



RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS IN FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

FROM THE FAITH INITIATIVE OF THE POINTS OF LIGHT FOUNDATION
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Recruitment is the process of locating volunteers. A key to effective recruitment is efficient use of resources—use time, energy, and finances in the ways that are most likely to get volunteers who are qualified for the needed positions. This is important to remember, as recruitment is a potentially time-consuming and costly task. This tip sheet outlines reliable methods for efficient and effective recruitment campaigns and includes examples of how to carry out these methods.

RECRUITMENT IN FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Faith-based organizations face particular issues in the recruitment of volunteers. These include: ensuring that volunteering is spread throughout the organization; making certain that the work of volunteers is connected to the mission of the congregation; and keeping the leadership informed of volunteers' efforts.

Over-success in recruitment can be a serious problem for programs. Either accepting volunteers whose skills are under-utilized or rejecting applicants creates potential for volunteer resentment. This also can make a congregation's volunteer coordination efforts appear disorganized.

RECRUITMENT METHODS

Three common ways of planning your recruitment program include:

I. Episodic Volunteering

This method is utilized when the volunteer positions to be filled fit these two characteristics:

- A very large number of volunteers are required a one-time or short-term volunteer opportunity; and/or
- The volunteer job to be done lacks special qualifications and is one that most people can do if given some training.

The standard pattern for low-skill or time-limited recruitment involves simple dissemination of information about the program. These may include:

- Mention in sermons or other speaking events.
- Mention during meetings of congregation-sponsored clubs.
- Notices in congregational bulletins.
- Notices in local periodicals.
- Distribution of brochures.
- Posters.
- Word of mouth.

II. Targeted Recruitment

Targeted recruitment is the process of planning a campaign with the aim of delivering the recruitment message to a small audience. Targeted recruitment is a desirable method when the volunteer opportunity requires some special skills or characteristics that are not commonly found.

Planning a targeted recruitment campaign involves asking at least four questions:

- What is needed to perform the activity successfully?
- Who could provide this?
- What is the best method for communicating with this group?
- What would motivate this group?

The answers to these questions help to develop a means of identifying and locating potential volunteers who are likely to possess the qualifications for the task.

III. Concentric Circles Recruitment

This method involves attempting to recruit populations already in contact with the faith group or agency but who may not be members of them. Sample target populations might include:

- People who are affected by the problem the agency is attempting to solve.
- People from the neighborhood in which the program operates.
- Clients of the agency and their families and friends.
- Families and friends of agency volunteers and staff.

- Other faith-based groups and service organizations.
- Ministerial connections.
- Young people.

The advantage of concentric circles recruitment is that the target groups are already familiar with your faith group or agency and with the problem you are addressing. Members of the target group are often also being recruited via their connection with a friend of theirs. These factors make it more likely that they will be persuaded to volunteer.

THE RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

Every recruitment campaign must have a compelling message. The message is an explanation of why the faith group or organization is worthy of the volunteer's time. It should be short, simple, and direct. The message should also communicate to the volunteer the need that exists for their services and describe the good that they can do by volunteering. It is important to stress the needs of the community, not simply the needs of the faith group or organization.

MAKING THE ASK

A crucial recruitment step is actually asking someone to volunteer. One of the most effective recruitment techniques is having staff members or volunteers ask their friends and acquaintances to volunteer. Recruitment managers can assist in the process by providing the information to make the most effective use of this word of mouth method of recruitment.