RECRUITMENT BASICS

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When individuals and organizations need help, they recruit for the services needed. For non-profits, this often means volunteers.

Steps

1. **What do you need?**
Before you start recruiting, be sure you know what position needs to be filled or services that need to be done. Create a list of positions and / or tasks as well as the skills that are needed to complete the task.

2. **Skills versus characteristics.**
Skills are things like knowing how to proofread, effectively lead a group or make a campfire. Characteristics can be as important as skills. Keep an open mind if you find someone who has the characteristics you need and is willing to learn the skills. Some characteristics you may find useful include:
  • Flexibility
  • Endurance
  • Patience
  • Drive / passion
  • Confidence
  • Willingness to learn
  • Forward thinking
Create a list of characteristics that will be helpful and / or necessary in your volunteers.

3. **Define jobs / services.**
People looking to volunteer are often overwhelmed with the need they find. By being specific about the person or skills you need, you have a greater chance to recruit people. For example, if you are looking for a one-time project, you are more likely to get people who don't have a lot of time and can schedule a single project into their life. Scout leaders are often recruited for a long time. The fact that their children are in their troops is an incentive in getting volunteers. Further define the positions / skills you need so you can be specific in your requirements.

4. **Provide information.**
Not only are you looking for someone to fill your needs, your potential volunteers want to know about you as well. Providing information may include flyers, a web site, emailed items, etc. You need to sell your organization. Consider the following items for inclusion:
  • Mission statement
  • Organization / personal history
  • Current advertising / marketing
  • Stats on how your organization helps the community
  • Recruitment message

5. **Benefits.**
Ask yourself what the benefits are for your volunteers. If you don't know, ask current volunteers. You know what you're looking to get out of your volunteers, but if they can't see the benefits to themselves, you will have difficulty recruiting more.

6. **Ease of entry.**
Be sure that it's easy for your volunteer to move into your organization. This might be supplying a mentor, providing a list of expectations or having meetings on a regular basis to help answer questions. Be prepared with a strategy to get your potential volunteers up-to-speed as effortlessly as possible.

7. **Identify barriers.**
Ask yourself what may deter someone from volunteering with you or your organization. This might be cultural, fear, physical / mental limitations, financial, etc. You might also come against competition for the volunteer's time. Brainstorm ways to overcome or adjust your needs for these barriers.

8. **Teams vs. individuals.**
Recruiting more than one person allows your new volunteers the ability to share experiences as they become part of the organization. They help each other, encourage each other and do more than a single person can. Review your needs and see if a team would do better at the position / task than an individual and recruit accordingly.

9. **Current volunteers.**
Asking current volunteers to help recruit allows your potential volunteer to learn about you from "the inside." Recruitment is about relationships. Your potentials will be asking themselves not only can they work within your organization, but with the people currently involved with you. Be sure your volunteers are positive about you and / or your organization.

10. **Honesty is the best policy.**
Always be honest about your organization / individual. To completely ignore any "bad press" or rumors will only hurt your recruiting efforts. No one gets along 100% of the time, but showing an effort to resolve the issues means you're willing to work with your volunteers. Think of a few negative issues that happened and how they were dealt with. Could the issue have been dealt with better? How would you address accusations to someone looking to volunteer with you?

11. **Message.**
Is your message an attention grabber? Does it carry over different types of media? Are you conveying it to everyone the same way? Be sure to use language everyone understands. Make your message short and memorable.

12. **Materials.**
Recruitment materials are very important. They allow you to share information easily with multitudes of people. This includes brochures, slide shows, web ads, posters, contact cards and more. When designing these keep in mind:
- Consistent design
- Easy-to-read fonts (no more than 3)
- Engaging and relevant photos
- Graphics that support, not distract
- Where you plan to place materials
- Clear contact information

When you have created your materials, provide them so that others can easily reference them.

NOTE: Some organizations provide recruitment materials for you. Be sure to take advantage of these items.

13. **Diverse strategies.**
If you plan to have a single event at a local school to find volunteers, your audience will be extremely limited. However, if you also put a story in the newspaper the week before, the number of possible volunteers goes up. People need to see / hear the same information three times to remember it. Look at these strategies and determine which you can add to your recruitment efforts.
- Word of mouth
- Newspaper ads / articles
- Radio ads / interviews
- Television ad
- Web site drive
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Yahoo! Groups, Google +, YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)
- Information table (festivals, schools or community events)
- Post flyers / information at libraries, stores and other local gathering places
- Speaking engagement at events
- Direct mailing
- Permission marketing / email
- Reinvest in non-active volunteers

14. **No vs. never.**
If you are told "no", does that mean "never?" Often it means "not now." You cannot know how someone's life is going. It is up to them to decide if they can do justice to a volunteer position. If the person is enthusiastic, but cannot commit now, ask if you can contact them in the future for projects. Implement a way to do so.

15. **Numbers.**
Recruiting more than you need is a good plan. About 25% of the people who are interested will not follow through. Many drop out shortly after accepting. Our lives are constantly changing and your volunteers may not be able to follow through.

16. **Volunteer support.**
Do you have a plan to support your new volunteers? Do you have staff or other volunteers that they can continue to contact after they've completed the entry process? Brainstorm ways you can support your volunteers. Find one or more you can implement.

Sites to Explore

www.worldvolunteerweb.org/browse/volunteering-issues/senior-volunteers/doc/16-tips-in-recruiting.html
www.energizeinc.com/wisdom/recruit/techniques.html
www.energizeinc.com/art/npbarriers.html
www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/recruit.html
nfp.answers.com/getting-involved/the-basics-of-volunteer-recruitment
nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/recruitvols.htm
www.volunteerpower.com/articles/7sins.asp
www.nationalserviceresources.gov
www.volunteermatch.org
www.volunteercentral.net

Check out larajla's Enrichment Project
to start your own adventure.