

Effort in = effort out

It takes thought and work to get the right volunteers for the job

YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR. That adage also applies to volunteers, but "payment" here means the energy you use to recruit volunteers, and whether you value them enough to use their talents.

Beth Strumbo, assistant executive director of CARE, has been a teacher and a trainer for staff and volunteers for several years. Speaking at CUNA's first convention earlier this year, she said recruiting the right volunteers for the right job is an art.

You have to know what you need and expect from volunteers, what the job will offer them, and how volunteers fit into your style of management. Your attitude should indicate that you need volunteers and that you respect their contributions to the credit union.

Where to find them

Don't rely on the same people all of the time, Strumbo says. Take advantage of the other talent available. Strumbo says there are many ways to develop a list of potential volunteers:

- Write a letter to your members explaining that you are looking for volunteers. Spell out what kind of talent and expertise you need.
- Conduct member surveys; ask members about their interests and whether they're willing to help their credit union.
- Ask people at membership meetings whether they would like to volun-

teer, and write down their interests and what they would like to do for the credit union.

- Approach members who constructively criticize credit union policies or procedures. "Those are the people who have initiative," Strumbo said. But avoid chronic complainers.

- Put an advertisement or article in your newsletter. If you have specific positions open, specify them and the requirements.

- Train future directors by putting them to work first on other committees. This will give you a chance to see their abilities and to test their commitment.

- Brainstorm with directors and staff on other means of finding people you have not yet tapped.

Volunteers should recruit

Strumbo stresses that current volunteers should help recruit new volunteers. Volunteers are sensitive to the needs and expectations of people in similar positions. And the recruits will sense that.

"Don't send an employee alone to recruit volunteers. Have a volunteer, two volunteers, or a staff member and a volunteer do the recruiting," she said. The recruiters can go to the person's home, have the potential volunteer come to the credit union, or have groups of potential volunteers come to the credit union. Strumbo prefers the meeting to be in the pro-

spective volunteer's home because the person will be more comfortable and there will be fewer business interruptions.

Use the right tools

When you're ready to recruit, Strumbo says, there are a few tools you'll need to attract volunteers. A job description should be a priority.

Other tools may include a history of your credit union; an overview of the committee or board responsibilities; an organizational chart, including management, staff, and volunteers; a list of current and some former committee or board members—new volunteers might enjoy working with someone listed; a sample newsletter; a list of reasons why the person would enjoy the position; bylaws and policies; and samples of various committee reports and other materials.

The more information you can provide a potential volunteer, the more likely you are to get a committed person in the right job.

There are many selling points you can use, including the opportunities to gain corporate planning and policy experience, to contribute to the membership's financial welfare, to assume significant fiduciary responsibilities, and to bring innovation, change, and possibly reform to the credit union.

During the interview process, Strumbo says, recruiters should:

- Be prepared for questions about

the job and the credit union. So have the "tools" ready.

- Know why you want that particular person for that job, and be ready to explain your reasons.

- Have an alternative volunteer position ready to offer if the first one doesn't work out.

- Listen to the candidate's responses and show that you care about that person's concerns and opinions.

- Be enthusiastic about the job.
- Be ready to ask the candidate to take the position.

There's more to it

Your job is not over when a person agrees to volunteer. If you want a volunteer to be effective, you have to understand and meet that person's needs. Volunteers have feelings about their jobs similar to those of paid personnel, Strumbo says.

Volunteers need to feel needed. They want to help plan their goals. They want their jobs to have purpose, and their responsibilities to be challenging. And, volunteers want to see progress, to be kept informed, and to have confidence in the credit union management, staff, and other volunteers.

"When volunteers start, train them



YOU WANT VOLUNTEERS to do their jobs right, to understand the philosophy of the credit union, and to enjoy their work. Training is an essential step toward those goals.

Volunteers need motivation

Volunteers, as do others who work, need motivation from time to time.

Susan Ellis, a consultant and educator in the field of volunteerism, offers these tips to inspire volunteers:

- Be motivated yourself. Sincerity succeeds every time.

- Be clear when telling people what you want them to do. Use written job descriptions whenever possible so that you're telling the same thing in the same way to each potential volunteer.

- Be specific about the options available to volunteers—tell them what committees they can serve on, what special projects they can work on. That helps volunteers to focus on the tasks they want to do.

- Do not speak with "forked tongue." Don't lure people into assignments by minimizing the work to be done. And

be careful with such phrases as "This will take only a few hours a month" or "Try it for a while and then we'll see." If you need someone several hours a week or for a full year, say so. It may take longer to find someone to say yes, but you'll get the right person for the job.

- Announce deadlines. When does the work have to be finished? What are the intermediate deadlines?

- Define the training and supervision the volunteer will get. "Many people are wary of being thrown into a sink or swim situation," Ellis said. "If they believe they will have help while they learn the ropes, they may be more likely to give something a try. Also, it is reassuring to know that you do not expect them to start the job fully informed or trained."

- Tell volunteers how they'll benefit by accomplishing a task. "Every job has its 'payoffs' and it is legitimate to discuss these openly. Volunteers don't have to be martyrs or totally altruistic. In fact, volunteering is at its best when the giver receives as much benefit as the recipient," Ellis said.

- Explain why you are approaching particular people—what skills or traits do they have that make them good candidates for the position?

- Paint a positive picture of the work. Volunteering is a leisure-time activity. "You are not competing with salaried employment when you recruit volunteers," Ellis says. "Your competition is jogging and time with the kids. So the volunteer work should be fun at some level, and remember that everyone defines fun differently."

in the job and orient them to the credit union," says Strumbo. Staff should also take part in this orientation so that both volunteers and employees understand the relationships between each other, she said. Creating a line of command, and explaining the importance of the volunteer jobs, can prevent problems—possibly costly ones—later.

That's another advantage to having job descriptions, Strumbo said. If the person is not performing as the description requires, you can show it to the volunteer and ask why.

Also, when the line of command is not explained to volunteers and staff, you may begin to hear comments like "A volunteer should be doing that, not me," or "If staff would only do its job like this." "You need to nip those problems in the bud," Strumbo advises.

How to keep them happy

There are many ways to stimulate your volunteers. Post an honor roll of the hard workers. Keep their jobs

challenging. Ask them to run for higher offices. Provide further training. Give them additional responsibilities. Present awards for outstanding performance. Hold discussion sessions on credit union issues.

Or, send newsworthy information about volunteers and their work to the news media. Ask them to train other volunteers. Celebrate achievement of milestones. Praise them in front of their bosses and friends. Stage staff/volunteer social events. Show them they are important by giving them

evaluations. Send letters of appreciation to their supervisors. Say "thank you."

"Recruiting is definitely hard work," Strumbo said. "But most often, the management and staff would admit that they could not operate without the help of volunteers. If that is true, you should carefully think out what you want those people to do, get the right people to fill the positions, and then make sure that you keep them happy—just as you would anyone else you need." cum

Written job descriptions help

Job descriptions are as important for volunteer positions as they are for paid positions.

Susan Ellis, founder of Energize Associates, a firm that helps organize and improve volunteer programs, says the job description is essential to a successful volunteer program. Energize Associates provided a handout at the 1985 CUNA annual convention that says, "If an assignment cannot be described in writing, it probably isn't a job."

Volunteers are non-salaried personnel, Ellis likes to say. "I want you to treat them that way." Start by showing you think the job warrants a description, and that you have thought it through enough to write it down.

A written description will help you in several ways:

- Recruiting is much easier when you show the job's title and its specific duties to prospective volunteers.
 - It will ensure that you are telling the same thing in the same way to each candidate.
 - Once you "hire" the volunteer, the description can be used to reaffirm what you want the person to do. It can be used for evaluation and for recognition of the volunteer's work.
 - It can help delineate who works for and with whom. Unclear lines of authority can cause problems for both staff and volunteers.
- Volunteer job descriptions should list:
- A title for the position.

- The purpose or rationale of the assignment.

- The scope of the work to be done, citing both the potential and limits of the job.

- Training and supervision plan.

- Time frames necessary.

- The preparation necessary, in terms of time and materials.

- The types of contact the volunteer will have with others.

- The type of experience desired.

- The skills to be used and learned.

The descriptions should not be reserved for officers, but written for directors' jobs and any committee positions as well.

The time used to write the descriptions will be worth it, Ellis says. "You will have a clearer idea of what you expect from your volunteers, who they work for, and how they fit into your whole operation," she says. "In a financial institution, volunteers make decisions that have significant impact. You want people who are committed and know what they are doing. If that is true for you, indicate that with a job description. You will always have it to fall back on if the volunteer is not doing the job."

Editor's note: If you have job descriptions for your volunteers, please send us a copy. We would like to publish sample job descriptions for our readers. Send them to the magazine at P.O. Box 431, Madison, WI 53701.

2B SYSTEM--YOUR NO.1 SOURCE FOR

Plastic Membership Cards

Many of the nation's largest Credit Unions use 2B System Plastic Cards. Here's why:

- Easy to issue. No embossing required.
- Affixed to continuous forms, they can be computer printed or manually typed.
- Cards, alone, can be manually typed.
- Won't dog-ear or wear out like paper cards...last almost indefinitely.
- Your members gain a new "pride of belonging."

PHONE
313/588-7400

MAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION TODAY

2B
SYSTEM

Credit Union Membership Division
2B System Corporation
P.O. Box 106
Madison Heights, MI 48071

Please send complete information and give me a price idea on the following:

- Plastic Membership Cards _____ (quantity)
- Plastic Cards Affixed to Continuous Forms _____ (quantity)

NAME _____ TITLE _____

CREDIT UNION _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____