
Volunteer Recruitment and Management - Specific Steps

Step 1 – Plan and Describe Specific Jobs

Just as a key to improved fundraising is effective advance planning, so too with effective use of volunteers – effective advance planning is key.

As part of the annual work plan, specific volunteer activities should be identified. For each activity planned by the organization, you should ask yourself, “Does this activity lend itself to using volunteers?”

For each activity that is appropriate for volunteers, go the next step and draft a volunteer job description with the following components:

- Title of the job
- Purpose of the job
 - o Explain why this job is important to the organization and/or downtown
- Responsibilities and duties
 - o Note major responsibilities and expected outcomes or performance standards. Discuss timing and coordination with other jobs
- Requirements and qualifications
 - o List background, skills, and knowledge required
- Time commitment
 - o Total time required and specific time constraints such as when during the year, time of day, time when it needs to be done by
- Reporting responsibilities
 - o To whom does the volunteer report and how often, and who else will the volunteer be working with
- Benefits to the volunteer
 - o Such as: chance to learn a new skill, meet new people, contribute to the downtown, etc.

Identifying specific volunteer activities in the work plan and crafting specific job descriptions takes time but is a worthy investment because it makes recruitment and management of volunteers so much easier.

Step 2 – Identify a Volunteer Coordinator

This may be the executive director but it is best if it is a volunteer, perhaps a board member. In any event, it is important that a single person be the keeper of information on who is volunteering for what and make sure that all volunteers have been properly oriented and recognized for their efforts.

Step 3 – Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers can be done in a variety of ways including the following:

- Word of mouth
 - o This is the best way – volunteers informally asking other volunteers
- Newsletter
 - o Why not have a standing blurb in the newsletter which calls for volunteers and provides contact information for the volunteer coordinator. It could also note specific “job openings”
- At promotions and special events
 - o How about a table where people can inquire about volunteering for future events?
- Other ideas: website, special mailings, blurb tacked on the end of all speeches and presentations.

Recruitment tips:

- Don't use the word “volunteer” – all negative baggage that someone associates with the word will surface. Use phrases such as “get involved” and “become part of” or specific job titles such as “be a tutor” or “drive people happy.”

- Ask volunteers to do a specific job
- When asking, don't say “no” for them – don't provide excuses for why they might not want to do it – don't back off or soften the ask

Step 4 – Orientation

Don't take it for granted that volunteers know about the organization or the job. Orientation can be very informal but should be done none-the-less. At the very least, orientation for any volunteer should consist of the following:

- Information about the organization
 - o Provide them with written information and take time to explain about the organization
 - o Provide them with the current work plan so they can see where they fit in and other potential volunteer activities
- Information about their job – give them the written job description and whoever is their project supervisor should explain the job and answer questions
- Contact information – how to contact the volunteer coordinator, their supervisor, and the organization office
- Explain how they will be recognized for their efforts

Step 5 – Supervision/Mentoring

We may not want to think of volunteers being “supervised” in the traditional sense, but it is important that each volunteer has a “go to” person. That is, someone who knows the job, can answer questions, and tell the volunteer what to do when in doubt needs to be available to each volunteer. In many respects it is more of a mentoring role than a supervising role.

Step 6 – Recognition

Recognizing volunteers is key if you want them to keep volunteering and encouraging their friends to volunteer. It seems to work well if recognition happens informally and formally. Informal recognition consists of on-the-job thanks and compliments. Formal recognition may consist of a letter of thanks from the Board, or an invitation to an event specifically designed to recognize