around augmenting the NGO's digital presence. From suggesting paid advertising strategies to actual execution on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, the focus was to maximize reach and engagement. Parallely, a concerted effort was made to ensure local businesses showcased their support for our cause on their platforms.
- Additionally, the utilization of Canva allowed us to ensure that our brand's visual appeal remained consistent across all communication mediums.

|
Español:

Guía para promocionar publicaciones en Facebook e Instagram usando publicidad pagada

Impulsar publicaciones (Boosting Posts)
¿Qué es?: Una forma rápida y sencilla de mejorar el alcance de tus publicaciones existentes.

Pasos:

1. Navega a tu Página de Facebook o Perfil de Instagram.
2. Ubica la publicación que deseas impulsar.
3. Haz clic en "Impulsar Publicación" (Boost Post) en Facebook o "Promocionar" (Promote) en Instagram justo debajo de tu publicación.
4. Establece tu Audiencia Objetivo:
 - Usa sugerencias predeterminadas o
 - Crea una nueva audiencia basada en ubicación, intereses, edad y género.
5. Establece tu Presupuesto y Duración de la promoción.
6. Elige un Llamado a la Acción (CTA). Para la Iniciativa Bastón de Caramelo, usa "Más Información" (Learn More) o "Compra Ahora" (Shop Now) si hay un enlace directo para comprar.
7. Revisa y confirma haciendo clic nuevamente en "Impulsar" (Boost) o "Promocionar" (Promote).

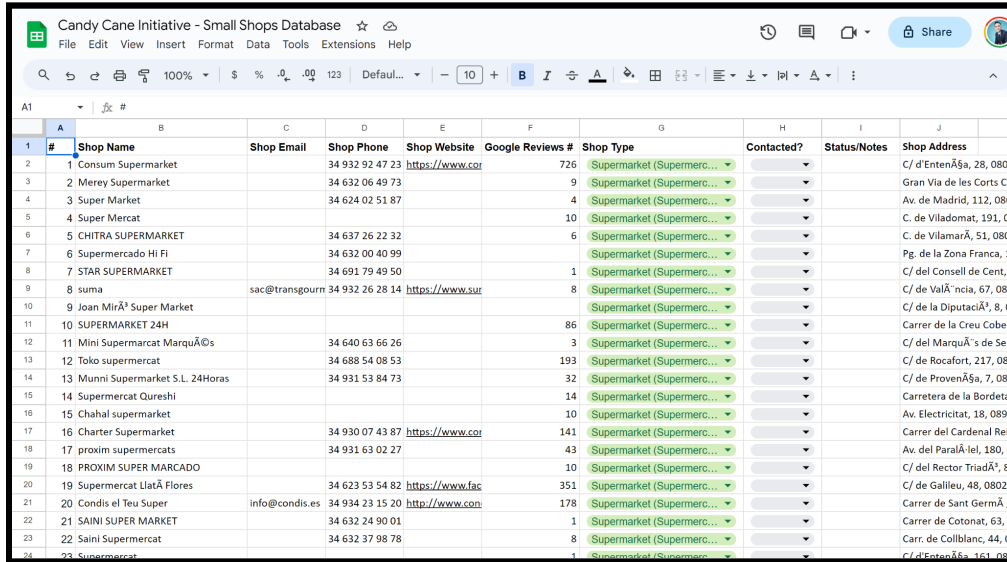
Beneficios:

- Rápido y fácil de configurar.
- Maximiza el compromiso de tus seguidores actuales y puede atraer nuevos.
- Bueno para publicaciones que ya han ganado cierta tracción.

Contras:

Database Creation and Management

- One of the significant tasks I undertook was the creation of a comprehensive database for potential partnerships. This involved scraping information from physical stores, websites, and Google Maps, which served as a bedrock for our outreach strategy.
- While this task was essential, it brought to light the necessity of automation and efficiency. Hours spent manually curating data underscored the need to explore more streamlined approaches in future projects.



#	Shop Name	Shop Email	Shop Phone	Shop Website	Google Reviews #	Shop Type	Contacted?	Status/Notes	Shop Address
1	Consum Supermarket		34 932 92 47 23	https://www.consum.cat	726	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ d'Entença, 28, 08011
2	Merey Supermarket		34 632 06 49 73		9	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 112, 08001
3	Super Market		34 624 02 51 87		4	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Av. de Madrid, 112, 08001
4	Super Mercat				10	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C. de Viladomat, 191, 08001
5	CHITRA SUPERMARKET		34 637 26 22 32		6	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C. de Vilamarçà, 51, 08001
6	Supermercado HI FI		34 632 00 40 99			Supermarket (Supermercado)			Pg. de la Zona Franca, 112, 08001
7	STAR SUPERMARKET		34 691 79 49 50		1	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ del Consell de Cent, 112, 08001
8	suma	sac@transgourni	34 932 26 28 14	https://www.suma.cat	8	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ de València, 67, 08001
9	Joan Mirà Super Market					Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ de la Diputació, 8, 08001
10	SUPERMARKET 24H				86	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carrer de la Creu Cobert, 112, 08001
11	Mini Supermarcat Marquès		34 640 63 66 26		3	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ del Marquès de Seneja, 112, 08001
12	Toko supermarcat		34 688 54 08 53		193	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ de Rocafort, 217, 08001
13	Munni Supermarket S.L. 24Horas		34 931 53 84 73		32	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ de Provença, 7, 08001
14	Supermercat Qureshi				14	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carretera de la Bordeta, 112, 08001
15	Chahal supermarcat				10	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Av. Electricitat, 18, 08001
16	Charter Supermarket		34 930 07 43 87	https://www.charter.cat	141	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carrer del Cardenal Reig, 112, 08001
17	proxim supermarcat		34 931 63 02 27		43	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Av. del Paral·lel, 180, 08001
18	PROXIM SUPER MARCADO				10	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ del Rector Triadà, 88, 08001
19	Supermercat UatÀ Flores		34 623 53 54 82	https://www.uat.cat	351	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ de Galleu, 48, 08028
20	Condis el Teu Super	info@condis.es	34 934 23 15 20	http://www.condis.es	178	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carrer de Sant Germà, 112, 08001
21	SAINI SUPER MARKET		34 632 24 90 01		1	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carrer de Cotonat, 63, 08001
22	Saini Supermercat		34 632 37 98 78		8	Supermarket (Supermercado)			Carr. de Collblanc, 44, 08001
23	Supermercat				1	Supermarket (Supermercado)			C/ d'Entença, 161, 08011

Overview

Achievement	Key Details	What was Done
Comprehensive audit of brand and marketing strategies.	Analyzed current brand positioning, assessed effectiveness of marketing channels, and identified areas of improvement.	Through a structured review of the organization's current marketing efforts, studying the audience response, and analyzing competitors. Recommendations were based on best practices and current trends in the digital space.
Effective planning and content calendar for the Candy Cane Initiative.	Established a clear timeline for collaboration with local businesses, and strategize marketing rollouts for the upcoming September timeline.	Prioritized tasks, allocated resources, and set clear deadlines. Collaborated with the team to gather input and fine-tuned the plan to ensure timely execution.
Prototyping and annotation for website redesign.	Introduced changes to the organizational website based on annotations. The slight redesign (although inherently limited due to the organization's processes) aimed to improve user experience, incorporate the new branding, and provide updated information.	Used website design tools and best practices. Collaborative feedback was sought. Learned how to use wordpress. Key sections were annotated to highlight the importance and rationale behind each change. Majority of changes were made to the actual content and text within the website.

Achievement	Key Details	What was Done
Crafting Spanish content guidelines and fostering a strong online presence.	Developed content tailored to the Spanish market, including emails, social media posts, and promotional materials. This was backed by an optimized strategy and guide book for platforms like Facebook and Instagram.	Leveraged online translation tools for accurate content creation, and adapted content to resonate with local nuances. Used online advertising, targeting specific audience segments based on market research to bolster online presence.
Building comprehensive guides for partnering businesses.	Created detailed, step-by-step guides for each initiative like the email marketing campaign, use of paid advertising, and audience engagement strategies.	Recognized the need for structured guidance when introducing new initiatives. Utilized the feedback from the team to ensure clarity and effectiveness. The guides were designed to foster a culture of self-reliance within the organization and ensure sustainable adoption of strategies. They provided clarity on how to execute each task and the rationale behind the recommended approach.

Navigating Challenges and Growth

Language Barriers and Adaptation: An ongoing challenge was the language barrier, given my limited proficiency in Spanish. Nevertheless, leveraging tools like Google Translate and consulting with fluent Spanish-speaking acquaintances, I crafted Spanish content, hashtags, and other related materials.

Collaboration and Feedback: Throughout the weeks, collaboration with the core team, despite moments of disconnect, was vital. Virtual meetings, messages, and in-person meet-ups kept the synergy alive. Continuous feedback from my superiors played a pivotal role in my approach to the project, allowing me to recalibrate and adapt accordingly.

Lessons in Leadership: Working within this organization, especially amidst unfamiliar terrains and language barriers, offered innumerable leadership lessons. Adaptability, resilience, patience, cultural understanding, and solution-oriented thinking were the cornerstones of my journey.

Pivots and Adjustments: As the project progressed, it was inevitable to pivot on some initially set SMART goals due to evolving organizational priorities. This required a blend of flexibility,

communication, and strategic realignment. While I envisioned being more involved in in-person brainstorming sessions, the realities of remote work and language barriers required adjustments. Embracing these unexpected challenges ultimately enhanced my skills and led to varied accomplishments.

Anticipated Challenges vs. Reality

At the outset of this journey, I had foreseen a set of potential challenges that I thought I would face:

- **Technical expertise:** Crafting an effective online presence might have required skills that I did not possess.
- **Language barrier:** A formidable challenge, considering the essence of my work hinged on effective communication.
- **Limited time frame:** The flexibility of my work and access to technological tools made this less of a challenge than anticipated.
- **Access to necessary equipment and resources:** Did not end up having limited access, as I brought my camera from home and was able to access all platforms on my computer.
- **Time management:** Indeed proved to be a challenge with a variety of tasks and flexible work. I had to navigate both the projects I wanted to initiate and do on my own time, in addition to the work allocated to me.

Ultimately, the reality, while encompassing some of these anticipated challenges, brought to light unexpected complexities in my personal life. The week I was robbed in Barcelona underscored life's unpredictability. This unforeseen setback outside the workplace echoed a pivotal lesson - adaptability is as significant in our personal lives as it is in professional settings.

Adapting to Team Priorities and External Factors: Working in collaboration with an NGO often means aligning personal goals with the broader objectives of the team. While I initiated the project with a certain set of SMART goals, the shifting priorities of the organization meant I had to be agile in my approach. When introducing the team to innovative ideas like the email marketing campaign or setting up a technological platform, I learned the importance of structured communication and presentation. In Week 5, I spent significant hours building an exhaustive database, only to realize that outreach had its unique challenges. Many businesses preferred telephonic communication, an avenue I hadn't foreseen and was unprepared for, given the linguistic barriers. This obstacle required yet another layer of adaptability, leading to the creation of a Spanish phone pitch to streamline the process.

Learning Through Unexpected Setbacks: These challenges, while at times overwhelming, were silver linings in disguise. They were pivotal in emphasizing the importance of resourcefulness. Whether it was using AI translators or Google tutorials for design assistance, each challenge nudged me to think out of the box, affirming that leadership is as much about finding solutions as it is about envisioning the bigger picture.

Impact & Sustainability

Increased Visibility and Engagement: From the onset, one of the critical milestones achieved was amplifying the visibility of the NGO's initiatives. Through a combination of preparing and teaching paid advertising, boosted posts, and strategic organic approaches, audience engagement was set to potentially increase when the organization was ready. Working through collaborations with local businesses in spotlighting the Candy Cane Initiative on their digital platforms further strengthened the project's presence in the digital space.

Building Bridges through Database Creation: An exhaustive database, encompassing over 450 businesses in Barcelona, was meticulously established. This data, which varied from shop details to Google reviews, provides a 360-degree view of potential partners. The information will enable future outreach.

Cross-cultural & Technological Communications: Despite initial challenges with the language barrier, leveraging tools such as Google Translate Facilitated effective communications. This adaptability ensured that potential communication impediments did not hinder project progression. Additionally, the development of Spanish phone pitches, tailored to the local businesses' preference for telephonic conversations, showcased commitment to effective and culturally sensitive communication.

Structured Guides and Resources: Realizing the NGO's desire to embrace many of the strategies suggested but facing the challenge of the know-how, detailed step-by-step guides were formulated. From understanding the basics of email marketing campaigns to the intricacies of the technological platforms, these guides ensure a roadmap for the organization. This not only aids in the seamless adoption of strategies but also fosters a culture of self-reliance, ensuring these initiatives are sustained long-term.

For the continuity and assessment of the initiative's success, the following indicators can serve as markers. Unfortunately, I have not been able to receive these metrics in real-time. Rather this is something for me to inquire about and think about in looking back at the efforts and success into the future.

- **Engagement Metrics:** Tracking the engagement rate, conversion rate, and click-through rate on digital campaigns will offer insights into the effectiveness of the online strategies deployed.
- **Partnership Metrics:** Monitoring the response rate from the extensive business database, alongside the conversion rate of these contacts into tangible partnerships, will gauge the success of the outreach initiatives.
- **Feedback & Adaptation:** Feedback with team members, specifically regarding the utility of the guides and resources created, will help assess their effectiveness and areas of refinement.

Conclusion and Takeaways

In six weeks, my immersion into APSOCECAT and FESCOE provided me with a robust understanding of the challenges, successes, and opportunities for growth in the realm of support for individuals with deafblindness. Located in the heart of Barcelona, I embarked on this journey as a bridge between my expertise in creative technologies and the noble mission of the organization. The experience wasn't just professional but deeply personal, as it honed my leadership skills, cultural adaptability, and the ability to find significance in each task, irrespective of its perceived magnitude.

These six weeks have not just been about contributions to APSOCECAT and FESCOE but have been a transformative journey. It has reshaped my perspective on leadership, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, resilience, and the ability to view every challenge as an opportunity for growth. Whether it was the digital campaigns, the fundraising initiatives, or the cultural immersion, every experience carved a deeper understanding of the confluence of personal growth and professional impact. As I reflect on this journey, I am reminded of the experiences that shape us and the invisible threads of impact that connect us.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Laidlaw Scholars Foundation, whose vision and commitment have made this transformative journey possible for me. A special thank you to Shraddha Prasad for her unwavering support and meticulous coordination. My appreciation extends to the dedicated team at ImpacTrip Barcelona – Clara Polaino Martin and Elian Cespoli, for their invaluable guidance and warm camaraderie throughout.

I reserve a deep and particular sense of gratitude for my personal advisor in the organization FESCOE, Teresa Boullon Zegarra, who has been an unwavering pillar of strength, wisdom, and inspiration.

Lastly, I am immensely thankful to the U of T Laidlaw Scholars Programme for recognizing and fostering potential, and for laying the groundwork for this meaningful expedition. It is through these collective efforts that my experience has been both profound and enriching.