Everything you think you know about recruiting volunteers is wrong

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What we’ll cover
Steve McCurley, consultant, and SHIP TA Center

• A strange exercise to show you that you’re your own worst enemy when it comes to recruiting volunteers
• How to do recruitment the right way
• A preview of the SHIP TA Center’s recruitment testimonials
WHY RECRUITMENT GOES WRONG

1. The goal of recruitment: “just enough of the right volunteers.”
2. Primary tasks in recruiting volunteers:
   ✓ Getting people’s attention
   ✓ Giving them a reason to say “yes”
Exercise

• Find a group of intelligent, compatible, new faces: 3-4 people per group.
• Say ‘hello’ really quickly.
Instructions

• Read classified ads
• Pick 2 best and 2 worst recruitment ads
• Exchange views with others in group: which, why
A “good” recruitment message…

• …is one that attracts the kind of volunteer you are attempting to recruit.
Important subtle point

• We’re not trying to recruit you.
RECRUITMENT THE EASY AND EFFECTIVE WAY
1. Build a good intake system

• Most volunteer recruitment efforts fail because the organization doesn’t have a smooth and welcoming intake system for prospective volunteers.
Hobson & Malec, 1999

- 49.3% received offer of assistance
- 69.3% did not receive name of person answering phone
- 26.4% were not referred to appropriate contact person
- 48.7% were not asked for contact details if contact person not available
- 70% of those who left contact information did not receive a return call
Instant gratification:

• Major common mistake is not getting back to potential volunteers quickly enough - “quickly” means within 24 hours these days.
• Don’t need a full response, just an “echo” or an acknowledgement. It should sound friendly. Info packets that you can email people are a good way to buy time.
• Train people who answer phones on exactly what to do when a prospective volunteer calls.
2. Use no-brainer recruitment

• Encourage staff and volunteers to tell people they know about volunteering: “talk it up”

• Post signs about areas of activity: “If you like this what we do and you’d like to be involved in it, talk to...”
More advanced note:

• “Word of mouth” recruitment is very effective but if it’s the only kind of recruitment you do it is also a very effective way to kill your volunteer program...
The Danger:

• Cloning
3. Learn to ask

• A direct face-to-face request for someone to volunteer will work about 70% of the time – at least to get them to check things out further.
Powerful phrases

• “We need your help...”
• “You were recommended as the best person for this job...”
• “Here is where your background and experience makes you perfect for this...”
• “This is what we can accomplish...”
• “You can be in charge of...”
4. The Internet works

• Volunteer matching sites
• Program web site
• Social media
VolunteerMatch, 2006

How many volunteer opportunities did you list with VM last year?

- 2% None
- 1-5 65%
- 6-10 19%
- >10 14%
VolunteerMatch, 2006

On average, how many people responded to each listing?

• 2% None
• 44% 1-5
• 26% 6-10
• 14% 11-15
• 14% >15
• The key to Internet recruitment is being able to get back to inquiries quickly and begin the process of cultivating a relationship.
5. Recruitment is about motivational buttons

• Need
• Solution
• Fears
• Benefits
Motivational appeals to seniors:

• Life is a continuing journey with never-ending opportunities.
• New bridges are being built to new generations - you can help.
• Your experience, wisdom and talent are needed and will be valued.
• Your freedom and autonomy will not be compromised.
• You can experience the unique satisfaction of a “relationship with a purpose” again.
Summing this all up
SHIP TA CENTER TESTIMONIALS
Overview

• **We asked Steve**, “How can we help SHIPs recruit volunteers at a national level?”
  – ...and then we took his advice

• **What did we do?**
  – Interviews with diverse volunteers from CA, IA, MI
  – Short videos from edited interview footage

• **Where will they be and when?**
  – SHIP Center website and You Tube channel (summer 2017)
  – *Coming later in 2017*: state-branded versions for each SHIP
Demonstration
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QUESTIONS?

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