

CASE STUDY

Online Community Service Work Program

The Case of D.R. Using Bots

Background:

D.R. was a 25-year-old man from Georgia who enrolled in The People Foundation's online community service program to complete **120 hours** as part of a court agreement following multiple misdemeanor charges. From the beginning, D.R. was **polite but disengaged**, submitting short, vague answers and speeding through coursework in record time — often completing sessions meant to take 25 minutes in under 10.

The Red Flags:

Our system flagged D.R. for **rushed submissions, poor engagement scores**, and patterns consistent with **auto-clicking bots** or scripting tools. Additionally, his reflective journaling responses were repetitive, off-topic, or filled with irrelevant filler text like "I agree" or "this is good" — clearly lacking thought or reflection.

Our team reached out with a **friendly warning** that his account was under review for failing engagement standards. D.R. ignored multiple messages and continued his behavior.

The Confrontation:

After a final review by his assigned supervisor and system audit, we froze his account and reached out with a formal message:

"Your account has been suspended due to serious engagement violations, including suspected use of automated tools and falsified time entries. You may respond to this message to either (1) admit fault and request a second chance or (2) deny and request a full manual audit, subject to permanent termination."

D.R. responded within an hour — not to admit fault, but to **threaten legal action, accuse the foundation of discrimination**, and claim he was being unfairly targeted. His messages were aggressive and defensive.

But then, something changed.

Three days later, he emailed again — calmer. He admitted that he had used a browser extension that auto-clicked through content while he was at work, hoping to "just get the hours done." He said he had just been overwhelmed and thought no one would notice.

He wrote:

"I didn't realize anyone would actually care that much. You guys watching everything made me stop and think. Honestly, I needed that. I want to do it right now."

The Redemption:

Moved by his honesty, we gave D.R. a **fresh start** with all his time reset. He agreed to slower-paced

engagement, and this time, his journaling became deeper, more personal. He reflected on growing up in foster care, his battle with alcohol, and the guilt he carried from past decisions.

He completed his 120 hours in full. His final supervisor note read:

“D.R. showed remarkable growth and self-awareness throughout this program. He was one of our most improved participants. He not only met the requirements but took responsibility for his journey.”

The Outcome:

D.R. completed his court requirements and sent a final thank-you email, stating that the program was the **first time someone actually held him accountable and gave him a real chance** to do better.

Why It Matters:

The People Foundation believes in **rehabilitation, not punishment** — but we also believe that accountability is key to real change. D.R.’s case is a powerful example of what can happen when **technology, compassion, and integrity** come together.