

Recruitment Strategies

[This section is largely based on the work of Sarah Jane Rehnborg and Betsy Clubine as found in "Volunteer Recruitment: Tips from the Field"]

In developing a recruitment plan, you need to consider the three types of recruitment strategies. These are: targeted, broad-based and concentric circles.

Targeted

Reaching volunteers through a targeted recruitment approach requires careful planning. The targeted approach is reaching out to a small pool of candidates. This small target pool of candidates has specific skills and desirable characteristics that meet an organizational need. They also have the interest and availability to fill the position. There are several questions that need to be answered before reaching this distinctive audience.

The first step is to look at the job positions you have created and assess what you are looking for:

- What do you need?
- What skills and characteristics can meet this need?

Next, you will be able to identify:

- Who has these skills and characteristics?
- Where do we find them?

Lastly, you need to consider:

- How do we communicate with them?
- How do we motivate them?

Broad-based

Positions that require minimal training create a greater pool of potential volunteers and you can therefore reach out to a wider audience. This is especially true when the volunteer position requires a short-term commitment, such as for an event.

"The goal is to keep your organization's volunteer needs in the public eye"

In order to reach your audience through a broad-based recruitment approach, you must disseminate information very broadly. For instance, you may distribute brochures in strategic locations, put up posters, speak to groups, channel notices through appropriate media, and last but certainly not least, enhance your recruitment efforts through word of mouth.

"The best way to recruit volunteers is to ask people to help"

Concentric circles

Rick Lynch and Steve McCurley, authors of “Essential Volunteer Management”, offer a third recruitment strategy: concentric circles. This strategy remind us that current volunteers, community stakeholders, staff and administrators are an asset to your organization in the volunteer recruitment process! Do not underestimate this resource; the individuals in the immediate network of your organization have contacts and social ties that might be interested in accepting a volunteer position. If you identify this resource, you can reach out to this population that is already in direct or indirect contact with your organization.

Consider:

- Your clients, their families and relatives
- Alumni of your program(s) Ex. Interns, etc.
- Friends of your current volunteers and staff
- Former volunteers
- Advisors
- Partner groups/organizations
- People in the organization’s neighborhood
- People who have been affected by the problem you are trying to solve

ABCD Technique

[This section is largely based on the work of Idealist on Campus- Action Without Borders as found in "Recruiting Volunteers: A Total Approach"]

A = Approach

How many people do you need to recruit?

Knowing these numbers helps to create a structure that utilizes your immediate resources/colleagues.

What is the caliber of people you need to recruit?

You should know what level of training and/or experience your volunteers need to truly be helpful in your work, and you need to know where/how to find and communicate with them.

B = Belonging

What motivates people to volunteer? Some of the reasons include:

- Skill Development: people seek the opportunity to learn and practice new skills
- Work Experience/Professional Development: to gain work experience and develop professionally
- Personal Experience: based on a past positive experience volunteering and/or activism to change identified problem
- Social Contact/Social Interests: to build friendships and relationships with those with shared commonalities
- Contribute to community: desire to give back and contribute to the community

These are just some of the ways that your organization can appeal to volunteers. When you are reaching out to prospective volunteers, remember that volunteering is a reciprocal and oftentimes positive experience. By contributing their time and skills to an organization, volunteers in turn receive work experience and professional development; enhance their skills, grow in personal areas, and are able to create lasting connections with the community.

C = Cast a Wide Net

Casting a wide net is equal to the broad-based strategy for the recruitment of volunteers. Where your organization can make use of: ads, flyers, door-to-door invitations, online recruitment including list serves and mass emailing, bulk mailings and public service announcements through radio and/or television advertising.

D = Direct Asks

Direct asks in the recruitment of volunteers is also known as the targeted strategy. The most effective direct asks include: in-person invitations (ex. in meetings, cold calls, etc.) and mailing personal letters.

The Ask

[This section is largely based on the work of Susan J. Ellis as found in "The Volunteer Recruitment Book"]

Doing "the ask" can sometimes be the most challenging step in the volunteer recruitment process. However, there are several facts and tips to remember that can simplify this process.

To begin with, you need to remember that doing "the ask" is extending an invitation and not pleading for volunteers. Susan J. Ellis reminds us that "you never insult someone by asking them to volunteer. Rather, you are usually flattering them by implying they have the talent for the job." Remember that volunteering is a reciprocal, positive experience, and that volunteers receive experience and skill development, and well as personal growth opportunities and social networking by investing their time and skills to your organization.

So with this in mind, you need to gather all the enthusiasm you can get as you prepare to do "the ask".

You can follow these six simple steps:

1. *Get excited*

You need to be welcoming and enthusiastic in order to effectively transmit the importance of this opportunity to both the agency and the volunteer to the interested candidate.

2. *Describe your organization and cause*

While you do need to be enthusiastic, you also need to be clear and honest as you describe your organization and/or cause and the nature of the work for the position you are recruiting. Make sure the interested candidate learns exactly who you are and why you are approaching him or her.

3. *Answer questions*

Another very important step is to be able to answer any questions that arise about the organization and the nature of the work. Make sure that they understand and believe in the mission of the organization. Remember that you need to be specific about needs and expectations. Mostly importantly, you need to be clear about what you looking for from volunteers, in terms of experience, knowledge, commitment, time, etc. It is good to have volunteer job descriptions during "the ask" to share with the interested candidate.

4. *Explain why she or he matters*

For any successful recruitment endeavor, you need to be able to articulate what the benefits are for the interested party. You can especially stress the motivations and reasons for joining, what they will get out of the experience and why it is so crucial for the organization that the position for which they qualify for be filled.

5. *Negotiate and provide contact information*

Expect many initial objections in response to “the ask”. It is always difficult to hear a “No”, but remember that it is not a failure. It is reasonable to negotiate if:

- Candidate seems hesitant- you can suggest that they try it and “test the waters” and offer a one-time assignment
- Candidate wants to make many changes to the job description- offer another position that is a better match
- Candidate says he or she is “too busy”- ask if they would be interested in the position if they had the time, then schedule a follow-up for a time when they are more available

Make sure that you provide the person with your contact information and clearly explain how and when they can reach you. It is a good idea to hand them a business card and/or a flyer.

6. Thank and ask them to pass on the word

Make sure you cordially thank the person for their time, and always keep in mind that they might volunteer with your organization in the future. Additionally, you can ask the person to pass on the word to friends and relatives about the volunteer position and needs with your organization.

Volunteer Recruitment Websites

Recruiting volunteers via the World Wide Web is a great idea, especially since it comes at no extra cost to your organization. However, it is good to keep in mind that online recruitment should not replace offline recruitment. Online recruitment should supplement offline strategies and efforts, which require much planning.

Once offline strategizing and implementation is complete, you will be prepared to make use of the many sophisticated websites that can be of aid in online recruitment:

Hand On Central Texas

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

“Hands On Central Texas, a program of United Way Capital Area strengthens communities through meaningful volunteer action. We provide over 400 volunteer opportunities & projects, Days of Service and Volunteer Leadership opportunities. We envision a world where all individuals discover their power to make a difference and are equipped as active, engaged citizens.”

VolunteerMatch

Where volunteering begins.

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

“VolunteerMatch strengthens communities by making it easier for good people and good causes to connect. The organization offers a variety of online services to support a community of nonprofit, volunteer and business leaders committed to civic engagement. Our popular service welcomes millions of visitors a year and has become the preferred internet recruiting tool for more than 75,000 nonprofit organizations.”

Servenet

Youth Service America

<http://servenet.org/>

“Launched in 1996, servenet.org is a website that mobilizes and empowers the volunteer service community to tackle some of the toughest challenges facing local communities. Since its inception, servenet.org has enabled millions of youth volunteers to connect with local nonprofits to make a difference in communities throughout America. In 2000, as a part of Global Youth Service Day, Servenet.org expanded into a global resource for the 3.5 million young people, in 155 countries around the world that participate in Global and National Youth Service Day. “

Idealist.org

Imagine. Create. Act.

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

“Idealist is a project of Action Without Borders, a nonprofit organization founded in 1995 with offices in the United States and Argentina. Idealist is an interactive site where people and organizations can exchange resources and ideas, locate opportunities and supporters, and take steps toward building a world where all people can lead free and dignified lives.”

Network For Good

<http://www1.networkforgood.org/>

“Imagine what the world would be like if every time you were inspired to help someone or something, you could -- with just a few clicks of a mouse, anywhere online. That’s the mission of Network for Good. We make it as easy to donate and volunteer online as it is to shop online, and we make it simple and affordable for all nonprofits, of any size, to recruit donors and volunteers via the Internet.”

Volunteers of America

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

“At Volunteers of America, we are more than a nonprofit organization. We are a ministry of service that includes nearly 16,000 paid, professional employees dedicated to helping those in need rebuild their lives and reach their full potential. Through our thousands of human service programs, including housing and healthcare, Volunteers of America helps more than 2 million people in over 400 communities in 44 states. Since 1896, we have supported and empowered America's most vulnerable groups, including at-risk youth, the frail elderly, men and women returning from prison, homeless individuals and families, people with disabilities, and those recovering from addictions. Our work touches the mind, body, heart — and ultimately the spirit — of those we serve, integrating our deep compassion with highly effective programs and services.”

Volunteer Solutions

Connecting people to caring.

<http://volunteer.truist.com/>

“Volunteer Solutions is a Volunteer Matching Application that helps Volunteer Centers connect individuals to volunteer opportunities in their community. Volunteer Solutions helps volunteers, nonprofit agencies, corporations, event organizers, and Volunteer Centers get connected. Read on to learn how Volunteer Solutions helps each one of these groups and how to get yourself or your organization involved with Volunteer Solutions today.”

1-800-Volunteer.org

<http://www.1-800-volunteer.org/1800Vol/OpenIndexAction.do>

“Is a powerful service that enables you to expand your organization’s recruiting efforts and easily manage your volunteers. The 1-800-Volunteer.org website helps organizations recruit and engage volunteers, communicate with the public, and meet the complex needs of stakeholders.”

GuideStar

<http://www2.guidestar.org/>

“GuideStar gathers and publicizes information about nonprofit organizations. Primarily a service for philanthropies looking to donate money, Guidestar also lists volunteer opportunities through a well-maintained database of hundreds of thousands nonprofit organizations — combining data from several sources for accuracy and credibility. Keeping your information updated moves you to the top of the list, and a link to your website allows people to learn more about your program.”

All For Good

All for good helps you find and share ways to do good.

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

“Inspired by the call of President Obama to engage more Americans in service, a group of individuals from the technology, marketing and public sectors came together to build an open source application that allows you to find and share volunteer activities. All for Good lets you browse activities and find events based on your location or interests. The site is governed by Our Good Works a nonprofit organization that was formed by some of the people who initiated the project and who support the product's growth. Even better - sign in with your primary social network to connect with friends, and discover and share interesting activities. Doing good is more fun together!”

Service Nation

A campaign to inspire a new era of voluntary citizen service in America.

<http://www.servicenation.org>

“ServiceNation is a national campaign to increase service opportunities and elevate service as a core ideal and problem-solving strategy in American society.... ServiceNation is the first campaign of Be the Change, Inc., a Cambridge, MA-based non-profit dedicated to strengthening American democracy by uniting citizens, social entrepreneurs, the service world and leaders from every sector of American society. Be the Change taps the wisdom, experience, and networks of these practitioners and thought leaders to craft post-partisan policy solutions to our greatest challenges and build powerful coalitions to advocate for them.”

Points of Light Institute

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

“Points of Lights Institute inspires, equips, and mobilizes people to take action that changes the world... Through three innovative and dynamic business units, Points of Light Institute helps put people at the center of transforming their communities.”

Social Media and Networking

Today, the world is connected and social media has become a hub that encourages and facilitates human interaction. Nonprofits have taken notice, and social media is becoming the standard for nonprofit fundraising and volunteer recruitment. Here are some of the renowned platforms for social media and online networking:

Craigslist

<http://austin.craigslist.org/>

Craigslist is a “local classifieds and forums - community moderated, and largely free.” Craig Newmark of Craigslist is participating, along with Huffington Post and many nonprofit organizations nationwide, with a project to share volunteer opportunities. This project is called All For Good, and Craigslist Foundation staff members have been heavily involved in creating the website. In addition, Craigslist is also feeding in the volunteer opportunities listed on to All For Good’s website.

You can both find volunteer opportunities and recruit volunteers through the use of the online classifieds and forums site Craigslist. To do this, on the Craigslist website select your State and City. Under the “Community” heading, you will find the link to “Volunteers” and recent postings. To create a posting, click on the right top corner “Post”. Choose the desired category (ex. Volunteers) and complete the fields. Make sure to check “OK to distribute this charitable volunteerism opportunity for inclusion in 3rd party web sites that have been approved by craigslist.” Submit.

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/>

Facebook can founded in February of 2004 with the mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.

It is highly recommended that your organization, if it does not already have one, create a Facebook fan page to connect with other organizations and supporters. You can post video content, images, podcasts, interviews, or documents on your "wall". As well as post brief messages, and reach out to your supporters through emailing and status reports that alert the user's entire network. You can also create, manage and invite your supporters to events on Facebook. Other options include "pokes" and "likes" which can serve as little reminders and free advertisement. Facebook also provide the opportunity for your nonprofit organization to raise funds through the application “Causes”.

Sarah Barbee of Fuss Budget Promotions said that “Facebook is particularly good for reaching the age demographic 18 to 34... Reaching out to them using Facebook meets this group in a comfortable space and allows interaction that enables organizations to connect with them.”

Twitter

<http://twitter.com/>

Twitter is a very fast and concise way to recruit volunteers. By making use of Twitter, your organization can post messages of up to 140 characters to which supporters who subscribe to your feed will be automatically notified. In one simple message, or a "tweet", you will make sure that your supporters and "fans" are aware about volunteer opportunities and needs. These messages can also be "re-tweeted". Through the use of Twitter, your organization would be opening up a whole extended network of friends of friends of friends, and so on that will be received your messages.

YouTube

<http://www.youtube.com/>

"YouTube is the world's most popular online video community, allowing millions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small."

Your organization can make use of YouTube by publishing a Public Service Announcement to recruit volunteers on the YouTube website. You can also embed the PSA on the website of your organization and/or other Social Networking sites that your organization utilizes (ex. Facebook).

In order to do this, you will have to create a free account and upload a video file. You will also be able to edit the video and set privacy settings before you upload the video.

Online Resources

Corporation for National and Community Service
Resource Center
Tools and training for volunteer and service programs
<http://nationalserviceresources.org/>
1-800-860-2684 (Toll Free)

RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service
“Volunteer Recruitment: Tips from the Field”
Sarah Jane Rehnborg and Betsy Clubine
<http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/rgk/serviceleader/leaders/tips.php#3-3a>

Other Resources

(2008). *Using Facebook for Your Nonprofit*. Techsoup: The Technology Place for Nonprofits. Retrieved from <http://www.techsoup.org/community/facebook/index.cfm>.

Burke, M. A. & Liljenstolpe, C. (1992). *Recruiting Volunteers: A Guide for Non-Profits*. Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publications Inc.

Ellis, S. J. (2010). *From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Successful Volunteer Involvement*, 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: ENERGIZE, Inc.

Ellis, S. J. (1994). *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*. Philadelphia, PA: ENERGIZE, Inc.

Idealist on Campus (n.d.). *Recruiting Volunteers: A Total Approach*. Action Without Borders. C.O.O.L. Idealist Civic Engagement Curriculum.

King Humphrey, E. (2010, March). Social Media Proves Helpful to Recruit Volunteers. *Greater Wilmington Business Journal*, SAJ Media LLC. Retrieved from http://www.wilmingtonbiz.com/industry_news_details.php?id=1243.

Lynch, R. & McCurley, S. (1989). *Essential Volunteer Management*. Heritage Arts Press.