

# **No Nonsense — Volunteer — Management**

**Nonprofit Center**

OF MILWAUKEE, INC.



**If you need volunteers and a system for managing them, but have little time to develop a program, this information is for you!**

The Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee, a service of the Nonprofit Center, has developed forms and put them on a CD so you can use them "as is" or customize them for your organization. These forms, policies, procedures and "tips" will give you a great place to start in creating a new volunteer program or enhancing and sustaining your existing program. In addition to the forms, there are instructions on how to use them and a volunteer management overview.

There are forms for creating a volunteer program

- **Policies**
- **Procedures**
- **Volunteer Position Description**

Forms for working with new volunteers

- **Volunteer Application**
- **Screening Interview**
- **Volunteer and Agency Agreement**
- **Reference Checks**

And forms for working with ongoing volunteers

- **Sign In**
- **Volunteer Evaluation**
- **Exit Interview**

## **Comments from Users**

*"The materials are all relevant and transferable to a variety of situations. I especially appreciate the volunteer and agency agreement form."*

*"It is important for me to have these forms on a disk so I don't have to recreate them from scratch."*

*"These forms will be a great starting point for us. They give us a structure to bring – and keep – volunteers. This will benefit both the volunteers and our mission."*

The cost for Nonprofit Center members is \$35.00 (\$50.00 for nonmembers).

Contact Bonnie Andrews at (414) 273-7887 or [bandrews@volunteermilwaukee.org](mailto:bandrews@volunteermilwaukee.org) for more information.

The Volunteer Center is Milwaukee's resource for volunteerism. Visit the web site at [www.volunteermilwaukee.org](http://www.volunteermilwaukee.org) to learn more.

## Volunteer Management Essentials

### A Volunteer Recruitment Plan

**What** needs to be done?

**Who** could do it?

**Why** should they?

**Where** are these volunteers?

**How** will you attract them?

March 2005

## Recruitment Maxims

By Susan J. Ellis

Sometimes we get into old habits and need a gentle (or hard) shove to climb out of a rut. Similarly, we can spend so much time thinking about "new" things that we overlook what has moved from standard to stale under our very noses. So this month, I decided to focus on volunteer recruitment – a subject of enormous importance and challenge to all of us.

In the interest of full disclosure, many of you know that one of my most popular books is still *The Volunteer Recruitment (and Membership) Development Book* ([www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)), which I first wrote in 1998 and have revised twice, mainly in order to keep current with Internet recruiting techniques. Because of my writing and training on this subject, I constantly hear questions from colleagues that provide a barometer of what is really going on at ground level. And my sense is that it is very easy to repeat the same old messages to the same old places in the same old ways (usually with the same or diminishing results).

There are many places to learn about volunteer recruitment<sup>1</sup> and clearly many of you are very good at it. But every day it's possible to see amazingly dull recruitment messages, all of which start with some variation on "XYZ agency is seeking volunteers." We simply must begin to think and act like marketing experts and approach the challenge of recruitment as a golden opportunity to educate the public about our cause, generate excitement about our organization, and discover the human riches of our community.

Volunteer recruitment does not mean wheedling, arm twisting, or asking for a favor. The best approach is that you are sharing an opportunity with prospective volunteers that you don't want them to miss! When someone sees or hears a recruitment message from you, their reaction should be described with adjectives such as surprised, intrigued, and enticed. Getting a smile or a laugh is fine, too. (Volunteering is too often presented as formal and serious.)

So, I'd like to propose a few maxims of recruitment – principles to remember whatever your organization or your recruitment technique. Then I hope you'll share *your* maxims, too.

***Don't go where there are "people," go where there are the right people.*** - If you are looking for Latino men, you won't find any at the Polish-American Women's Club. Sounds obvious, but think how often you place recruitment flyers or give a speech somewhere simply because there is an audience, without analyzing who's in that audience. This also means avoid mass media recruiting (everyone hearing it and no one listening) in favor of mini-campaigns targeted at specific places where you have the best chance of finding people with the skills or characteristics you want.

***If you feel you're in the right place to find the prospects you want, keep asking until you get a positive response.*** - Advertisers will tell you that *repeated messages* are what eventually have an effect. So don't just give a presentation every three years and hope people remember they can volunteer with your organization! Give a speech, send a note the next month, send an announcement of your holiday event the month after, etc., etc. Not to nag, not to repeat the *same* message, but to keep your organization visible and welcoming.

***Tell the whole truth from the start. Making something sound easy is not necessarily as attractive as making it sound challenging.*** - Just like used car salespeople, we have a bad reputation. We say things like "this will only take you a few hours a month," or "the committee meets every other month," when the volunteer work is more demanding and time consuming than that. But we are afraid of "scaring people away." Stop a moment and think about that. If telling the full story of what the assignment entails turns off the prospect from the start, what makes you think he or she would have done the work once the full picture was revealed? Much better

to allow people to self-screen themselves out of the picture than to engage someone who isn't willing to contribute what you need. Also, it's often more motivating to sign up for a role that is a bit demanding than to take on a task clearly meant for any warm body with a pulse.

**To reach diverse volunteers you have to go beyond word of mouth.** - It's gospel in the volunteer world to note that "the best recruitment is when a volunteer invites a friend to volunteer, too." That's fine and good if all you want is body count. But if you seek greater diversity – of any kind – you won't get it simply by word of mouth. Why? Because people talk to people who are *like them* in age, economic level, values, and interests. Also, the listener pictures the volunteer opportunities in your organization in terms of who is explaining them. Therefore, you have to do proactive outreach to new places, new neighborhoods, new groups of people – in other words, to the very people current volunteers probably don't know yet.

**Get listed everywhere.** - Never turn down a chance to list your volunteer opportunities anywhere, especially if the listing is free. Make sure you're on every Internet registry, in the databank of every volunteer center within 50 miles, known to student activity offices, on the list of any corporation with an employee volunteer program, on file with RSVP, Hands On, and any other placement program, etc., etc. Participate in Make a Difference Day, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, etc., etc. *But*, don't just list your agency's name and a bland, general, "we need volunteers" message. **Be specific.** (List several opportunities with different titles and qualifications.) **Be current.** (When you've filled a position, remove it from the list and put up a new one.) To do this, you need to record where you are listed, date every message you send, and put a reminder on your calendar to do the updating (a volunteer can help!).

**Use your own agency's Web site.** - Back in 2000, I wrote a Hot Topic called "If Not Your Home Page, Then Where?" It is still completely true today. See: <http://energizeinc.com/hot/aug00.html>

**Avoid competition for attention – surprise people in unexpected places.** - The Kiwanis, Rotary, and church men's club have a parade of speakers all year long. Some bulletin boards are so full of notices every message is drowned out. When you reach out to new recruits, be creative. Need volunteers to help with breakfast in your care facility? Go to the nearby factory *during the night shift's meal break* (get permission, of course!). They'll be happy to see you...who else visits them? Staff a table at a street fair in the neighborhood you most want to reach. Do something fun like face painting for children, provide take-away public education materials relevant to your cause, have volunteers wear costumes to match the theme of the event. Get noticed.

Use this Hot Topic as an excuse to assess how you do recruitment now and what you might do to spice it up. If it becomes more enjoyable for you to do, you'll generate more enthusiasm from the public, too.

So...

- What's the most important recruitment maxim or tip you'd like to share?
- If you've been in the field a while, has anything changed in how you do volunteer recruitment or in what seems to work best these days to invite people to participate?

From [energizeinc.com](http://energizeinc.com)

## Team Effort is Key to Volunteer Program Success

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Just as an organization's success does not depend upon one person, it is true that a volunteer manager alone cannot create a successful volunteer program. A Volunteer Management Professional (VMP) can effectively recruit, screen and place new volunteers, but the "solo act" stops there if the volunteer program is to be effective. The ongoing support of volunteers must include others in the organization.

In most nonprofit agencies, volunteers are regularly supervised and coached by a variety of staff. The volunteer will also meet program participants, co-workers, and other volunteers. When these relationships are established throughout the agency, the volunteers are more likely to be satisfied, feel connected, and remain in their positions. Fostering these connections is one of the roles of the VMP.

Here are some tips to help develop an effective volunteer/staff team:

1. Solicit the help of staff in creating and updating volunteer position descriptions.
2. Consult with staff before assigning a volunteer to their department and deal with any concerns or obstacles that arise.
3. Do some internal marketing and promote the success of volunteers. Help your Executive Director and staff realize that volunteers are great! Publicly recognize staff who work successfully with volunteers.
4. Include "supervising volunteers" in every staff position description. Beginning at the orientation for new employees, help staff understand the importance of volunteers to your agency.
5. Be sure volunteers are adequately screened and matched with an opportunity. The "warm body" approach to volunteer placement may backfire later, and staff may long remember the volunteer who didn't work out!
6. Provide training for staff in the effective supervision of volunteers.
7. Monitor the volunteer/staff relationships to be sure that a good fit has been attained. Informal conversations to address early concerns can help avoid problems later.
8. Realize that effective management of volunteers will take time and expertise.
9. Educate your volunteers about the mission and work of the organization. Creating understanding and a commitment to mission can circumvent potential problems.
10. When a problem arises, deal with it as quickly as possible using established volunteer program policies and volunteer position descriptions.

Good communication is the foundation for establishing positive relationships and an effective volunteer program. For more information on volunteerism contact the Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee at (414) 273-7887 or [bandrews@volunteermilwaukee.org](mailto:bandrews@volunteermilwaukee.org).

Bonnie Andrews

Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee, a service of the Nonprofit Center

# Components of a Successful Volunteer Program

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*An effective volunteer program makes a significant contribution to achieving the agency's mission. A number of key volunteer management elements are required to meet this goal. Listed below are some of the essentials in developing a successful volunteer program.*

**Written Policies** - Will ensure consistent treatment of all your volunteers. Your policies should cover guidelines regarding behavior, safety issues, insurance, expense reimbursement, medical requirements and general expectations.

**Written Job Description** - List duties, qualifications and goals to be achieved.

**Recruiting** - Use several strategies to recruit volunteers. Think proximity (people in your area) and passion - your enthusiasm will be contagious. Include volunteer information in all brochures and your website. The Volunteer Center is a great resource!

**Application** - Volunteers seeking ongoing positions should complete an application which includes background information and a reference. Ask why they want to volunteer and what skills they would like to use.

**Interview and Screening** - Do a background and reference check on ongoing volunteers. Use the application to explore the volunteer's interests and abilities, and a standard interview format to help match the volunteer's interests with the needs of the organization.

**Orientation and Training** - An orientation should include information on your agency (mission, services, locations, and future plans), confidentiality, and how the volunteer fits into the organization. Your training can start at a specific event, and should also include ongoing coaching. Invite the volunteers to staff meetings and regular in-service training.

**Supervision and Evaluation** - One supervisor should direct the volunteer's activity and evaluate their work. Evaluation should be tied to expectations outlined in the job description and can be informal and ongoing or done on a regular schedule (such as every six months).

**Recognition** - This can include your "thank you" at the end of every day as well as an annual event. Don't forget that knowledge is important to volunteers and you can recognize them by keeping them informed and valuing their ideas and opinions.

**Record Keeping** - Maintain current information on the volunteers, including their address, phone and emergency contact. Record their volunteer hours so you can recognize the contribution of time.

**Measure Program Effectiveness** - Determine the dollar value of the volunteer hours and how they enhance your program. Communicate the volunteer successes to the whole organization and community — the stories can help in your recruitment.

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## Bibliography and Resources

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### The following books and websites were used in the development of this guide

Susan J. Ellis, *From the Top Down*, Philadelphia: Energize Books 1992.

Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, Downers Grove, IL: Heritage Arts Publishing 1996.

[www.casenet.org](http://www.casenet.org) - The website for Court Appointed Special Advocates. Volunteer Management information is found in the Program Management section.

### These are good resources for more volunteer management information

[www.bls.gov/cps](http://www.bls.gov/cps) - Annual volunteer statistics in the US from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[www.charitychannel.com](http://www.charitychannel.com) - An internet resource on a wide variety of nonprofit management topics.

[www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com) - Susan Ellis has information on volunteer management and a bookstore.

[www.idealists.org/vmrc](http://www.idealists.org/vmrc) - Tools and resources from Idealist.

[www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) - The Corporation for National and Community Services includes reports on US volunteerism.

[www.nonprofitrisk.org](http://www.nonprofitrisk.org) - Website for the Nonprofit Risk Management Center.

[www.polf.org](http://www.polf.org) - The website of the Points of Light Foundation-Hands on Network with a listing of local Volunteer Centers ([www.volunteermilwaukee.org](http://www.volunteermilwaukee.org) in Milwaukee).

[www.serviceleader.org](http://www.serviceleader.org) - Volunteer management and community engagement resources. A project of the RGK Center at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

[www.volunteerresource.org](http://www.volunteerresource.org) - A comprehensive library and effective practices on volunteering and volunteer management. Maintained by POLF and James J. Hill Reference Library.

[www.volunteertoday.com](http://www.volunteertoday.com) - An e-newsletter to build the capacity of individuals to organize effective volunteer programs and to enhance the profession of volunteer management.

### Internet Background Checks

[www.courts.state.wi.us](http://www.courts.state.wi.us) - Open records for Wisconsin. Go to case search - then Circuit Court.

[www.doj.state.wi.us](http://www.doj.state.wi.us) - Department of Justice Crime Information Bureau - \$2.00 per search.

[www.offender.doc.state.wi.us/public](http://www.offender.doc.state.wi.us/public) - Free access to the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Sex Offender Registry.

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