

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT GUIDELINES.

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INTRODUCTION TO RECRUITMENT

The success of volunteer recruitment depends upon several things:

1. Having assignments that are worth recruiting for...and this includes clearly-articulated volunteer job descriptions so that a potential recruit can self-assess his or her desire to do the job.
2. The visibility and goodwill of the OIC project. Recognize that publicity is not the same thing as recruitment. First the public has to know you exist and what you do. Only then are they ready to listen to your request for their help. SAo as you consider this material on recruitment of volunteers, think about whether your OIC has an effective general p.r. strategy.
3. The commitment of the recruiter, personally, to the value of the volunteer assignments he or she is trying to fill. Enthusiasm wins out over technique every time.

Your goal as a recruiter is not to elicit hundreds of public inquiries. Rather, you are looking for a certain number of qualified people to fill specific volunteer assignments. Therefore your task is to conduct a number of targeted "mini-campaigns" rather than to blanket your community with recruitment messages. The inexperienced recruiter prints 5,000 brochures and then asks "where should I place these?" The experienced--and more effective--recruiter asks "where might I find the right volunteers?" and then selects the best technique to match the potential source. So keep yourself focused on the best places to look for available volunteers, rather than on "how" to get your message across.

In the last analysis, the only way to get volunteers is to ASK PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER! Until you are really asking people to help, rather than simply informing them about your work, you cannot evaluate the results of your recruitment efforts. Also, while one-to-one recruitment of new volunteers by current volunteers is an excellent way to identify new people, you cannot rely on such word-of-mouth alone to bring in new volunteers with diverse skills, of both sexes, or of different ethnic groups. You have to purposely seek out such candidates and tell them that you want their involvement in OIC.

KEY STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT

As in so many other things, good planning makes all the difference in recruitment. Of the following six key steps,

note that the first five are done at your desk in preparation for asking people to volunteer.

1. Develop WRITTEN VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS and know: what qualifications are needed for each position; how many openings there are; what schedule the work requires; and the ideal "profile" for prospective candidates in terms of personality, background, etc.
2. Know WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER...and why some do not, and how these reasons relate to the job descriptions you want to fill.
3. For each volunteer job description, brainstorm the POTENTIAL SOURCES of volunteers in your community.
4. EDIT and PRIORITIZE this brainstormed list.
5. Select a TECHNIQUE of recruitment that best matches each source you have prioritized.
6. DO IT! Use the selected technique and actively ask people to volunteer.

One recommendation is to form a "Recruitment Task Force" to help you brainstorm and strategize. Ask current volunteers, paid staff members, even community people such as the director of volunteers at a nearby agency. This group can work with you as a think tank to verify the reasonableness of your volunteer job descriptions, identify the most likely sources of volunteers, and help you formulate your materials and/or presentation.

Let's examine each of the above steps more closely.

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS

The organizations that are most successful in recruiting volunteers have the greatest variety of assignment options, particularly in terms of volunteer jobs someone can do to "test the water" and see if s/he really wants to make a long-term commitment to the organization. Therefore, create assignments for:

- regularly-scheduled, ongoing work requiring at least six months to a year initial commitment;
- short-term assignments that are project or goal-oriented and can be completed within a specific timeframe (example: translating a set of documents);
- one-shot assignments that allow a person to help you once and see how things work at OIC (examples: being a guest speaker to a trainee class; helping at a fundraising event);

- periodic assignments that allow the volunteer to be "on call" to help as necessary (example: assist with mass mailings);
- assignments that can be shared by more than one person, such as two friends together or a family together...also, write job descriptions for activities that will require group effort.

Written volunteer job descriptions clarify the work to be done. They do take time to write, but the pay-offs are enormous. A few are:

- Writing them helps assure that there really is a job to be done--and that it isn't so big it should be broken down into more than one job description.
- They make sure you tell each prospective volunteer the same things in the same way each time.
- They form the basis for your targeted recruitment campaign.
- They involve the paid staff in developing a training and supervision plan for volunteers.
- They give you something against which to measure the performance of a volunteer. Which means that you can thank or "recognize" someone for achieving the volunteer job description...and you can use the job description as the basis for "firing" a non-performing volunteer.

The next page gives you a "Volunteer Job Description Worksheet" with a series of questions that will lead you through a consideration of what to put into the final job description.

If you do not like the concept of a "job" description for volunteers, you can call the form anything--"Volunteer Position Description" or "Assignment Description."

Please note that the worksheet asks you to give each assignment a title. The word "volunteer" is not a title--it is only a pay category, or an adjective. If the person will be a "Trainee Mentor" or "Tutor" or "Special Project Coordinator," why not call him or her by that working title?

WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER

People volunteer all the time for many things. The reasons why they agree to do volunteer work are enormously varied. Ask yourself why you have said "yes" in the past to a request to help an organization. Now look at the list on the next page and see if your motivations are included. If you asked a room full of people why they personally did

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VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET

Position Title: _____ *(the word "volunteer" is a pay category, not a title!)*

Outline of responsibilities or list of tasks:
(give potential and limits)

Training Plan:

Who will supervise/be the contact point?

What reports will be expected, in what form, and how often?

Minimum hours per week/month? On any special schedule? For what duration of time?

How will you and the volunteer know the job is being done well?
(Translate these into "performance goals")

Qualifications needed?

Benefits to the volunteer?

SAMPLE OIC VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

Position Title: SPECIAL TRAINING COORDINATOR

Outline of Responsibilities:

1. Design and keep current an orientation program for all new volunteers with OIC.
2. Schedule monthly orientation programs for new volunteers, invite participants and staff/volunteer speakers, and monitor attendance.
3. Host the monthly orientation sessions, conduct evaluation of the sessions, and follow up with new volunteers not in attendance (providing individualized orientation when necessary).
4. Work with staff and committee chairs to develop training plans for each volunteer assignment category.
5. When new volunteers are assigned, maintain liaison to monitor that training is completed.
6. Work with a committee of representative volunteers and staff to plan an annual calendar of in-service training opportunities.
7. Keep aware of community workshops and conferences of potential interest to OIC and encourage attendance by volunteers.

Supervision/Training Plan: The Special Training Coordinator is part of the Volunteer Program Management Team and reports to the Director of Human Resources, who will provide individualized training.

Reporting Process: The Special Training Coordinator will meet monthly with the Volunteer Program Management Team and will submit a monthly written report on the orientation/ training conducted in that period.

Time Commitment: Work averages approximately 3 hours per week in preparation, 1 evening per month at the orientation session, and 1 Team meeting per month.

Qualifications: Understanding of adult education/training; commitment to volunteer involvement; public speaking ability; willingness to keep records.

Benefits: Being part of the OIC management team; working with a diverse group of outgoing people; knowing that your work makes a difference in preparing volunteers to be effective.

volunteer work, you would probably create a list as long as the one shown here. So what does this prove?

1. Because there are so many different reasons that people volunteer, it is important not to limit our recruitment "pitch" to only one or two selling points. What will appeal to one audience will not necessarily be the "hot button" for another audience. For example, a class of college seniors might respond to the message that "volunteering with OIC gives you something valuable to put on a job resume," while a church women's club might be more likely to be activated by the approach of "you can make a difference right here in this neighborhood."
2. Many reasons for volunteering may look "selfish," but that's all right! The best volunteering is a form of "exchange," rather than of "charity." The giver can benefit as much as the recipient.
3. Do not underestimate "for fun" as a motivation to volunteer. Volunteering is a leisure-time activity that fills a person's schedule instead of things like jogging or spending time with friends. So the volunteer work better have an enjoyment quotient to it.
4. These are reasons why people join up initially. What happens if the volunteer work is disappointing? Note that another list of reasons could be developed for why people stay on a volunteer job.

Having thought about why people volunteer, it is also very helpful to consider why some people do not volunteer. Again, why have you ever said "no" to someone's request for help? Here are some possible factors:

- Not enough time.
- Not interested in the work.
- Not interested in the client group.
- Afraid of failure.
- Not sure one can do the job.
- Don't like the people involved.
- In the past, things weren't run well.
- Fear of personal risk.
- The out-of-pocket cost.
- Think the job is too big.
- Not willing to make a long-term commitment right away.
- Wasn't asked.
- The wrong person asked.
- Looks like busy work.

Distinguish between valid objections and those based on misconceptions or misunderstandings. Also, recognize that



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In developing volunteer job descriptions and in considering approaches to recruitment and ongoing supervision, it is useful to consider:

WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER (Just a few possible motivations):

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| TO FEEL NEEDED | TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS | TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW |
| TO SHARE A SKILL | TO EXPLORE A CAREER | TO GAIN STATUS |
| TO GET TO KNOW A COMMUNITY | TO DEMONSTRATE COMMITMENT TO A CAUSE/BELIEF | TO HAVE FREEDOM OF SCHEDULE |
| TO HELP SOMEONE | TO HELP A FAMILY MEMBER | BECAUSE THEY WERE ASKED |
| BECAUSE A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND PRESSURED THEM | AS THERAPY | TO TEST THEMSELVES |
| TO GAIN LEADERSHIP SKILLS | TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN ONE'S DAILY JOB | FOR ESCAPE |
| TO ACT OUT A FANTASY | FOR FUN!!! | TO BECOME AN "INSIDER" |
| TO DO ONE'S CIVIC DUTY | FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS | TO BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE |
| TO EARN ACADEMIC CREDIT | TO KEEP SKILLS ALIVE | BECAUSE OF ONE'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH A CAUSE OR PROBLEM |
| TO BE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DIFFERENT THAN ONESELF | TO REPAY A DEBT | GUILT |
| TO KEEP BUSY | TO HAVE AN EXCUSE TO DO SOMETHING ONE LOVES | BECAUSE OF INTEREST IN/ CONCERN FOR THE PARTICULAR CLIENT GROUP |
| THE AGENCY IS EASILY ACCESSIBLE | TO DONATE ONE'S PROFESSIONAL SKILLS | TO BE CHALLENGED |
| TO DO SOMETHING WITH A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER | TO BE ABLE TO CRITICIZE WITHOUT VESTED INTEREST | TO EXPERIMENT WITH NEW WAYS OF DOING SOMETHING |
| TO FILL A GAP | BECAUSE THERE IS NO ONE ELSE TO DO IT | AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO GIVING MONEY |
| TO DO ONE'S SHARE | TO ASSURE PROGRESS | TO BE A WATCHDOG |
| TO SEE THAT RESOURCES ARE WELL ALLOCATED | TO FEEL GOOD | TO FEEL PROUD |
| FOR RECOGNITION | TO HAVE AN IMPACT | TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED |
| | TO BE PART OF A TEAM | |

Add your own:

Now, can you think of reasons why people don't volunteer?

not everyone is a candidate for OIC volunteering. Some people genuinely preferring volunteering for the arts, or with small children, and will not be "turned on" by the assignments you offer--no matter how good the recruitment technique. Also, some people really are too busy right now. Maybe they just accepted the presidency of another organization's board of directors, or are studying for final exams, or are expecting a baby in two months!

The key is really listen between the lines to the possible objections--and to anticipate objections before they are raised. Therefore, if someone might be reluctant to volunteer because s/he is not sure s/he has the right skills, be sure to mention that you expect to train new recruits. If there is some question of safety, point out that parking is available on site (only if it is! If safety is a real problem, first develop ways to minimize risk for volunteers, such as a buddy system).

Consider possible objections and see if some need better management or planning. For example, can you reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket expenses? Is there rotation of committee chairs so that strong personalities can't dominate a group and turn newcomers off? Are you flexible in the schedules volunteers can work?

When someone says "I am too busy," try to differentiate between real schedule overload versus this as a smokescreen response that really means: "I'm busy and what you asked me to do just doesn't interest me enough to make room for it in my schedule." If someone is actually interested in OIC, offer other options for becoming involved.

SOURCES OF VOLUNTEERS

In many ways, the ability to identify where to look for prospective volunteers is at the heart of successful recruitment. If the right people hear your message, you have a good chance of motivating candidates. But if you are trying to "sell" the wrong audience, you won't end up with recruits.

This aspect of recruitment is classic marketing. It requires you to "target" the segment of the community or population that you most want to reach with your message. You begin with one volunteer job description and ask yourself (and your Recruitment Task Force):

"Where in our community might we find people who have (whatever) skill?"

This question looks easier than it is, because in answering it you must keep yourself focused. Let's look at an example. Let's say you need a volunteer who can do calligraphy. By asking: "Where could we find someone who can do calligraphy," you might brainstorm a list like this:

--Art classes studying pen and ink

- Special invitation writing services
- Graphics department of a major company
- Local freelance artists association
- Japanese art society
- Large catering firms that also do invitations
- Companies with computers that do calligraphy
- Sign-making companies

As you can see, each of these have a better-than-equal chance for you to locate someone there who does calligraphy.

Note that the list does not include general places such as "churches" or "schools." These are not sufficiently specific--you cannot be certain that you will find anyone with the skill you seek and therefore will be wasting time and effort sending your message to people who cannot help you.

Once the initial list has been compiled, you can edit it:

1. Delete any ideas that do not seem feasible.
2. Prioritize the list in order of most likely to less likely.
3. Get specific: exactly which companies, organizations, schools, etc.? This might require some research, at least with the telephone book.
4. As you identify the specific places, put these into priority order, too. Some criteria are:
 - Which are geographically closest to you?
 - Which are already linked to you in some way, such as have already given you money, provided job leads for trainees, etc.?
 - Does anyone in your OIC have an inside contact at any of the sources, such as a husband who works there, a best friend who works there, etc.?

These would be good reasons to move a potential source higher up on the list.

5. If you are particularly interested in a certain ethnic or racial group, focus your identification further, such as: which of these is in a predominantly black neighborhood? which of these serves mainly Spanish-speaking people?

You can see how this process helps you to discover possible sources for help that you might otherwise have not considered. It certainly forces you to go beyond the

"traditional" places to look for volunteers.

The "Proximity Chart" Exercise

There is one more way to locate potential volunteers and it involves geographic proximity. (See Appendix B in NO EXCUSES: THE TEAM APPROACH TO VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT by Ellis and Noyes.) Think of your location as the center of a "bull's eye." Now take a walk around the block (you might seriously want to do this physically, clipboard in hand). Write down everything you see--everything: office buildings, small stores, gas stations, schools, parking lots, parks, apartment houses, etc.

After you've done this for a one block radius, do it again for a two block radius. (If you are in a rural community, do this same exercise by car and use a radius of a quarter mile, a half mile, etc.)

The purpose of this exercise is to discover what you have been taking for granted: the resources under your nose. A powerful volunteer motivator is: you can be of help and not even have to travel far. So is: you can be of help right in your own neighborhood.

Remember that a big part of recruitment is actually asking people to volunteer. Just because a company is located across the street from you does not mean that anyone who works there knows you are looking for volunteers or that any of your neighbors are even aware of the work you do. And your "bull's eye" inventory might turn up some terrific specialists who can help you in specific ways--maybe someone with computer skills, or a sign painter, or a good typist.

Register Everywhere

As you assess the resources in your community, you will become aware of a number of organizations whose mission it is to help people find good volunteer opportunities. Be sure that you register your OIC with any clearinghouse, databank, directory, or program offering volunteer placement services.

One major resource is your community's Volunteer Center (or it may be called Voluntary Action Center or Volunteer Bureau). Another possibility is the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, known as "RSVP." Your local college or even the public school district may have a student volunteer project, too.

Think about the groups that regularly sponsor civic or service projects and make sure that they know about OIC. It rarely costs anything to be on these lists and--though it may not provide immediate results and does not substitute for an active volunteer recruitment campaign of your own--there is excellent public relations value in becoming known as an organization that wants help from volunteers.

TECHNIQUES OF RECRUITMENT

Now that we have found all sorts of new places to look for volunteers, we are ready to figure out the best ways to do the asking. There are no perfect right or wrong ways to recruit, but the most important thing is to match the technique to the source. This means that if you are trying to find evening volunteers in the local laundromat, you probably should not consider giving a speech!

The following are the most common techniques of volunteer recruitment and some pointers for the use of each.

1. **MASS MEDIA:** includes television, radio, and newspapers; general community audiences and special targeted or neighborhood audiences; feature stories, public service announcements, advertisements, special volunteer opportunity columns.
 - a. **Caution!** While the mass media can provide you with nice publicity, it is also "indiscriminate" recruiting--you must screen candidates carefully because they will not be coming from a known source. For most situations, the mass media is not the technique of first choice. However, it does allow you to get your message to many people at once (if you are prepared to do the necessary screening). It also lets you do a search for very specialized skills, such as a want ad for someone who can teach machinist skills in Vietnamese.
 - b. You can rarely control what the media says about you.
 - c. Distinguish between feature stories that usually are required to have some "news" value from public service spots that are very short and force you to say your message succinctly.
 - d. An appearance on daytime television will be seen by people available in the daytime. A message delivered in Spanish will be understood by people who speak Spanish. These are ways to "target" your audience using the mass media.
2. **PUBLIC SPEAKING**
 - a. Be sure you know who will be in your audience and why you are there. Remember, you won't find black men at a Polish women's club!
 - b. You will be most successful with "unaffiliated" groups such as students in a classroom or

groups such as students in a classroom or people at a conference. If the people in the audience are already members of an organization or club, they may not be looking for additional volunteering to do. Be careful that you are not this week's nice luncheon speaker.

- c. You can increase the impact of your presentation with slides (see next section) or by bringing along a current volunteer who can give personal testimony to the value of being a volunteer for OIC.
- d. Always have handouts to leave with people after your speech that contain your name and telephone number. People hang onto those things for an amazing period of time, or pass them along to others, and so you will be "sowing seeds" for the future by putting such paper into circulation.
- e. Stick around afterwards to talk to audience members individually. Speak to the group's officers and discuss the question: "What might you like to do as a group to help OIC?"

3. SLIDE TAPE SHOWS/VIDEOTAPES

- a. A picture is worth a thousand words.
- b. Pictures reflect your image: productivity, people of all races and both sexes enjoying their work, etc.
- c. Audiovisual materials have many uses:
 - in new volunteer orientation
 - at volunteer recognition events
 - for staffed and unstaffed exhibits
- d. See if you can recruit a community group or business to underwrite the cost of creating your slide show or video, or if you can recruit an advertising firm or student class to actually produce one for you.

4. PRINTED MATERIALS, including:

- a. BROCHURES: are generally typeset and printed, fill several panels or pages, and describe the full OIC program. These are not targeted recruitment materials, but support your outreach efforts and are very useful at the interviewing stage.

- b. **FLYERS:** Single sheets, generally inexpensively off-set or photocopied, that are very targeted at specific sources of volunteers and/or for specific assignments. Can be used on bulletin boards, as inserts in mailings, etc. Might be created for one night only to follow up a speech or might have a longer lifespan.
- c. **POSTERS:** Have limited usefulness because you cannot put too much information on a poster. Can be used in store windows or on bulletin boards, for example. Are especially effective in reaching younger, student audiences.
- d. **INSERTS:** Tailored to need, such as bookmarks in libraries or bookstores, envelope stuffers in a factory's paycheck envelopes, etc. Lots of variations! Options include placemats, coasters, etc.

For all printed materials, use the following guidelines:

- e. It does not have to cost a lot to look neat and good.
- f. Avoid the word "volunteer" in a headline. Use phrases like "get involved," or "become a part of." Mention the volunteer job title.
- g. Do not imply that all candidates will be accepted into the volunteer position. Instead, ask people to "apply" or "call to talk about it."
- h. Be upbeat. Stress what the volunteer will get as well as give.

5. BOOTHS AND EXHIBITS

- a. Again, there are many variations on this theme. Be aware that some forms of exhibiting require a lot of staffing time and may therefore be too costly when you weigh the likely payback. Other exhibits are able to stand alone.
- b. You can participate in a "Volunteer Fair" with other agencies (often sponsored by your local Volunteer Center or by the host company or college). Or, you can try to exhibit alone to be even more visible.
- c. You can ask to include a volunteer recruitment exhibit to "piggyback" onto a community event already scheduled. For example, if there is to

be a "Job Opportunity Exposition" for high school seniors, perhaps OIC can get permission to have a booth about volunteering for OIC.

- d. Work with your potential source of volunteers to determine the best type of exhibit, timing, etc. for that location.

6. ONE-TO-ONE

- a. Sometimes a well-worded letter or phone call to a key contact person will result in just the right referral. For example, a personnel manager of a company, or the president of a professional society, or the minister of a church.
- b. Ask current volunteers to bring their friends to a special event (an open house, to hear a guest lecturer) to learn more about OIC.
- c. Ask current OIC clients to talk to their family and friends about the work of OIC--give them flyers to take home that describe your search for volunteers.
- d. Do special outreach to OIC alumni. Invite them to do something specific for OIC (such as participate in a one-shot volunteer activity), rather than asking in a vague way for "support." Separate volunteer recruitment from fundraising.
- e. The wrong question to ask is: "who do we know who can do this?" The right question is: "who don't we know yet that we can approach to help?"

PUTTING IT ALL TO WORK

Recruiting volunteers is not a mysterious process. Once you have done the planning suggested here, you will be ready to go out and do it!

When you are face to face with a prospect, here are just a few more pointers to help you get them to say "yes":

1. Be motivated and enthusiastic yourself. Remember that you represent OIC to this candidate and that s/he will form an impression about OIC from your tone and demeanor.
2. Be as clear as possible about what you want a volunteer to do. Allow people to do self-screening based on the details you share about the work.

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3. Do not speak "with forked tongue," trying to convince recruits to volunteer by minimizing the work to be done. While it may take longer to find a volunteer if you are honest about the amount of work or commitment involved, once someone has said yes to the full job description, you probably have found the best candidate.
4. Share deadlines honestly. When does the work have to be finished? What are the interim deadlines?
5. Define the training and supervision a volunteer will receive. If recruits believe they will have help while learning the ropes, they will be more likely to give something a try.
6. Identify and express the benefits to the volunteer from doing this assignment.
7. Explain why you are approaching this particular person--what skills or traits s/he has that made you think of him or her as a possible volunteer. Remember that it is always flattering to be asked to volunteer because it implies that you recognize the person's talent.
8. Describe the work in a positive way, emphasizing that it will have its enjoyable elements, too.
9. Don't have mental conversations. The way to recruit volunteers is to ask people and let them answer for themselves!
10. Keep in mind that every recruitment contact is a form of public relations for OIC. Even if you are not successful in getting a "yes" this time around, you have kept a person informed about your work and maybe will win his or her support for the future.

BE PREPARED

When you start a recruitment effort, be prepared for prospective volunteers when they respond. Have a plan ready for interviewing and screening candidates. Brief your telephone receptionist that people will be calling. Develop a volunteer application form and an orientation process.

Nothing undermines a recruitment campaign more than asking people to volunteer and then seeming unconcerned when they come forward to do so. So only do recruitment when you are ready to put volunteers to work. Go to it!