



Targeted Volunteer Recruitment: Planning Your Presentation

Many organizations rely on the support of volunteers to fulfill a variety of needs. Recruiting volunteers on a regular basis is a necessity for many programs. Volunteer recruitment can be labor intensive and a targeted approach can maximize recruitment efforts. Targeted volunteer recruitment involves crafting a message to gain the attention of a specific audience and addressing their questions and needs. From an organizational standpoint, it is crucial to understand the needs of the organization and be aware of which volunteer positions need to be filled. Once you have a clear idea in mind of what it is you are trying to accomplish through volunteer support, you will better understand which groups you might approach for help. It's also important to tailor your message based on your audience. Just like advertising, each demographic has certain needs and marketers try to package their product in order to make it as attractive as possible. For many individuals, their time is more precious than their money—which is why it is so important to explain your opportunity in a way that will want to make them give your organization that gift. Be clear about the expectations, but share them in a way that showcases what might appeal most to your audience.

Before You Begin

Before you start recruiting, it's important to think about who you want to target based on the needs of your program.

Consider the following questions:

- What population do you serve?
- What volunteer positions do you have available?
- What are the transportation needs of the volunteer position?
- Where do people who meet these characteristics spend time? Consider clubs, associations, types of businesses and community organizations.
- What kind of commitment do you require from volunteers?



Understanding Your Target Audience

Once you identify your ideal volunteer base and select places you may go to engage them, it is important to learn more about this group. Make sure you do your research before heading into a recruiting opportunity. Ask yourself:

- What are the demographics of this group?
- What does this group already know about volunteering? Are they currently volunteering, and if not, why?
- What do they already know about your program?
- What motivates this audience?
- What is the context in which you will be delivering your pitch?

Planning Your Recruitment Pitch

Prior to delivering your recruitment presentation, there are many elements to consider. Keep the following things in mind:

- You might not necessarily be the right person to give this style of presentation. The style of the presentation, audience or situation might not be ideal given your talents and skills. You might consider asking a colleague to co-present to share another perspective, or inviting a youth or current volunteer to share their experience.
- Recruiting volunteers can be an intimidating or emotionally draining experience, and sometimes we can carry those feelings in with us when recruiting. Conduct a self-check by tuning in to your current emotional state. If you go into a recruitment event expecting them to say no, it can affect how you share your message—in a bad way! Stay positive and let your light shine.
- Targeted recruitment is about tweaking your message to appeal to your audience. You should not be delivering the same presentation to every group. On the other hand, some things should stay consistent—logos, tag lines, etc.

- Make sure there is a consistent brand identifier so potential volunteers can find you in the future.
- Different approaches appeal to different audiences. Some people are sold by “warm fuzzies” or stories and photos that pack an emotional punch. Others need statistical data about the volunteer program and opportunity in order to be motivated to give their time to a worthy cause. Others need a combination of the two. Plan accordingly.
- The print materials you provide to your audience should reflect their diversity as well as the diversity of your audience. Help your audience to visually imagine themselves volunteering with your organization.
- Certain giveaways can motivate your audience. Some examples include entering them into a raffle or giving them a nice pen or another usable item with your program’s contact information. Base your giveaways on what might appeal to an audience.
- Dress appropriately for the situation. It’s important to always look professional, neat and well-groomed.
- Technology can be a friend or foe when recruiting. Know when to use presentation software, and be certain that if you do so, your presentation helps your audience understand your opportunity. We often use PowerPoints for our own benefit as presenters rather than for the audience’s.
- If you decide to use technology in your presentation, make sure you are well-prepared with a backup plan in case the technology fails.

The Presentation

Depending on the amount of time you are given, your presentation can include a number of things. Some things to consider:

- Cover the who, what, when, where, why and how of your volunteer opportunity.
- Be certain the presentation has a concrete beginning, middle and end.
- Make sure to include the “So what?” and leave them with an impact.
- Describe the benefits of volunteering from their perspective.
- Share what it is you want them to do and how they can get involved.
- Leave them with your contact information and get contact for individuals who are interested.

Following Up

Many volunteer organizations lose out on wonderful volunteers due to a lack of follow through. Here are some things to keep in mind after you make the ask:

- Send the organization a personalized note thanking them for the opportunity to present and encouraging them to get involved.
- Contact the individuals who indicated an interest within a few business days. Make sure you stay fresh in their mind.
- If your program requires an applications process, you will need to continue to motivate and support potential volunteers to get through the process.

