

Saku City, Nagano



Creating a ‘Remote City Hall’ Using Slack

Background and Reason for the Project

As part of its efforts to curb the population decline, Saku City has taken advantage of the recent increase in interest in rural migration and established the ‘Saku City Promotional Policy’ in FY2018 and has been working on the project since the following year, FY2019. The city aims to share the city's charm and strengths, including its high ease of living, to increase the number of residents and people who move to the city.

Their ‘Remote City Hall’ is a project that has been in operation since FY2020 and was based on this Saku City Promotional Policy. Since it was proving difficult for those who wished to potentially move to Saku City to visit due to COVID-19, the project was originally started as an online group where people could easily exchange real information about Saku City and relocation matters without traveling there.

Project Aims

The Saku City Promotion is one of the initiatives in the city's comprehensive strategy. The main objective was the ‘creation of people’ to help curb the population decline and create Saku City itself, by appropriately communicating the city's charm and strengths, including its high ease of living. It aims for an increase in the population, those that have ties to the city, and both temporary and long-term residents. This in turn lead to the ‘creation of jobs’ that enables their residents to continue working with peace of mind through industrial development and the ‘creation of our town’ by enhancing

residents’ health, medical care, and welfare services.

The city attracts interest particularly from residents in the Tokyo area, by sharing information on its charm and strengths, such as its location being within commuting distance to Tokyo via the bullet train and other advantages of the city's high-speed transportation network. The city also aims to discourage residents from moving away and encourage those who left for higher education or employment to return. By encouraging people to visit or live in Saku City, and current residents to want to continue living there, the city can increase the population, those that have ties to the city, both temporary and long-term residents and promote regional development.

Project Outline

‘Remote City Hall’ is a new relocation platform that uses a business chat tool called ‘Slack’ to allow current residents and prospective new residents to communicate with each other about life in Saku City and relocation matters. The Remote City Hall allows users to exchange real information that they would like to know about life in Saku City, including both positive and negative aspects of living in the city.

The Remote City Hall is also designed to serve as a platform to share ideas as well as a place for users to interact with one another. Discussions are held on issues related to Saku City and relocation, to address and solve issues that may appear. In July 2021, the company announced ‘Shijuly’, a support

and subsidy service for trial residency that was formed from topics posted on the Remote City Hall. In August 2021, the Remote City Hall section managers and employees for FY2021 were decided via a call for applications among Remote City Hall users. In addition, the city has also put in place an online event called 'Shokuin Kaigi!' (staff meeting) and radio content 'FM Remote City Hall' to further encourage communication.

Features and Innovations

This is Japan's first government-led online group utilizing Slack. It features an exchange of real information, with both the positive and negative aspects of city life. It helps promote information on Saku City and relocations, as well as a casual means of exchanging of information with residents.

Results of the Project

The Remote City Hall has grown into a platform with approximately 2,400 users today and it has fostered active communication with approximately 20,450 posts. As a result of the Remote City Hall, 89.3% of Remote City Hall users said they thought Saku City was a progressive city, 69.8% said they were interested in urban development in their own city, and one in two said they wanted to move to Saku City. In addition, some people moved to Saku City due to their participation in the Remote City Hall, which was a step towards solving the original goal of increasing the number of residents.

In recognition of this new business initiative, Remote City Hall was awarded Gold in two categories at the PR Awards Asia, the Golden World Awards, Gold and the Future Creation Award at the City Promotion Awards, Bronze at the PR Awards Grand Prix, the Incentive Award of the Japan Marketing Awards, ACC Silver in the ACC Tokyo Creativity Awards Branded Communications Category (C Category: PR), and Grand Prize in the Municipal DX Awards.

Furthermore, the idea of remote city halls has

spread to other municipalities, too.

Issues, Problems and Responses

The biggest issue is continuing to create an environment where users can easily contribute. A Remote City Hall operation meeting is held at the beginning of each month to review the previous month's results, consider the contents of the current month's postings, and discuss plans, to keep the project going strong.

In addition, since those who post and answer questions are often the same group of core users, it is necessary to get more people to want to be actively involved in the Remote City Hall. The city plans to increase the number of participants through PR and maximizing media exposure through SNS to get more people interested in Saku City and the Remote City Hall.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

Several users have expressed a desire to deepen exchanges with other users in the user survey, and the city hopes to hold an offline event as well.

Reference URL

Remote City Hall HP:

<https://www.city.saku.nagano.jp/outside/citypromotion/salon>

Slack:

https://join.slack.com/t/saku-remote-cityhall/shared_invite/zt-2axupqmqc-W6p7CniUL3zNf~BelPXuSA

Shijuly:

<https://www.city.saku.nagano.jp/outside/citypromotion/shijuly/>

FM Remote City Hall:

<https://anchor.fm/fm-remote-cityoffice>

Contact:

Division in Charge: Saku City, Planning Department, Public Information Division

Tel.: +81-267-62-3075

E-mail: kohokoty@city.saku.nagano.jp