

Volunteer Recruitment Tips For Board and Committee Positions

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Five Volunteer Recruitment Questions

Volunteer recruitment is one of many invitations we receive for choosing how to spend discretionary time and dollars.

1. Does the message honor the individual and the position or do we sound desperate?
2. Have we clearly identified why some individual may choose to say no?
3. Are we extending our invitation to the people most qualified and desirous of the opportunities that we offer?
4. Does the invitation include the needs of the client, the way the volunteer can help and the benefits he/she will receive?
5. Are we utilizing the best person to extend the invitation?

Preparing A Recruitment Message

Every recruitment message should have a compelling message to attract the best potential candidates. The following three parts are essential...

- **A statement of the volunteer position you're trying to fill.**
 - a) This part of the message should state why the position is important to the chapter membership, not the organization itself.
Example: *Hospital Case managers in Happytown need representatives on the CMSA hospital case management task force to assist in identifying the unique needs of this group of individuals.*
- **How the volunteer can help**
 - a) This part of the message articulates activities the individual will perform.
Example: *Volunteers will participate in a focus group from 7-9 pm Thursday, June 1st at the Acminet medical facility.*
- **Benefits of accepting the volunteer position**
 - a) This statement shows potential volunteers how they will benefit by participating.
Example: *Participants will receive a fee pass to attend a future chapter CEU program.*

Techniques for Recruiting Committee & Task Force Members

- Start your recruitment by writing the job description for the committee/task force and include...
 - a) What you want the committee/task force to accomplish.
 - b) The time frame for operation.
 - c) Expectations of behavior for both the chair and the committee members.
- Begin recruitment by selecting the chair of the committee.
 - b) The chair ought to be selected on the basis/qualification of being good at getting people to work together.
 - c) Chairs do not need to be experts and they do not necessarily have to have large amounts of time to contribute.
 - d) Their primary skill ought to be the ability to focus and coordinate the work of others.
- Work with the chair to determine whom else ought to be on the committee.
 - a) For large committees or committees working on complex activities; construct an outline of the tasks to be accomplished and select members that represent the skills and qualifications the group will need to successfully complete the task.
 - b) For smaller committees, look for three areas of qualification: knowledge, time and interest.
- Meet individually with each potential committee member.
 - a) Describe the work of the committee and how you see that person contributing.
 - b) Make sure you are very clear about the role you would like them to play and an accurate assessment of the time you believe will be required.
 - c) A refusal to participate is preferable to an uninformed agreement that ends in unsatisfactory performance or no work at all.
- At the first meeting of the committee, re-recruit every member, ensuring that they are all in agreement about the purpose they will be fulfilling.
 - a) You can accomplish this by outlining what you see as the mission/purpose of the committee.
 - b) Then open the discussion to the committee members to ensure everyone is in agreement with the goals outlined for the group.
- Recruiting a volunteer's heart and mind is an important part of the process and following these steps helps ensure effective committee function.

Successful Volunteers Like...

1. Assignments that fit their talents and personality and represent the types of work they like to do.
2. Assignments with definite parameters and clear guidelines regarding the job he/she is being asked to do.
3. Assignments with finite completion dates
4. Being asked to undertake an assignment.
5. Leaders who identify particular volunteers for a task. Most people view a general "call for volunteers" as an evasion of leadership's administrative responsibility.
6. Assignments that call for a worthwhile contribution. A member who is given a trivial assignment or placed on a committee with nothing to do will become disinterested.
7. Responsibility for the assigned task. Never divide an assignment between committees or the task that is "everyone's job, turns out to be nobody's job."

The Ask

1. In directly asking a professional to volunteer on behalf of the chapter, a common technique that works well is "We saw your work and really liked it."
2. Another approach is to recruit an intermediary such as a senior partner in a law firm to assist in recruiting another attorney.
3. Many professions now encourage community service as a part of their professional responsibility. Both the legal and accounting professions are taking leadership roles in this area.
4. Finally, many professions have organized their own groups of volunteers. Check in your community for service groups like Lawyers for the Arts, Accountants in the Public Interest, or Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility.

Impact On Member/Volunteer Recruitment

1. Because of increasing time constraints, members and prospective members in almost all age categories desire short-term volunteer opportunities and prefer task forces over committees.
2. Many more professional skills are available from volunteers
3. Childcare provisions are becoming more important as volunteers have less time
4. Training is a major motivation for many professional volunteers due to rapid changes in technology and adult transitions to new careers.
5. Career experience is a major motivator for young professionals
6. Job-sharing is an attractive alternative for professionals who want large long-term jobs, but have time constraints
7. A tight labor market, particularly for young and retired individuals is seriously impacting the market of available prospective members and volunteers for CMSA chapters and other volunteer organizations.
8. CMSA chapters and all volunteer organizations must learn how to reach out to and recruit from ethnically diverse populations or expect to recruit from a much smaller population base.
9. As the population ages, the bulk of our volunteers will come from this base. We must understand how to recruit and motivate seniors to be effective. A recent study in California discovered that individuals were not likely to volunteer as seniors if they had not established a pattern of volunteering earlier in life.
10. Individuals report they are most interested in volunteering for organizations that directly impact their lives or those of family, friends, colleagues, etc.
11. Individuals, who work in hi-tech, look to volunteering for opportunities to connect with people
12. Because of the rapid pace and limited time of our members and prospective members, we must become more adept at sequencing volunteers in and out of chapter activities and developing systems to re-invite those who have been on a volunteer sabbatical due to other life pressures.
13. Innovative organizations are seeking to develop many of the volunteer functions into internships or service learning opportunities and pro-actively recruit volunteers at educational institutions.

If non-profit organizations like CMSA re to serve as training grounds for individuals, they must keep up with advancing technology so volunteers have training experiences with current technology.

Recognition of the Professional Volunteer

Recognition - of the professional should take place around the project. Examples include:

- Formal thank-you by the board following presentation of results
- Commemorative photograph of the project site or team
- Letter of appreciation addressed to business setting or professional association

Before undertaking any public recognition efforts be sure to check with the volunteer. The professional may not want to advertise the fact that he/she provided free service. Recognition usually works best if conducted within the peer setting.

In Summary Regarding Professional Volunteers

- It's important to remember professional in no way implies perfection...
- But rather the in-kind donation of professional services for which the chapter would otherwise be required to pay.
- In this understanding be aware that professional volunteers are subject to the same types of mistakes any other volunteer may be prone to.