

Volunteer Tips and Strategies

Topic 2: Finding Volunteers: Marketing and Recruiting



Finding Volunteers

Before you can begin recruiting volunteers for your project, you must first understand who volunteers and why. In a report released in 2010, the Corporation for National and Community Service reported that across the country, 63.4 million Americans volunteered to help their communities in 2009, an additional 1.6 million volunteers when compared to 2008, contributing 8.1 billion hours of service, which has an estimated dollar value of nearly \$169 billion.

Many factors motivate people to volunteer. Some reasons include:

- They were personally asked.
- An organization with which they are affiliated is participating.
- They have a personal connection to the mission of the project or organization.
- They enjoy the type of work being performed.
- They want to learn new skills.
- They want to meet people.

Understanding why people volunteer and their motivational needs will help you target your recruitment strategies to engage the volunteers you need to achieve your project goals. While some volunteers may only relate to their own personal reasons for volunteering, you must articulate the relationship between the work of the project and the benefit to either the community or the volunteer.

Convey this and other motivating messages in your recruitment efforts.

Define Types of Volunteers Needed

Consider the type(s) of volunteers you need for your project or program.

Some options to consider include:

- Long-term service provides volunteers the opportunity to commit to a project or program that spans an extended period of time.
- Short-term episodic volunteer opportunities include those that are of short duration and those that occur at regular intervals, such as annual events.
- Family volunteering provides volunteers the opportunity to participate in meaningful service while spending time with their families.
- Through volunteering with schools and youth groups, young people gain valuable knowledge and skills. Through internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships, students gain valuable experience while serving the community service organization.
- Virtual volunteering allows anyone to contribute time and expertise without ever leaving his or her home.

Who and Where

The next step is to create a recruitment strategy to determine whom you will ask to volunteer and how you will ask them.

Think beyond your traditional volunteer base. First, examine the volunteer positions to be filled. Then, ask yourself these questions:

- Who will be qualified for and interested in this position?
- Who will be able to meet the time commitments?
- Where will you find these people?
- What motivates them to serve?
- What is the best way to approach them?

Now that you have decided on **who**, you need to start thinking about **how** to target them. Remember that different messages will appeal to different audiences, so you will want to use a variety of recruitment methods.

You can use targeted recruitment that is focused and addressed to a specific audience where people will have the skills, interests, and availability needed to fill your positions. Broad-based recruitment can be effective for positions requiring minimal training or for when you need a lot of people for a short-term event.

Additionally, technology has become a valuable resource in making volunteer matches with nonprofits, increasing access especially for small groups unable to conduct significant outreach on their own. A number of organizations provide online tools for this purpose.



Tools and Resources

The Volunteer Recruitment Book

By Susan J. Ellis

Energize, Inc. 156 pages

Susan Ellis has literally crammed this book with every suggestion and recommendation on the subject of recruitment developed over her 20-plus years in the volunteer management field. She first shows how to design the best assignments for volunteers as the initial step to finding the most qualified people. What follows is a wealth of information on topics ranging from how your organization's image affects your success in recruitment to where to look for new volunteers, including your own backyard.

Volunteers: How to Get Them, How to Keep Them

By Helen Little

Panacea Press, 128 pages

A practical, down-to-earth guide that offers real advice on solving your volunteer shortage. Outlines 12 fundamental needs of volunteers and clearly spells out how to meet those needs. Rich with examples and useful tools. Find out how to: Compete for volunteers Recruit the best person for the job Ensure projects are completed on time Equip new volunteers to hit the ground running Manage volunteers (versus managing employees) Fire a volunteer Keep your best volunteers coming back and more!

Useful Websites:

Kansas Volunteer Commission

www.KanServe.org

Hands On Network

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nonprofitgov/toptools>

National Service Resource Center

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>

Volunteer Match

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/resources/>

Volunteering in America

<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/>

"The inexperienced recruiter prints 5,000 brochures and then muses: 'where can I distribute these?' The experienced--and more effective-- recruiter first asks: 'where might I find the right volunteers for each job,' and then selects the best technique to match each potential source."

--Susan Ellis

The Volunteer Recruitment Book

Best Practices/Notes: