



RECRUIT, TRAIN, RETAIN!

Basic tips and resources for
recruiting and managing
volunteers

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BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS
UNLIMITED MARYLAND



BVU's
Volunteer **Central**

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WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER?

Think about the best experience you ever had as a volunteer. What made it a great one?

Think about the worst experience you ever had as a volunteer. What made it a bad one?

Social science researchers have been studying the reasons people volunteer for a long time. These reasons have been described in many different ways, but five general themes have appeared throughout the research.

Different people might tell you they volunteer...

1) *Because it matches their personal values...*

“Because of my humanitarian obligation to help others.”

“Because I enjoy helping other people.”

“Because I consider myself to be a loving and caring person.”

“Because people should do something about issues that are important to them.”

“Because of my personal values, convictions, and beliefs.”

2) *Because they want to understand more about the world around them...*

“To learn more about the people I serve.”

“To learn how to help people.”

“To deal with my personal fears and anxiety towards the people I serve.”

“To learn about how the people I serve cope with the issues they face.”

“To understand how the people I serve are affected by their situation.”

3) *Because they seek personal development...*

“To get to know people who are similar to myself.”

“To meet new people and make new friends.”

“To gain experience dealing with emotionally difficult topics.”

“To challenge myself and test my skills.”

“To learn about myself and my strengths and weaknesses.”

4) *Because they are concerned about their community...*

“Because of my sense of obligation to the community.”

“Because I consider myself an advocate for the community.”

“Because of my concern and worry about people in the community.”

“To get to know people in the community.”

“To help members of the community.”

5) *Because they want to feel better about themselves...*

“To make my life more stable.”

“To escape other pressures and stress in my life.”

“To feel less lonely.”

“To feel needed.”

“To feel better about myself.”

Because each potential volunteer is different, you are going to want your recruitment message to appeal to people who want to volunteer for any of the reasons on the previous page. Some of your recruits will be solely focused on one or two of them, while others will be looking for a little bit of all five.

Pick one of the volunteer opportunities you'll be recruiting for in the months ahead:

Jot down some ideas about how you could respond to someone interested in each of the five reasons for volunteering listed on the previous page:

"I want to volunteer because it matches my personal values."

"I want to volunteer to understand more about the world around me."

"I want to volunteer for my own personal development."

"I want to volunteer because I am concerned about my community."

"I want to volunteer to feel better about myself."

GENERAL RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Some information in this section adapted from “What's Our Volunteer Recruitment Message?” by Nan Hawthorne Charity Channel, November 14, 2001

Once you have a good idea of what you're asking of potential volunteers and why it might be attractive to people with different perspectives on volunteering, it's time to put your description in writing.

Keep in mind that volunteer opportunities are most likely to be positive experiences for your volunteers and beneficial to your organization when:

A project description was created and presented

The volunteer received a clear and concise description of the work they'd be doing before starting the project.

Project length and milestones were defined up front

The volunteer was given an accurate estimate of time required (both in terms of hours per month/week and when the project was expected to be completed).

Qualifications and expectations were mutually understood

The volunteer was told what knowledge and skills they needed to be successful, and were given an opportunity to discuss questions and concerns.

The volunteer had a consistent point of contact throughout the experience

From initial contact to project completion, the volunteer knew who to call or speak with at any point throughout the experience.

If you're prepared with all these pieces of information, you're ready to write your volunteer opportunity description.

Option 1: The Basic Recruitment Message

A succinct, straightforward recruitment ad will draw more and better volunteers to your program. Let the ad do half of your screening by anticipating and answering common questions!

The general outline:

[Motivational appeal/goal] by **[task]** for **[persons or goal]** for **[time required]** in/at **[location]**. **[Reward]**. Training provided. **[Any requirements/qualifications]**. For more information contact **[recruiter's name]** at **[organization/program]** by phone **[phone number]** or email **[email address]**. Web: **[website]**.

Example 1. You can help seniors remain independent in their homes by delivering meals three days a week in your neighborhood. Here's a chance to put in a great day's work helping others! Training provided. Must have car. For more information call Jane Doe at Meals for Seniors at 555-1234 or jdoe@mfs.org. Web: www.mfs.org

Example 2. Brighten the day and share a meal! Help prepare and serve lunches at the Parkhurst Adult Day Care in Ballard one to three days a week! We're looking for "people" people who like to visit and have fun. Training provided. To receive more information about joining the team, call John Smith at 555-5678 or john.smith@parkhurstadulthoodcare.org. Web: www.parkhurstadulthoodcare.org

Example 3. Do you want to help create a better life for our seniors? Community agency advocating for senior rights is looking for "just do it!" individual to spearhead public information campaign. We want your firm handshake, persuasive tongue and about ten hours of your time per month! Training provided. To learn more about this exciting opportunity, call Georgia Brown at Eldervoice at 555-9876 or email g_brown@eldervoice.org. Web: www.eldervoice.org

Example 4. Earn the smile and appreciation from a homebound neighbor simply by stopping by once a week with flowers, your child's school artwork and an hour of your time. Neighbor's Keeper is a program offered by The Old Stone Church in West Seattle. We value our volunteers and provide them with all the help they need to bring companionship into the lives of lonely seniors and disabled people. Training provided. Call Sara Sotta at 555-4321 or email volunteers@nbrskeepers.org for information. Web: www.nbrskeepers.org

Option 2: The Detailed Recruitment Message

If you're looking to recruit a volunteer for a complex project or one that requires specific expertise, you may consider creating a recruitment ad that looks more like a traditional job description. Note how the different sections from the basic ad on the previous page fit into this version.

ORGANIZATION NAME & SUMMARY:

VOLUNTEER TITLE:

SKILLS CATEGORY: (Examples: Accounting/Finances, Advertising/PR, Creative Services, Coaching/Mentoring/Training, Customer Care, Human Resources, IT, Marketing/Sales, Product Development, Operations/Facilities)

MAJOR GOAL OF THIS PROJECT:

[Motivational appeal/goal] by **[task]** for **[persons or goal]** for **[time required]** in/at **[location]**. **[Reward]**. Training provided.

VOLUNTEER SUPERVISOR:

QUALIFICATIONS: **[Any requirements/qualifications]**
REQUIRED:

PREFERRED:

MAIN DUTIES:

PROJECT LENGTH:

HOURS PER MONTH REQUESTED:

For more information contact **[recruiter's name]** at **[organization/program]** by phone **[phone number]** or email **[email address]**. Web: **[website]**.

For an electronic version of this template and examples completed by other nonprofit organizations, visit <http://www.volunteercentral.net/agencies-resources.htm> and explore the documents under "BVU/Volunteer Central Skills-Based Volunteering Program."

More Helpful Tips for Recruiting Volunteers

1. Don't tell them what *you* need. Tell them what *they want*.
2. Start your ad with sentences that start with verbs like "Teach," "Help," "Save," "Read," or "Befriend" to serve as a motivator and/or task description.
3. Never, never, never use the word "desperate." Never.
4. Recruit via the Internet for motivated volunteers.
5. Stay away from clichés like "Make a Difference."
6. Look to underutilized groups such as qualified disabled people to boost your numbers and diversity.

What's your "hook?"

First impressions are important! Notice how all of the examples on page 7 start with catchy, interesting phrases that make you want to keep reading. They focus on something **specific** and **attractive** to the volunteer ("help create a better life for our seniors," "earn the smile and appreciation from a homebound neighbor," etc.).

Consider your volunteer opportunity and try to develop the most compelling first line that you can. Think about this like an "elevator speech" (a short, 15-30 second sound bite that succinctly and memorably introduces your opportunity).

TRAINING & ORIENTATION: THE BASICS

Information in this section adapted from <http://volunteerweek.org/trainingPrepare.html>

Volunteers who are prepared and supported throughout their service experience are more likely to volunteer again. One of your first opportunities to prepare and support your volunteers is the orientation and training session on the first day they arrive to serve. As with any learning or service experience, your volunteer orientation and training will be most effective with careful planning.

In planning any orientation or training, consider this: "What do volunteers need to know to feel comfortable and competent in carrying out their tasks?"

The answer to that question should lead you to the design of your training program. Most volunteers attend projects with little to no understanding of the work that is to be done and/or how it's going to be accomplished. To help them get engaged in the project, it's your job to help them understand the issue that the project addresses and the impact it will make on the community. Volunteer orientation can be conducted prior to the project or included as part of the events on the actual day of service.

A week or two before training and orientation, remember to provide your volunteers with important project information such as arrival time, a list of tasks that will be completed, how to dress appropriately, and whom to call in case of last-minute emergencies or inclement weather.

Orientation should include:

1. A brief overview of your organization's mission and services and how volunteer support contributes to that mission.
2. A brief history of the issues, current statistics, current events related to your mission and other related activities and organizations in your area.
3. An outline of the project and training on the tasks volunteers will be doing (including a demonstration if necessary) so that everyone knows what to expect and what is expected of them. Be sure to take time, location, trainers, and any necessary instructional materials into consideration when planning a volunteer training.
4. Distribution / review of relevant operational and human resources policies at your organization that apply to both staff and volunteers.

When working with groups of volunteers, you may choose to use some of the following strategies to make the experience go even smoother:

1. If you are pre-registering volunteers, you can post orientation information online to those who have successfully signed up for the project.
2. If you are utilizing an existing group (such as a fraternity or corporate group) to assist, you may offer to attend one of their meetings or speak at their office to give participants information ahead of time.
3. If you are registering volunteers on-site, you can solicit the help of your registrars to do a brief on-site orientation prior to starting the event.

Take a few minutes to think about the main topics you'll need to cover in your volunteer orientation and training session and jot them down here:

How long do you think your training and orientation session will take?

What people/experts and materials will you need to make sure the session is successful?

MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS: RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Some information in this section adapted from <http://volunteerweek.org/recognizingIdeas.html>

Once you've done all the hard work to recruit, train, and engage a volunteer at your organization, it's important to keep working to hold their interest and commitment. A new volunteer who feels appreciated and utilized in her or his first few experiences at your organization is more likely to turn into a long-term volunteer than someone who feels expendable and unimportant.

Ideas for Recognition

Volunteer recognition can take many forms, from a simple thank-you card to a large annual event. Consider different ways to thank your volunteers before, during, and after their service.

Easy, everyday ways to recognize volunteers:

- Use e-mail to send thank you letters/messages.
- Send postcards or thank you cards to volunteers after they attend a project.
- Send a birthday card.
- Submit pictures of volunteers to be in your organization's newsletter.
- Post pictures of volunteers on a bulletin board at your organization.
- Provide organizational goodies – hats, shirts, pins, magnets, water bottles, etc.
- Have them join you for coffee or lunch.

More involved, intermediate recognition ideas:

- Nominate a volunteer Star of the Month – award them a certificate, letter, or small gift.
- Sponsor happy hours and social events. Encourage volunteers to meet each other.
- Recognize volunteers on local radio or television stations.
- Invite volunteers to serve as project leaders or committee members.
- Give gift certificates to movies, restaurants, etc. Solicit your community for donations!
- Nominate volunteers for local/national awards such as the Presidential Service Awards.
- Write articles about them in newsletters or newspapers.
- Write a letter to their employer highlighting the accomplishments of the volunteer.
- Celebrate major accomplishments.
- Recognize anniversaries with your organization.
- Have them attend a training or seminar at the expense of your organization.
- Give them additional responsibilities.
- Create a photo collage or slide show of volunteer activities.

Large-scale means of recognition:

- Hold annual recognition events: dinner, awards ceremony, theme party, etc.
- Recognize long-term volunteers with service awards: a plaque, trophy, certificate, etc.
- Give additional responsibilities and a new title.
- Put up a banner celebrating major accomplishments.
- Enlist them as trainers of staff and other volunteers.
- Involve them in the annual planning process.
- Make a donation to the organization of their choice in their name.
- Organize a free outing to an amusement park, sports game, etc., for your volunteers.

What are two easy-to-implement forms of recognition you can try in your organization?

How about two intermediate recognition ideas?

What large-scale recognition activity might you be able to execute?

In addition to recognizing volunteers for the work they do for **you**, think back to the 5 reasons for volunteering to consider what your volunteers want the experience to do for **them**.

“I want to volunteer because it matches my personal values.”

“I want to volunteer to understand more about the world around me.”

“I want to volunteer for my own personal development.”

“I want to volunteer because I am concerned about my community.”

“I want to volunteer to feel better about myself.”

How are you demonstrating over time that the volunteer experience is addressing each of these reasons for volunteering?

FINAL WORD

Always keep in mind that each of your volunteers comes to your organization for a different reason. It's important that you get to know them as soon as possible. Present a clear and exciting description of your organization's needs (think of it as a sales pitch), and find out what they are looking for from a volunteer experience the first time you talk with them.

Once people come onboard, find ways to demonstrate that they are getting what they want from their experiences. It's also important to note that any individual's reasons for volunteering may change over time, so it's important to check in with each of your volunteers. Ask them, "How are things going for you? What are you enjoying about your work with us? Is there anything else we can do to make your experience even better?"

Above all, remember to keep two words in mind as you work with volunteers: ***care*** and ***respect***.

Show your volunteers that you care not only about their interests and needs, but also that you care about the mission of your organization that they are choosing to support. The latter point may seem obvious, but it is critical. Imagine you were a volunteer looking to get involved with a cause you cared very much about, but found your volunteer manager to be unexcited and/or grumpy. Wouldn't you probably look for another place to volunteer?

Show your volunteers that you respect them by providing timely communications, thorough orientation and training, and clear explanations when they have questions. If you ask them to arrive at 11:00 am, be sure you are ready to get them started at 11:00 am. Listen to their opinions and suggestions. Be honest in your responses.

Volunteerism is a rewarding experience for individuals giving their time and the organizations that utilize their help. We wish you the best of luck in developing a strong volunteer program and look forward to providing any additional assistance we can along the way.

-Your partners at Business Volunteers Unlimited and Volunteer Central

RESOURCES FROM BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS UNLIMITED & VOLUNTEER CENTRAL

One of Business Volunteers Unlimited and Volunteer Central's most important goals is to strengthen nonprofit organizations' ability to manage their volunteer programs.

The most basic way to take advantage of our resources is to register and post your volunteer opportunities on Volunteer Central (www.volunteercentral.net). See "Registering Your Agency with Volunteer Central" in the Appendix for instructions. The website contains a searchable database of volunteer opportunities throughout the Greater Baltimore region visited by more than 50,000 unique visitors per year.

You'll find a number of resources to help you recruit, retain, and develop your volunteers on the "For Agencies" section of Volunteer Central at <http://www.volunteercentral.net/agencies-resources.htm>. You may want to pay special attention to the BVU/Volunteer Central Skills-Based Volunteering Program section if you are interested in recruiting volunteers for more complex duties, as discussed on page 8 of this guide. This program matches professionals of all areas of expertise, such as Human Resources, Finance, and trade skills, with nonprofits whose needs and missions match their interests.

We also offer our nonprofit partners opportunities to promote their volunteer programs at periodic events throughout Baltimore. Four times per year we host a café-style event called Volunteer Café at which 4-5 nonprofit representatives share their missions and volunteer opportunities with about 30 community members interested in making a difference through volunteerism. We also host an event series called Do Something!, similar to Volunteer Café but on a larger scale, featuring a keynote speaker and an exciting activity called "speed volunteering." Groups of volunteers meet with nonprofit representatives like daters would at a speed dating event, in search of a perfect volunteer match!

To increase your visibility to a wider audience, we publish a monthly e-newsletter called Volunteer Community News highlighting volunteer opportunities posted on our website and upcoming events. A different organization is highlighted each issue in our Nonprofit Spotlight.

We also have a newsletter for nonprofit managers entitled Volunteer Management News, with information about our upcoming trainings (held throughout the year on various topics related to volunteer management) and other news from the nonprofit world.

CONTACT INFORMATION

To learn more about any of the resources and services listed above, contact us today at 410-366-6030 or info@volunteercentral.net.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

In addition to our own services and documents, many national organizations provide useful resources for new and experienced volunteer managers. A few of them include:

Idealist (www.idealist.org)

Idealist is an interactive site where people and organizations can exchange resources and ideas, locate opportunities and supporters, and take steps toward building a world where all people can lead free and dignified lives. They have a highly detailed Volunteer Management Resource Center at <http://www.idealist.org/en/vmrc/>.

Corporation for National & Community Service (www.nationalservice.gov)

The mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. Visit their extensive Resource Center at <http://nationalserviceresources.org/effective-practice>.

HandsOn Network (www.handsonnetwork.org)

BVU is an affiliate of HandsOn Network, an organization that inspires, equips and mobilizes people to take action that changes the world through volunteer projects and programs that align their passion with real needs in their local communities. Their site includes key information and resources for volunteer managers on the latest trends in volunteering, found at <http://www.handsonnetwork.org/getinvolved/non-profits>.

APPENDIX

Registering your agency with Volunteer Central

Volunteer Central is the leading coordinator of volunteers in Baltimore. Every year we help hundreds of nonprofit organizations identify much needed volunteers. Register all of your opportunities on our searchable website which receives more than 50,000 unique visitors per year!

1. Register Your Agency

- Go to www.VolunteerCentral.net
- Click on “For Agencies” at the top
- Click on “Register as a new agency”
- Type in your agency’s name
- Click “Sign Up” and then click “I agree”
- Fill out information as requested, click “Save & Continue”
- Choose to either *review & check for changes* or *continue with no additional changes*
- Upload your agency’s logo (if you don’t have it, that’s ok)
- After the logo is loaded, your agency is considered registered!

2. Post Your Agency’s Volunteer Opportunities

- Click “Opportunities” on the next page that comes up
- This will then allow you to post volunteer opportunities on our website
- Be sure to specify whether it is an ongoing opportunity or date specific
- Follow each step
- When finished, everything will be sent to the Volunteer Coordinator for approval
- After your opportunity is approved, it will be posted for all of our registered volunteers to see!
- If you have a volunteer opportunity that can be considered Skills-Based (i.e. Human Resources, Marketing, Finance, Electrician) you may fill out the opportunity description in the template we have provided for our Skills-Based Volunteer matching program, posted here: <http://www.volunteercentral.net/agencies-resources.htm>

Once you have completed your Skills-Based volunteer job description copy and paste the data into an opportunity listing and submit it for approval. Skills-Based Volunteer opportunities formatted correctly using this template will be assigned a “Skilled” medallion to make the opportunity easily accessible to skilled volunteers.

Please contact us if you need assistance.

Phone: 410-366-6030 • **Email:** info@volunteercentral.net