

## Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers ...No Gimmicks, No Gags!

Sue Vineyard

Whenever someone presents a workshop that has to do with recruiting volunteers, you can bet the room will be packed to the rafters with people looking for new ways (or gimmicks) that will insure an instant influx of dozens of new volunteers, complete with years of experience and never-ending enthusiasm! In training groups across the country in the art and science of recruitment and retention of volunteers, I can usually spot those people who attend simply to find new tricks by the disappointment in their eyes when I begin by stating:

1. There are no "quick-fix" solutions to recruitment woes; and
2. Recruitment will fail when it is isolated from the rest of the basic management process; and
3. It "t'ain't" easy.

Their disappointment comes because, first, they wanted something easy, quick and foolproof and, secondly, because many don't wish to "bother" with learning the steps of sound management. Others don't wish to really learn new ideas...they want to continue to recruit in the '80s the way they did in the '50s...ignoring the fact that the volunteer of today is totally different than our stereotypical Polly Do-Gooder of 30 years ago.

Recruitment is the keystone in the management process.

It follows, in natural sequence, the planning (goal and objectives) and organization phases (plans of action, job designs) of management.

If we think of management in terms of an arched bridge which connects our dreams to the potential realization of those dreams, we can see where recruitment fits. Note that recruitment is the first component of the "Staffing" phase and is followed by interviewing and placing before our bridge moves on to the "Directing" phase (training and supervising) and "Assessing" (evaluation).

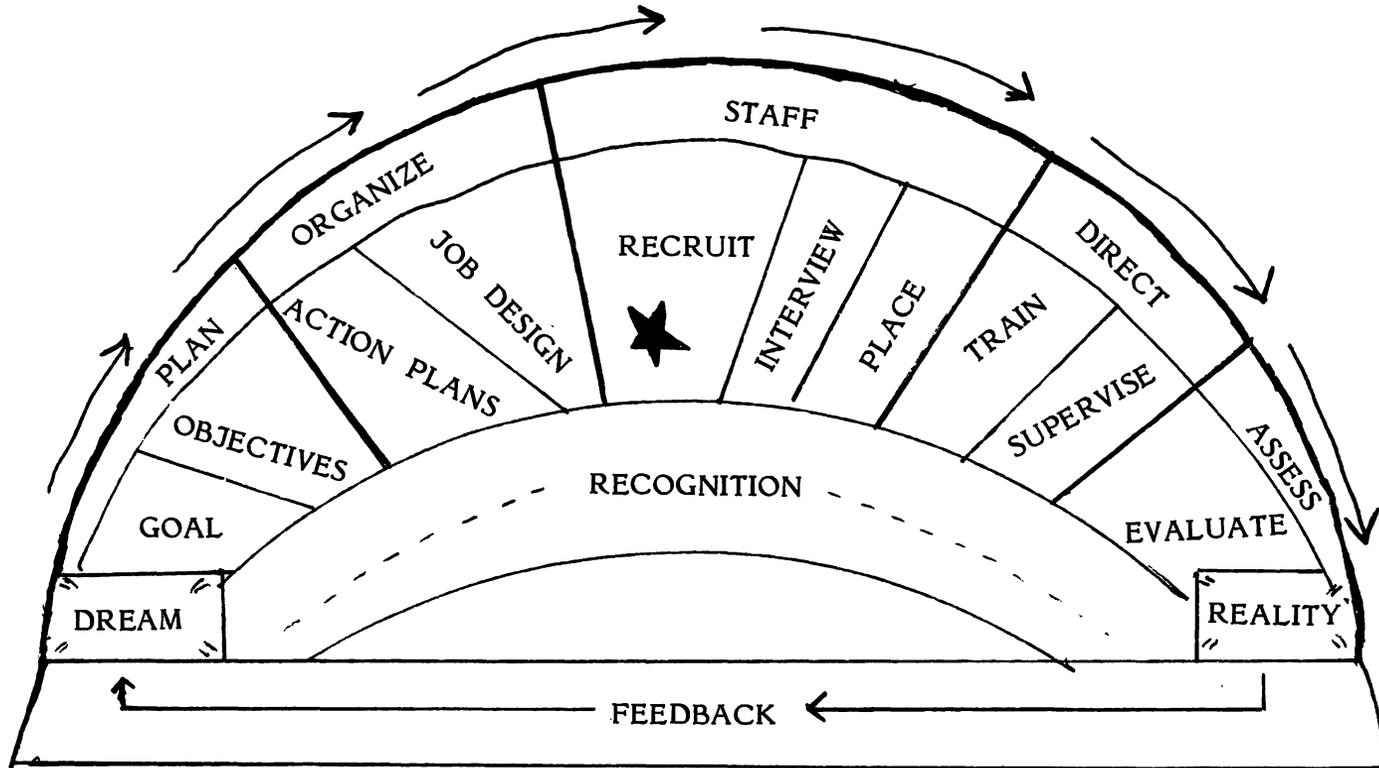
By definition, recruitment means "enlistment" and helps us understand why recruitment must come where it does in the management process.... We should not "enlist" people before we know what we need them to do (job design). We should not write job designs before we have plans laid down, which must come from objectives developed from the mission statement or goal.

In working with groups that tell me they are having "recruitment" problems, I have never found one whose "problem" really is their recruitment. What I do find is that problems of deeper origin usually surface at the recruitment stage, with the root causes more likely being ones of no clear goals and objectives, no timed, specific plans of action or (most frequently) no written job designs.

---

*Sue Vineyard is a nationally acclaimed trainer, author and consultant in the areas of volunteer management, motivation and fund raising. She has over 20 years of experience in the management of volunteers including with Project Concern where she was National Director. Sue is President of Vineyard Enterprises of Downers Grove, Ill., serves on several human-service boards and is currently Vice President for the Association for Volunteer Administration. She is author of three books on recognition, fund raising and volunteer management.*

THE BRIDGE FROM DREAMS TO REALITY



s.v. ©1980

I've decided that there have been secret conventions held around the world to teach volunteers how to ask "trick" questions of recruiters... "trick" queries such as: 1) What do you want me to do?? or, 2) How long do I have to do this??? or, and the real "killer," 3) How come???????"

These same secret conclaves have given instruction on the art of saying "NO" and alerted potential volunteers to the dangers inherent in the frequently-used recruitment con-games of the past:

..."There's NOTHING to it...you could do it with your eyes closed, dearie!" (Solution offered: Tell recruiter to close his/her eyes...you run for nearest exit.)

..."First-Warm-Body-Through-The Door Recruitment Method." (Solution offered: Look blank, express sorrow at "no-speaka-da English," sign nothing and run!)

..."Buffalo-Bill Recruitment Method," where one dumb buffalo gets away from the herd and is shot down. (Solution offered: go to all meetings and NEVER leave for the washroom during a meeting point when the group is trying to get someone to be chair of the rotten-job-committee!)

Modern volunteers need specific answers to real questions. They need to understand how their efforts will truly help people, not just an organization and what they have to do to be successful and see where the job makes sense.

## KEY COMPONENTS

In looking more closely at recruitment, we can see it is made up of three components: management, marketing, and motivation.

I've touched on the importance of management, not only in having all the phases and components present but present in their proper sequence. In designing a recruitment campaign, remember that it must be planned, organized, staffed, directed and assessed. In so doing you are simply "getting your act together" and pre-

thinking the necessary steps to net you the results you desire to aid clients. RECRUITMENT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN...IT MUST BE MANAGED.

The second component of recruitment and the one most overlooked, I feel, is marketing. Marketing (the second oldest profession, Irma Bombeck's opinion notwithstanding!) is simply the trade of value for value. In enlisting someone's energies to help your clients, you must consider both what you will gain and what the volunteer will gain from the effort.

Frequently I find groups have never really thought about what they might offer volunteers in exchange for the donation of their energy, resources, time, etc. I urge groups to consider this question and to draw up a list of both tangible and intangible rewards, in a brainstorming session that disallows nothing legal or moral! Consider: helping others, using my gifts, feeling important, companionship, filling time, school or work credit, building my resume, gaining skills, repaying a debt, putting my faith to work, a free meal, a safe building to work in, family tradition, group assignment, etc.

In developing your skills in marketing it is important to identify your organization's "publics" (groups identifiable by title or makeup with whom you might someday establish a trade relationship.) Hold another brainstorming session to list your publics...excluding no suggestions.

After you list your publics (there are hundreds), you will ask people to examine your list and note any contacts they might have inside these groups. This is the start of a resource inventory that connects your group to others via people already attached to you. See the accompanying sample Resource Inventory.

Placed on a card file (or better yet, a computer), such an inventory grows richer through constant updates and serves as a guide to help when you identify needs. (Its main-

Resource Inventory for Eureka, Ill. American Red Cross

Public	Date	Internal ARC Contact	What contact?
1. Eureka GAZETTE	10/83	Mary Smith (555-1234)	her sister, Jane Jones is Editor
2. Girl Scouts	11/83 2/84	Pat North (555-5678) Wes Wylie (555-0987)	leads troop #45 daughter in troop #45
3. Eureka Real Estate	7/81	Bea Taylor (555-8877)	she owns it!
4. Jr. Womens Club	1/84 1/84	Carla Skladany (555-3596) John Wilson (555-3322)	past pres.; best friend now pres. wife treasurer til '85
5. Elm Baptist Ch.	2/84	Tippy Coast (555-6666)	member, on board, brother minister

tenance is an excellent job for home-bound volunteers.) For example, your group may need 50 volunteers to work 4 hours each on a one-day bloodmobile project. A quick scan of your publics will reveal several groups that might help...and people who have contacts in each of those targeted groups.

At the point that you move into singling out publics that can meet your specific need, you have in reality moved into the second step of marketing: identifying "markets" (identified publics with whom you have determined you wish to have a trade relationship). An easier way to define a "market" is: they have what you want!

After identifying your markets as such, you move into the third step of marketing: the exchange relationship. In this you actually make a list of what you want from others and what you might offer in trade--a value traded for a value.

To determining value you must be mindful of the last component of recruitment, motivation, the stimulation of people to positive response. Certain aspects of motivation need to be kept uppermost in your mind as you develop your recruitment:

1. People see things differently. They are attracted or repelled by different motivations...**KNOW AS MUCH ABOUT A PERSON OR GROUP BEFORE APPROACHING THEM AS POSSIBLE ...DO YOUR HOMEWORK!**

Recruitment is USER oriented. For an offering to be worthwhile to others it must be perceived as valuable by them. Only then will it motivate positively.

3. The art of persuasion comes in the understanding that you are not trying to talk someone into saying "yes," but rather, in trying to remove their reasons to say "no." The most frequent reasons people say "no" are: a) they don't know what is expected of them (therefore not knowing what "success" is, people always want to be successful); b) they don't know

how long they must do this job ("If I'd say yes, I'd probably have to do it forever") and; c) they don't know if what they are being asked to do really matters.

It is very beneficial for recruiters to understand several different theories of motivation in order to know what might turn people on and/or off. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, McClelland's Motivational Classifications, Herzberg's Motivation/Hygiene theory, and Vroom's Theory of Expectancy all help us in our understanding of why people respond to initial recruitment efforts and what continuing supervisory efforts might retain them.

The presentation of your motivation is a critical aspect of your efforts to enlist volunteers and for this aspect understanding of the art of asking is your most valuable tool. When asking for my group support, I urge the recruiter to take several people with him/her so that they can assist in talking to interested people after a general presentation.

The presentation needs to tell what the agency does to help people, offer personal stories about people helped, detail what is needed from the group and use the language the listeners understand.(You will want to weave into your presentation any past involvement by that group, mention of their own goals and purpose, and acknowledgement of their reward system if appropriate.)

The critical piece in this form of recruitment is instant follow up with those people "caught up" in your presentation, those obviously in tune with what you are saying. Be sure to get to them; get their name and phone number and make an appointment for a second one-on-one recruitment effort.

In the technique of asking, the one-on-one approach (or two of you to one other) is best because it offers opportunities for persuasion, removal of "no's," negotiation, personalization, etc. The second best technique is one-to-a-group, the third is

via phone (there is still room for direct response and feedback), and the last (and least effective, especially when it is random) is via mail.

#### TO SUM UP

Recruitment is not easy, quick or gained through gimmicks. It is honest, "up-front" and avoids any gags that would try to con someone into taking on a job. It is studied, targeted, thorough and ever-mindful of an even exchange of value between parties.

It employs the understanding of good management (getting your act together); marketing (the trade of value for value); and motivation (removing "no's" through the art of asking). Recruitment works best when it is done in the name of the people served, not the organization, which is simply a vehicle for action.

Although some recruitment is done through specific campaigns, trained recruiters and publicity, the vast majority is accomplished informally, by satisfied volunteers telling others about their satisfaction.

If you are to utilize your best recruiters--your satisfied volunteers--the key is that they have been recruited and retained through your dedicated efforts to keep them "up" on what is happening, to constantly help them see what a difference they are making in client's lives, to involve them in decisions that affect them, to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them and to recognize them for their unique contributions.

In short, good recruitment compounds itself positively as it enables people to be and feel successful...no gimmicks, no gags!