

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention

A clear, targeted recruitment plan is essential to any volunteering campaign...

Considerations for a Targeted Plan

- Why do you want to recruit volunteers and for what tasks?
- Who is it that you want to recruit?
- What skills and experience do you want your volunteers to have?
- What do you think your potential volunteers will want from a volunteering experience?

Considerations for a Targeted Plan

- Who will look after new volunteers and deal with any enquiries?
- What will your selection process involve?
- If you recruit successfully, how will you ensure that you keep the volunteer? Do you already have a good management policy for volunteers?
- How will you go about finding them?

What Makes Someone Volunteer?

- A personal connection to the organisation or cause
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- A local problem they want to help solve
- Looking to improve their employment prospects
- Develop and build social circles
- Your recruitment campaign needs to give people that strong reason to get involved

Create a Recruitment Campaign

- What is your volunteering message?
- What media are you going to use?
- What kind of 'ask' will appeal to your potential volunteers?
- “Voluntary organisations need to remember that they are selling a product, an experience, a sense of meaning and that people will shop around until they get the product that fits their agenda” Peter Hammond from the Samaritans describes the process of marketing volunteering (Extract taken from nfp Synergy's report, The 21st century Volunteer)

Make the Recruitment Campaign Personal

- Your story or campaign message needs to be tailor made for the group of people you want to volunteer
- It has to satisfy them and what they want
- Consider who you are trying to attract and the language/imagery that will appeal to them

Key Messages To Include in Your Recruitment Campaign

- What the organisation does and what cause or people it benefits
- The range of volunteer opportunities that exist
- The difference a volunteer can make to the cause or the people
- What the volunteer can gain from working with the organisation
- How prospective volunteers can find out more

Generating Awareness

- At first you may have to focus on using the media to increase public awareness of your organisation in general
- Key messages about volunteering and appeals for voluntary support should be integrated into all your communications work
- Requests for volunteers can also be added to your comms for donors, other awareness/ marketing campaigns, at the end of all emails and on any literature or publicity materials your organisation produces

Use Your Existing Connections

- Identify people/businesses who are already in direct or indirect contact with your organisation to target with your recruiting message. These may include:
 - Your clients, their families and relatives
 - Friends of your current volunteers and staff
 - People in your organisation's local area
 - People who have been affected by the problem you are attempting to solve
 - Local businesses
- It is more likely that you will succeed in persuading them to volunteer than complete strangers
- In sales terms, there is a big difference between a "cold" call to a stranger than a "warm" call to an acquaintance or a friend

Methods to Reach New Volunteers

- There are lots of ways of advertising for volunteers. These include:
- Word of mouth
- Press releases to local media
- Libraries
- Community notice boards
- Leaflets and other printed media
- Volunteer Centres
- Organising or speaking at events (Women's Institute, Rotary etc.)
- Press/radio adverts
- Online - on your own website, via volunteer recruitment websites or through social media i.e. Facebook/Twitter
- Whichever method/s you chose, make sure potential volunteers can get in touch easily by including a phone number or email address

Short Term or Long Term Volunteer Recruitment Campaign?

Short Term Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

- Recruitment Campaign

Short Term Volunteer Recruitment

Advantages

Simple and quick message

Easy to get a short message queries quickly

Fast way to get volunteers in

Increases public awareness

Disadvantages

Volunteers may be less committed on a long term basis

Need to deal with volunteer in the local media

'Urgent Calls for Help' can't be used that often

Long Term Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

- Establishes a real need for volunteers and explains exactly what volunteers do
- Volunteer role descriptions are essential
- Encourages people to share their skills and experience
- Stresses the importance of the work volunteers do
- Shows how volunteers are combating a particular problem

Long Term Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

Advantages

Targets committed volunteers who willing to go through training

Encourages people to become long term supporters of the organisation

Helps people realise the value of their life experience and how they could use their skills in their community

Patience and persistence needed to ensure 'right' volunteers are recruited

To be effective it often depends on a fairly high level of public awareness of the organisation

Volunteer Application Process

- Assess the amount of information you need from a volunteer during the application process, based on the requirements of the role
- In all cases be ready to have an informal chat on the phone/via email
- Designing a simple form for applicants will help make sure you collect basic information and take into account equal opportunities and diversity
- Be conscious about accessibility for people with disabilities
- In all cases keep volunteers informed of their progress

Volunteer Interviews

- Should not be overly formal
- A simple 'person specification' and role description can be a useful template for the interview
- Explore why the applicant wants to volunteer
- Explain any requirements that need to be met before appointment and the support that will be available
- Advise volunteer of any 'compulsory training'
- Ensure the volunteer role/s are understood and give time for the applicant to raise any questions or concerns
- This will help to bring the interview to a natural end

Appointing a Volunteer

- Fix a provisional start date and induction time
- The firm start date depends on a number of factors, if required:
 - References
 - DBS checks
 - Training

Volunteer Refusal

- Having completed all the stages of recruitment, the applicant may not be suitable for the role available
- It is important to tell the applicant the reasons why you are not accepting them as a volunteer
- Suggesting that the nearest Volunteer Centre may have more suitable volunteer roles may ease the blow of rejection
- The applicant may decide that they do not want to volunteer for your organisation after all
- You might want to ask the applicant for their reasons
- This insight may prove helpful for future recruitment activity
- The beauty of VC brokerage is that we steer people away from unsuitable roles

Volunteer Retention

Set Your Retention Goals

- Whatever your definition of retention, develop some practical retention goals
- achieve an average number of hours of service from each volunteer per year
- Or
- total number of hours per year per group of volunteers - a team approach

Key Retention Questions

- How do you maintain volunteers enthusiasm?
- How do you communicate with them to make them feel part of your organisation?
- What are the things that cause volunteer relationships to go wrong?

Volunteer Satisfaction

- Volunteer satisfaction is a vital key to retention
- Be clear how this benefits your organisation and at the same time, matches their expectations
- Where volunteers feel that their needs are being met, as well as those of the organisation, they will add even more value
- Providing on-going support and supervision will mean an increased commitment
- Maintaining relationships with volunteers will result in retaining their support
- These aspects of good organisation and support of volunteers will help to achieve the goal of retaining highly motivated volunteers

Volunteer Contribution

- Every volunteer is a significant member of the organisation with a key contribution to make
- Recognising their achievements and saying 'thank you' privately or publicly in a variety of ways is important:
 - Informally, telling volunteers they are doing a great job
 - Asking their opinions on internal developments
 - Getting them to feel comfortable with being a part of the organisation's social life
 - More formally, volunteer events e.g. Volunteers Week, where group recognition takes place, the awarding of certificates
- Include volunteers in staff meetings and invite them to be members of working groups (if appropriate)
- These will demonstrate a recognition all volunteers, staff and committee members of the importance of volunteers contribution

Resolving Volunteer Problems and Handling Complaints

- Problems can arise because different priorities arise, volunteers may lack understanding of the resources available
- Where good support and supervision procedures are in place, problems may get solved without prolonging the difficulty.
- However, a volunteer may bring a complaint about a member of staff, or vice-versa, or a client may complain about a volunteer:
- Volunteers need to feel complaints are handled with sensitivity and they receive a fair hearing and that the complaints/grievance procedure of the organisation will be rigorously followed
- This procedure should be in writing and available to volunteers, and will ensure a consistency of response
- A volunteer handbook and clear policies/procedures can help to reduce issues that may arise

Letting Go

- Eventually all volunteers will leave for one or a combination of reasons
- they have volunteered in one role for a very long time and run out of steam
- their personal circumstances have changed to the detriment of their volunteering
- others may show themselves to be unsuitable in spite of good recruitment procedures

- Knowing when to let go is as important as knowing how to retain

- Unless there has been serious misconduct, a departing volunteer should receive thanks and can be offered an Exit Interview opportunity

- Depending on the reasons for departure, the right level of 'farewell do/gesture or thank you celebration' can be arranged

Useful sites

- <http://www.charitycomms.org.uk/askcharity>
- <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/handbooksorpolicies>
- <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/recruitment>
- <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/rewardrecognitionretention>