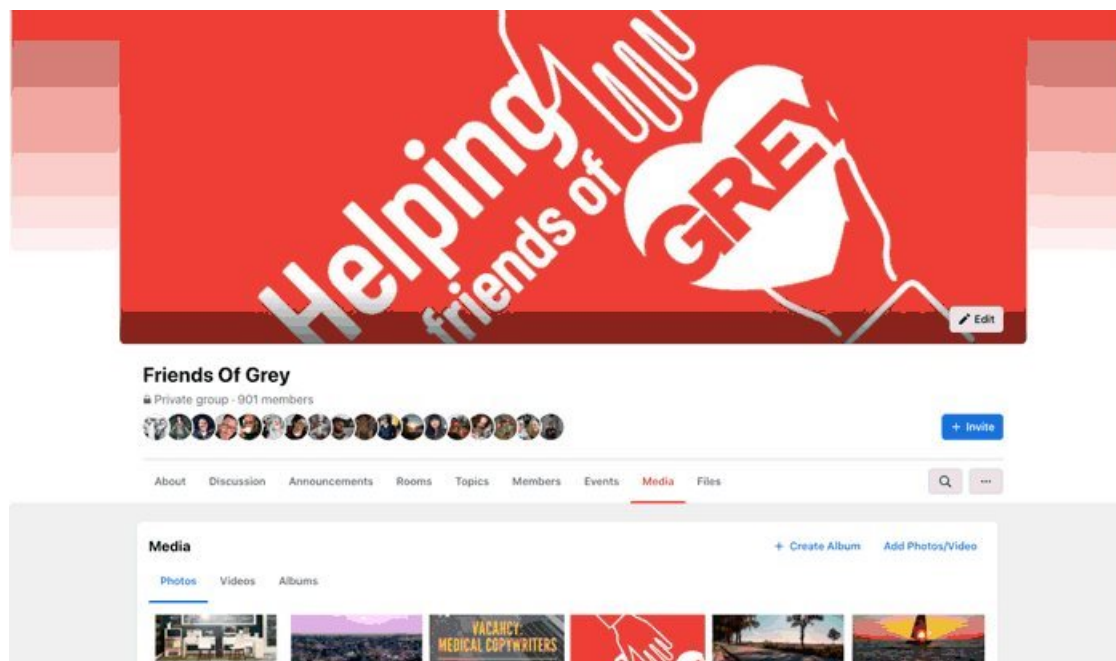


Into the Fog: My year in recruitment

By  Felix Kessel

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About a year ago, in the heart of lockdown, we started feeling the very real secondary impact of the virus. It happened to us like it happened to so many agencies. Clients, affected by revenue loss or threat or fear had no choice: fees must fall - and they did. The knock-on was inevitable and emotional. People lost their jobs.



But the work that needed to be done still needed doing but the formal fees couldn't pay for it in the traditional channel of agency land. So there was work, and there were workers, and there was the germ of an idea.

Friends of Grey (Fog) was born. It was a simple thought – start a social media group (on Facebook), by invite only, to connect people to work and work to people – here's how we put it in our own description:

“ Friends of Grey is an initiative to use our agency network to help connect people who have lost work, jobs, or business due to Covid-19, to our network of employees and their networks to, hopefully, make a match! ”

It's been a year almost to the day since we asked our people at Grey to sign up and then start spreading the word, and in an industry that only has a few thousand people in it anyway, we've just crossed 900 members. 900 folk willing to sign up and spread the word.

Community

It's all based on a simple community principle – people who need help are also people who will help and people who see people helping tend to jump in and help also.

900 people isn't a lot. But it's 900 people who know a few more people. I've been watching the friends as they join and one of the bits of info is their friend count. There is almost no one with fewer than 200 friends. Most people sit at 400 – 600. Imagine, 900 friends with 350 other friends who might know someone who may be eligible for that job or could do the work? That's 315,000 people. Even if you halve it for cross-over friends, that's still over 150,000 people that we could reach. I must say I never thought we'd have that potential reach, that far or that wide.

That is the secret to recruitment and it's what I've been doing as a creative leader, business leader and now accidental recruiter, all along. Knowing that the brand in the middle functions only to connect the right people to the right people and let them share experiences and part of their journey, together (hopefully changing things for the better).

So, what have I learned in a year in recruitment? People buy people. The more you have, the better your chances of success. The more people you have access to, in the right fields, the more chance you have at a successful match. Quality control is up to the employer, we connect, you decide.

Promotion

People are uncomfortable promoting themselves. The next phase of Fog is certainly to help people talk themselves up! It's amazing how self-deprecating people are, even in desperate times.

There are not enough people innovating in the communications space. I'm seeing too many people struggling to find their traditional roles and not thinking about what their roles may mean in another space or industry.

People are afraid to question. They don't ask enough of their employers, their colleagues and their own networks. In the age of social media, it's odd that reaching out for help is still the very last resort. Is it pride? I don't know for sure, but I hope people can get past that.

Also, there is positivity in abundance. People are immensely supportive of each other. Nearly a thousand people are willing to participate in this thing and spread the word for everyone who has or needs work. That's amazing. And that is why we do it. To help. To know that we are doing something positive.

As Friends of Grey enters its second year we will take our own advice and innovate – help people promote themselves a little better and maybe, just maybe, we 'll connect a few more people and take the hard edge off this troubling and trying time.

Suggestions for how to improve Fog, are always welcome! Reach out.

ABOUT FELIX KESSEL

Born a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, where writing was the only way to survive the suburban ennui of his homeworld, Felix wrote his way into a strange land called advertising. Currently, he is the creative lead at WPP's agency for Distell, TeamLiquid.

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