

United Way of Salt Lake*serving Davis, Salt Lake, Summit, and Tooele Counties*

Ten Volunteer Recruitment Tips

Many organizations rely on volunteers to help staff programs, assist clients, provide administrative support and participate on their board. Volunteers are a valuable resource that, if cultivated properly, can become passionate champions for your organization.

Volunteer management begins with recruiting volunteers. By having an organized system in place your organization can welcome volunteers of all ages and backgrounds to share their time and talents to further your mission and goals.

In no particular order are ten tips for a successful volunteer recruitment campaign.

1. **What's in a Name?** When posting your volunteer needs online try thinking of something creative that will draw attention and stand out amongst all the other available opportunities. How about calling your opportunity Soup and a Smile for an opportunity serving food to the homeless or Social Butterfly for an opportunity interacting with clients. Sometimes a fun or quirky name can get more volunteers to open your opportunity which could translate to more volunteers signing up with your organization.
2. **Tell Me More.** In addition to a great title your opportunity description should give a perspective volunteer all the details to determine if the opportunity is something that could be a good fit for them. Review your description to see if it gives the who, what, where, when, why and how. List any perks that are relevant to the opportunity and don't forget details like dress code or age restrictions if they apply. The more the volunteers know up front the more likely you'll get the right volunteer for the opportunity.
3. **But Why?** If you have an opportunity that isn't glamorous but needs to get done be sure to let your volunteers know why it's important to your organization. Volunteers want to help and are much more willing to if they understand why. An opportunity mopping floors may not interest many volunteers until they find out the floors need to be cleaned because your clients' children will be playing there while their parents receive critical job skills. Stuffing envelopes may sound like a chore until volunteers realize that the newsletters you're sending may be the only communication they get that keeps them in the loop to the events and services your organization provides. Volunteers want to know that what they're doing truly impacts your organization so share stories, give examples and tell them why their work is so important.

4. **No Car. No Problem!** Some volunteers have experienced economic hardship that has impacted their ability to get around. Volunteers are now looking for opportunities that they can access by walking, biking or taking public transportation. If your organization is located by a bus or Trax station it is helpful to list information like a bus stop number or Trax station name so volunteers know your organization is easily accessible.
5. **Sorry, I'm Busy.** Avoid the frustration of scrambling to get volunteers at the last minute. Plan ahead and post your opportunities online as far in advance as possible. When you do, you have more chances to promote your opportunity to volunteers. You could request your opportunity to be spotlighted through social media, listed in the Newspaper or shared by word of mouth by volunteers who sign up early. Encourage early volunteers to invite a friend or pass the word on so you can try to fill your opportunity well before your event date.
6. **Alternative Opportunities.** Think of all the ways people can volunteer in non-traditional ways. Of course you need volunteers to run programs, assist clients and serve during normal business hours but some volunteers may not be able to commit to those types of programs. Offering opportunities that volunteers could do from home such as creating a newsletter, updating your website or crafting from home could engage volunteers that are interested in your work but can't make it to your office. Additional opportunities that could be done any time during the year could be helpful for groups of volunteers such as coordinating a donation drive or planning a client celebration. Have a wish list of your organizations needs and wants so when volunteers call you can match their skills and interests with your organizations most pressing needs.
7. **Be Professional.** Volunteers want to know that they are important and a critical participant in your organization. Having specific volunteer position descriptions lets your volunteers know you mean business and are looking to utilize their skills and talents. Writing down what you need from your volunteers in any ongoing positions also helps you to determine exactly what your needs are instead of scrambling to keep volunteers busy when they come in. It can also be helpful to have a process in place for interviewing volunteers and offering an orientation to your organization.
8. **Get Connected.** Major days of service such as Day of Caring, MLK Day and Make a Difference Day are a great opportunities to get your organization recognized by the community. More people tend to seek opportunities to volunteer on these recognized days of service. By planning a volunteer project on a local or national day or week of service you have the chance to engage new volunteers in your mission and accomplish your goals.
9. **Keep it Simple.** Don't worry about getting involved with every new idea that you hear about. Find the methods and processes that work for you and your organization and stick with them. Volunteers will find it easier to work with an organization that has a

consistent and complete program including an application process, orientation and training and recognition. Even if you are working on a tight or non-existent budget a simple “thank you for being here today” or calling a volunteer by name lets them know that you appreciate what they do for you and help them feel welcome and involved.

10. **Other Options.** Not every volunteer that contacts you will be a good fit for your organization. Even if they are too young or lack a specific skill you need, having other options for these volunteers shows you appreciate their interest in serving the community and want them to find the opportunity that is right for them. You could refer a volunteer that’s not a good fit for your program to 211ut.org to find another opportunity online instead of just telling them they can’t volunteer at your organization or placing them in a position that isn’t a good fit.

Things to Consider

- Do you have an organized system in place to recruit volunteers? This could include a volunteer application, interview process, orientation and training and volunteer position descriptions. With the right systems in place your volunteers will feel like an important part of your mission instead of just another person that came through your doors.
- What is your long term vision for volunteers in your organization? Working to turn volunteers into passionate champions does not happen overnight. With the proper relationship building, opportunities and recognition your volunteers may go from sharing their time and talents to advocating for your cause or even making monetary or in-kind donations. Taking the time to have a solid recruitment process in place can help you retain volunteers in the long run.