

How to Recruit & Manage Volunteers

Enthusiastic volunteers can open doors, bring creative solutions to the sticky problems, and help your organization extend its impact and growth. Master the basics of creating and effectively managing volunteers at all levels, including predicting common challenges and having a variety of solutions.

Recruiting

Create recruitment materials. Think about the types of people you want as volunteers and tailor your materials to them. Make sure to include how much time you need your volunteers to commit to, the level of difficulty, and what are the benefits to volunteering.

Leverage the web for recruitment purposes. Find local community calendars and tap into existing online platforms, such as idealist.org, volunteermatch.org, allforgood.org.

Conduct targeted outreach. If your project requires a specific skill - target your outreach and materials to those people. Consider visiting other group's meetings to talk about the volunteer opportunity.

People respond better when the invitation to volunteer is more personal. For example, you may get better responses by sending individual emails versus one blast email. Determine which method is best—perhaps even a combination of the two.

When you just need many hands for a short period, try the “warm body” recruitment approach. This approach is all about

spreading your call for volunteers as far and as wide as possible.

Recruit from your existing networks. Invite your supporters, your partners, and any friends to volunteer. Most people begin volunteering because someone they know encouraged them to volunteer. At worst, you have an extra pair of hands. At best, it will deepen their commitment to help your cause.

Managing

Create a volunteer management plan. Who is going to be in charge? Are you going to have sub-committees and team captains? If you have many volunteers, it's especially important to have a solid management system, so everyone knows their role and purpose at all times.

Hold an orientation for your new volunteers. This is not only a good time to establish expectations and ground rules, but also a time to make your volunteers feel welcome and part of the team. Invite a beneficiary to speak so the volunteers understand the impact of their time.

Treat volunteers well. Volunteers that feel that the group is cliquey or unwelcoming will be less likely to volunteer again.

Make it fun. Organize social time before, during, and after the event. This can be a break for chips or a team-building activity. One group played hide-and-go-

seek in between picking up litter at a local park.

Keep track of volunteers. Have a sign-in sheet and ask for contact information. Consider asking volunteers to wear a certain color shirt or give them stickers and name-tags.

Brief volunteers on your purpose and communication guidelines. In addition to expectations and rules, it's important that your volunteers know what your organization is about and how to talk about it. Put it in writing, so they always have it as a reference.

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