

CASE STUDY

Online Community Service Work Program

The Case of A.J. Trying to Skip Ahead

Background:

A.J., an 18-year-old high school student, enrolled in The People Foundation's online community service program with the goal of completing 40 hours of service to fulfill a school requirement. Like many young participants, A.J. started strong, but our system soon identified irregularities in his engagement.

The Issue:

Our platform tracks user participation closely, including whether participants complete the reflective Q&A sections that accompany each course module. While it's normal for users to occasionally skip or exit a lesson before completing it, our **engagement monitoring system** detected that A.J. had a **consistently low Q&A completion rate**—a red flag that suggested he was not participating meaningfully in the curriculum.

This type of pattern indicates a lack of genuine engagement, and while our platform is designed to be flexible, it also holds participants accountable to ensure their community service is impactful and legitimate.

Our Approach:

As with all such cases, we reached out to A.J. and gave him two options:

- Admit the issue and commit to engaging properly moving forward, or
- Deny the findings and request a full manual review of his account.

A.J. responded honestly and admitted that he had been skipping the reflective questions, thinking they weren't important. He apologized and assured us he would take the work more seriously going forward.

Resolution:

We appreciated his honesty and offered him a **second chance**—a partial reset of his account and hours, allowing him to start over and complete his service properly. From that point on, A.J.:

- Completed every lesson with thoughtful, personal reflection.
- Maintained a balanced pace and consistent engagement.
- Showed a clear improvement in the quality and depth of his responses.

Outcome:

A.J. successfully completed his 40 hours on time. His HourLog was reviewed and certified by our staff. Upon completion, he expressed his appreciation, saying that the structure of the program helped him stay focused and gave him a better understanding of his personal growth.

Why This Matters:

This case highlights the importance of **reflection and personal responsibility** in community service. At The People Foundation, we don't just offer a platform—we offer a process that promotes **accountability, second chances, and meaningful engagement**. A.J.'s story is a great example of how young people can rise to the challenge when given support and a chance to do better.