

The New Breed: Understanding and Equipping The 21st Century Volunteer

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Introduction

You must wear three essential hats when working with the new breed of volunteers:

- The volunteer recruiter. Understand how to recruit the cause driven volunteer
- The volunteer manager. Understand how to empower the volunteer who wants to be led instead of managed
- The volunteer leader. Understand how to establish the power and passion of your volunteer team

SECTION 1: THE VOLUNTEER RECRUITER

Chapter 1: The New Breed of Volunteer

The new breed is a result of seismic shifts, shifts from one view to another

1. Family dynamics: from Father Knows Best to 2 1/2 men
2. Isolation: from community to individualism
Many Americans have fewer close friends than their parents did. Bowling Alone
3. Flexibility: from rigid scheduling to volunteer availability
Many volunteers want to work on their schedule, not yours. Rather than recruiting volunteers for preset slots, organizations must ask this new breed of volunteers how they want to be involved.
4. Generations: from experienced veterans to novice Generation Y
The Texting Generation will volunteer if they think they can make a difference. And they want their tech skills and savvy to be used.
5. Technology: from face-to face to cyberspace
Virtual meetings, e-mail, and texting replace meetings, letters, and conversations
6. Professionalism: from skilled workers to knowledge workers
Knowledge workers want to be empowered. They want to volunteer, but they want to influence how the volunteer project is accomplished. Many volunteers today are professionals and want to be treated like professionals.
7. Episodic volunteering: from long-term commitments to short-term projects
The critical role time constraints have on the potential for people to volunteer may help explain why episodic volunteering has become more common
8. Slacktivism: from hard work to easy, "feel-good" tasks
A combination of slacker and activism. Doing good (activism), but with less effort (slacker). Rally people with group texts.
9. Micro-volunteering: from big time commitments to bite-sized projects
People are reluctant to volunteer for extended periods of time. They want to control their commitment and time.
10. Speed: from slow movements to fast responses to change

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The new volunteer wants to get it done – quickly. Impatient, e.g. slow computers.

Profile of the new breed

The new breed of volunteer wants to call the shots. They want to be asked what they see as the needs in the organization and how they can help accomplish the mission. They have a passion for the cause but may not fit into the old organizational pattern. The new system needs to be more flexible and customized for the volunteer. They won't tolerate working alongside incompetent volunteers. And, they don't want to be micromanaged.

Chapter 2: Recruiting or the "Courting" Of Volunteers

Recruiting is actually a lot like dating. The goal is to get to know the other person before you ask them to join your volunteer team. Give them a chance to dialogue and take a peek at some of the exciting aspects of your organization. Ask them to help in a small way first. Ask them for feedback. Listen to what they say. And don't ask them to join up for life. What you want is a second date.

On the second date, you can ask them to help. Be honest and described the job requirements accurately. Find a fit, share thoughts on roles and responsibilities. Build the relationship for future recruiting or the next date. Get another date, that's the goal.

"No" doesn't always mean "never." Give them space and asked them again.

Chapter 3: Finding Volunteers and Not Scaring Them Away

Often, we find ourselves under the gun. We panic because we need volunteers quickly, so we're tempted to use anemic recruiting techniques.

Avoid the following sins that do not attract and may drive people away

Sin #1: expect announcements to get volunteers. Most people don't want to volunteer - they want to be asked.

Sin #2: go it alone. Use a recruiting team. It's not who you know, it's who they know. Look at the roles and responsibilities of the open positions and brainstorm possible people who fit that role and who share the vision or passion.

Sin #3: recruit only volunteers willing make long-term commitments. Short-term projects provide excellent first dates. Pair the dates with your best, most effective leaders.

Sin #4: assume that "no" means "never." Don't pester but ask again.

Sin #5: take anyone with a pulse. Effective recruiting demands a clear, complete, and brief presentation of the roles and responsibilities of the position you're recruiting. If we help volunteers understand what they would be doing and why, and help them fit where they believe they can make a difference, our retention will increase exponentially.

Sin #6: treat professionals like lackeys. Ask a CEO to do busywork like stuffing envelopes. That's the last time you will see them. They expect to use their expertise.

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Sin #7: Hire professionals who know nothing about volunteer management. Organizations that rely on volunteers need to hire volunteer managers for their volunteer managing positions.

Seven skills to improve recruiting and retention

1. Ask personally rather than rely on announcements – get the first date. Remember you're not looking for someone to volunteer - you're looking for someone to commit to your cause.
2. Develop strategic recruiting partnerships – build your network or recruiting team. Don't go it alone.
3. Recruit short-term project teams. The more specific the time limit, the more people you'll get to help. Short-term commitments might open the door to longer-term commitments.
4. Assume that no means not now or not this position. Listen to carefully to the reasons behind the no.
5. Develop roles and responsibilities or a position description for each position. Don't fill any position until you find the person who matches what you're looking for.
6. Recruit specific people for specific roles. Ask professionals to be in charge of significant areas of your organization that represent what they love doing.
7. Hire true volunteer managers – people who know and live the principles of positive volunteer attitudes.

Chapter 4: tapping into two new breeds (retiring boomers and incoming Generation Y)

Don't look at generations, look at life stages:

Young unmarried have time and talents. They want networking opportunities.

Marrieds with children are tapped out. Wait until the kids leave.

Retiring boomers have time and talents. They still want to change the world.

Young unmarried: 1) they're impatient; 2) they are multitaskers; 3) they think digital; 4) they tolerate differences and diversity; 5) they are looking for causes; 6) they are team players but....; 7) they don't want to be managed – they want to be led

SECTION 2: THE VOLUNTEER MANAGER

Chapter 5: Retain New Volunteers Live Motivating Them

Coaching is the work of the manager. Don't give orders. Nurture and lead.

1. Discover what motivates volunteers
 - The self-serving motivational drive
 - The relationship drives
 - The core motivational drive – their beliefs
2. Give regular feedback.

People want to make a difference. Without feedback, they can't know they're making a difference. You can't wait until the awards banquet to give feedback. Give feedback every day, all the time.

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3. Offer special privileges and perks.
Learn to budget events so volunteer staff can attend for free.
4. Send volunteers to conferences.
Training is essential. So is networking. Build their spirit and excitement.
5. Provide on-the-job vocational training.
Use new computers or tools so what they learn is portable, they can use at home or on another job
6. Be available to volunteers.
Go to lunch with them. Take them to coffee. Talk with them. Visit them while they volunteer.
7. Provide free food.
Offer free snacks to motivate and encourage them. Bring bagels, donuts, or fruit to a volunteer meeting, or have sandwiches delivered to along evening meeting.
8. Provide tangible incentives.
Logo apparel, restaurant gift certificates, say it with flowers.
9. Have fun.
Volunteer work can be stressful, but fun can serve as your most effective stress buster. Don't be so passionate you forget to laugh.
10. Accountability.
Post-performance and accomplishments, record attendance, recognize participation.
11. Positive gossip.
When someone praises one of your volunteers, tell the volunteer about it.
12. Use huddles.
These are only quick meetings. They call people together, given play, and get them back to work.
13. Thank families of volunteers.
Send a thank you note to the family members of a volunteer thanking them for their support of the volunteer. Acknowledge the good work and specifically explain the individuals importance to accomplishing the mission of the organization.

The common thread is personal recognition and respect.

Chapter 6: Empowering Volunteers to Do It Their Way

Most of the new volunteers want to be treated like knowledge workers. They want to be able to make empowered decisions. They don't want to ask for approval all the time.

Skilled workers do specific jobs. If the task is outside their job description, they tell their supervisor and often don't do the task.

Knowledge workers are empowered to make decisions. They have the ability to workforce solutions and address problems not previously seen.

Think of it in terms of who winds up with the monkey on their back. Don't take the monkey from the volunteer. Let them know you trust them to deal with the situation and come up with their own solution. That's why they are there.

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Six rules of empowerment

Rule 1. Don't take the problem – give it away. You have your own problems to solve. Let themselves there's.

Rule 2. Label each handoff as either delegation or empowerment. Let them know they have the responsibility. Delegation: talk to me first and then we'll determine the next move. Empowerment: make the next move but let me know what you did.

Rule 3. Secure the handoff. Start all your volunteers at the delegation level and move them to empowerment as soon as you can trust them to be empowered. When you discuss a problem with the volunteer, go through the options right then and make a decision. Don't defer, don't accept it back.

Rule 4. Break tasks into small manageable goals

Rule 5. Don't take the assignment if you can't do anything about it. Focus only on the problems you can control. When we focus on the problems we cannot control, we empower them to control us.

Rule 6. Develop good handoff skills to avoid disaster.

Chapter 7: using a new breed of technology.

The younger generation has grown less fond of email, primarily using texting or social networking instead. The new breed of volunteer communicates faster and more efficiently, mobilizing masses more effectively than ever before.

Social networks and volunteers

Every nonprofit really should have a Facebook page to promote itself. Build pages about exciting projects or events, and update people on what's going on with the project or event. Create a Twitter account for your project and ask volunteers to "follow" you. Create a YouTube page with videos of events. Tell volunteers and potential donors of your address so they can visit. Also post training videos, instructional materials, and publicity videos

wikis

Use wikis to share ideas, files, information, and conversations. No special software required. Wiki spaces.com will help create wikis for committees, teams, or projects.

Text message and email

Members of generation Y don't use email as much as text or social media. Use texting for personal communication.

Basic Communication Rules

Never deliver bad news by email.

Don't send a message you would not want to see in the newspaper

Don't assume your email will be read

Don't use email to vent your frustrations

Use email as a follow-up

Use email to document a conversation

Your website

energizeinc.com

serviceleader.org

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volunteerpower.com

The virtual volunteer – they volunteer remotely using tech resources to do the job.
It's a perfect fit for them, and for you.

Chapter 8: Managing or canning high-maintenance volunteers

Examples of high maintenance volunteers:

Know it all Nick: he has all the answers and gives all the orders. Never been wrong.

Helpful Hannah: very helpful and caring. She's really into sharing and letting them know about concerns she has with the organization. She uses time with her issues.

Negative Nancy: constantly complains about the people on the board, her committee, how money is spent. Frequent comment is "we tried that, and it didn't work."

Use performance coaching to bring the volunteers performance up to the standards of expectation.

Step one-Step in their shoes.

Before you do anything else take a look at things from your volunteers' point of view.

Step two-are there valid reasons for their action.

Don't dismiss them outright. Use the facts, feelings, and future probing method of listening. Prompt them to tell you what they observe, how they feel about it, and what they think they can do about it.

Facts: "What do you see happening?" "What are your concerns?"

Feelings: "how are you feeling about your roles and responsibilities?"
"How do you feel about our organization?"

Future: "What you think we could do to help make those changes?"
"What can we do to accomplish our goals?"

Step three-Determine how you should respond

Frame the problem

Enforce the rules. Keep standards high. active volunteers become discouraged when I made instance volunteers slide by, because they have to pick up the load. The new breed of volunteer will not tolerate incompetence or indifference from other volunteers. They don't want to waste their time working with people who are professional or committed to the mission of the organization.

Offer a timeout. Not for punishment, but renewal.

Removing high-maintenance volunteers

Make sure your own good legal ground.

Document all discussions.

During the firing session:

Do it in private

Be specific

Follow up. Send a letter thanking them for their participation and tell them you appreciate their efforts

Prepare for firing backlash.

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SECTION 3: THE VOLUNTEER LEADER

Chapter 9: Leading the successful volunteer organization

If you are a volunteer leader, your job is to focus all the passion, energy, and enthusiasm of your volunteers into a successful organization to make a lasting impact. Leaders set the vision for where the organization is going. Managers pave the road to get it there. There are five skills and principles of leadership.

Passion: Where the power begins

When volunteers focus on their cause, they are unstoppable.

Focus: The power of focused mission

Laser beam intensity on a given issue. No more turning the battleship metaphor.

Now we are leading the school of minnows and the only thing that can mobilize them is a unifying cause. Strategic thinking: the key for mobilizing passion: the mission: who we are; what we do; who we serve; how we provide a benefit; and, why we are unique.

Vision: a statement of your desired future

Community: Building team spirit

Training and Development: A valuable tool for instilling passion

Give training the context. Avoid lists of rules

Use role-playing. Challenge them with life like questions.

Use mentors and video replay.

Use staff meetings

Use case studies