

Tips For Volunteer Recruitment

Here are a few helpful tips for recruiting volunteers.

Be Specific and Clear

Create a volunteer job description that lists specific tasks/responsibilities. Know what you're asking people to do and define the level of commitment and time that will be required. Instead of "Can you help with our event?", try "Would you be able to help sign-in attendees at the registration table between 9 and 10 am?" Specificity helps the prospective volunteer say, "I can do that!" Vague requests without parameters about tasks and time can cause a volunteer to question if they are capable of providing what you need.

Include Information on Training and Support

Let people know that you will not simply be "throwing them to the wolves." Tell them what to expect for training/preparation, how it will be delivered and from whom they will get support. Then be sure to deliver on the promise.

Don't Assume They Know Your Mission

Talk about what your organization does and why it matters. Put context around the tasks that they will be performing. How does their participation make an impact? Knowing that what you are doing matters is a key motivator.

Don't Minimize the Task or Mislead the Volunteer

If you minimize the difficulty of the task, the time commitment required or the level of support and training available in order to entice the individual into agreeing to volunteer you will end up with a disenchanted, and sometimes uncommitted, individual.

Use Multiple Outreach Methods

Putting up a flyer at the local community center or posting on a volunteer matching site may or may not get the results that you are hoping for. It's like sending out a mass email asking "someone" to take responsibility for "X." What if "everyone" thinks you're talking to "someone" else? Include outreach to specific people or groups of people and tell them why you think their skills or personality would be well suited for this task. Engage others in identifying potential volunteers. Use social media to engage followers to help you find the "perfect match."

Be a Student of Human Behavior

Ask for help. Many people respond better to "Can you help me..." than they do to "Will you do..." Watch for what makes people tick. Some people will take on new experiences for their own learning and development, while others will respond to the opportunity to help those in need. Know whether to appeal to the person's desire to add a new skill to their resume or their desire simply to help. Both motivations can work to your benefit, and one is not better than the other when the results are the same. Understanding the small adjustments that you can make based on observing and understanding the individual will help you get to an enthusiastic "YES!"

