



Volunteers – Recruit and Retain

Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Workshop

2007 OLA Superconference workshop facilitated by Reva Cooper.

Reva acknowledged the challenge in trying to engage volunteers given today's reality. People are busy and they are looking for different things. We need to start thinking about new volunteers in new ways and get them involved. We also need to not overwork current volunteers.

Reva asked us our reason for being here. Responses reflected the challenges facing Friends organizations:

- Friends of Library has one person
- Friends in rural communities
- How to recruit right kind of people to serve on board (executive recruitment skills)
- Looking for skill set different from staff members. We have to be particular about kind of work we can ask them to do (avoid job sharing/job loss concerns among paid staff)

The workshop was designed to help us consider who volunteers, why they volunteer, how to increase our volunteer base, and how to retain the volunteers we already have. Reva explained strategies relating to targeted recruiting, marketing and volunteer management program models. We have to be flexible and innovative if we are to be successful in expanding and diversifying our volunteer base. The delegates shared best practices for volunteer recruitment and engagement.

Trends

Reva noted some risks reported in the report "Cornerstones of Community: Highlights from the National Survey of Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations".

- 1 million fewer volunteers between 1997 and 2000
- Ontario: decrease from 32% to 25% of population
- 7% of Canadians give 73% of volunteer hours
- 5% "super volunteers" give 34% of all volunteer hours
- 162 hours volunteered on average (split amongst several charities)

Reva asked us what trends we are noticing. Is it easy to recruit? People are finding it different from five to ten years ago. There is support from high schools – unlimited list of available people. On the other hand it is harder to get volunteers and older ones are babysitting. It is difficult to recruit leadership because of the time issue.

We are competing with many things for people's leisure time, as there are many charities and non-profits. Volunteers have great expectations and are being more selective. People want to make a difference and they want to add meaning to their life. Volunteering has a lot of positives.

For a full report of the workshop, and to read and download the handouts, please visit the FOCAL website (www.friendsoflibraries.ca), and look to the conference programming section. A complete list of resources, and links to documents are also found online.

Volunteer Retention Factors

Volunteers as customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a customer service approach to volunteers • Satisfied volunteers – unhappy people tell 9 people – happy people tell 3 					
Organizational climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Make people feel welcome • Volunteers feel supported • There is a process for resolving conflict • New ideas are welcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to feel comfortable • Lack of tension/politics/infighting • Sense of teamwork • Open communication 				
Orientation and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People want to learn, grow and develop their skills • Buddy system to match new member to experienced volunteer • Ongoing training - opportunities to take on new responsibility • Risk management issue – policies in place – screening required • Job description • Tell or show volunteer how to make a contribution. Their time is valued. • Ask experienced volunteers to train others • Reinforce enthusiasm and commitment 					
Supervision and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be an annual formal chat – Ask the question "Is it meeting your needs?" • Show volunteers ways to be more successful • Anticipate potential problems • Provide feedback and evaluation • Communication with and to volunteer - can do by e-mail • Ask if there is anything we can do to make your experience better • Volunteer satisfaction surveys – feedback forms • Stars and wishes – idea from Brownies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stickers – gives us a star – when we are doing something right • "Use a wish" sticky – Ask volunteers "What do you wish we were doing?" • Suggestion box/Comment box • Every volunteer deserves a formal time to sit down with supervisor at least once a year – informal session – pat on the back • Encouraging people 					
Recognition (includes rewards)	<p>Knowing who volunteers are and designing recognition that will be valued and appreciated. A continuous diverse process will make sure people feel valued.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Types of recognition</td> <td>Methods</td> </tr> <tr> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal/informal • Public/private • One time/ongoing </td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner/Tea/Food • Pin • Social evening • Draw prizes • Invitation to events • Media coverage • Thank you – written and/or verbal </td> </tr> </table>		Types of recognition	Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal/informal • Public/private • One time/ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner/Tea/Food • Pin • Social evening • Draw prizes • Invitation to events • Media coverage • Thank you – written and/or verbal
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Resources:

- Canada Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating www.givingandvolunteering.ca
- Environmental Scan on Volunteering in Canada - www.vsi-isbc.org/eng/hr/environmental_scan.cfm
- 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating & 2004 Canada survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating - www.givingandvolunteering.ca/pdf/CSGVP_Highlights_2004_en.pdf
- Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Today's Volunteers www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/seniors/english/resources/docs/StrategiesforRecruitingVolunteers.Eng.pdf
- Working Together : A Government of Canada/Voluntary Sector Joint Initiative: Report of the Joint Tables www.voluntary-sector.ca/eng/publications/1999/working_together.pdf

Target Recruitment Steps

**Identify:
Differentiate:** **Who is your target?
What do they want?**

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Targeted recruitment approach:

We need to be innovative, creative and flexible in our recruitment methods:

- Match the right person to the right position
- Support volunteers with infrastructure for training
- Break down the work differently
- Have co-chairs to attract reluctant executive members
- Ask for a (short) term commitment up front
- Offering the volunteer new ways of being involved
- Make it easy for people to say yes
- If we invite them to come in for one event, they will continue if they see that they can contribute.

Other strategies that worked:

- Get people on the board as director – with a job that has no responsibilities but gets them at the table, and they don't have to take on a big project or chair a committee
- Ask them to join
- Give somebody who is already in your group more training. If they get more confidence they will take on more duties
- Word of mouth/satisfied volunteers
- Most effective method – a happy volunteer
- Start within your own group – are there people who would benefit from doing more?
- Engage people – don't burn them out

Why do people volunteer?

- To help a cause they believe in (95%)
- To use their skills and experience (81%)
- Have been personally affected by the cause (69%)
- To explore one's own strengths (57%)
- To improve job opportunities (23%)
- People also volunteer to have fun and gain a sense of personal achievement.

Why they don't volunteer?

- Do not have the necessary time (69%)
- Unwilling to make a year-round commitment (46%)
- Give money instead of time (38%)
- Were not personally asked (37%)
- Already made a contribution to volunteering (22%)
- Did not know how to become involved (20%)
- Don't BELIEVE they have the time
- Television and computer time is going up – volunteering is going down

* Statistics from Motivations and barriers to learning – fact sheet from the National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (www.givingandvolunteering.ca/factsheets.asp)

Target Recruitment Steps

**Interact:
Customize:** **How can you reach them?
What is your message?**

Interact How can you reach them? **Customize What is your message?**

Strategies

- 8 - 10 times of contact to move a person to action
- Public Service Announcements – use the media for stories
- Image – we are a good organization – great place to volunteer
- Everyone in your organization knows what you are recruiting for
- Have a job description
- Make contact with high schools (posters or morning announcements)
- Articles in community newsletter
- Library newsletter
- Welcome Wagon
- Satisfied volunteers

What groups might have something to give?

- Retirees
- Students
- Book club
- History/genealogy
- Other cultural groups and service clubs
- Volunteer bureau/Speakers bureau

Who are we not appealing to now?

- New Canadians
- Young parents
- People who work full-time
- Yuppies
- Corporations
- Functionally illiterate
- People with mental health issues that we cannot accommodate

What do we offer volunteers?

What motive can we appeal to? Volunteers feel they have something to give or something to gain.

- Social – meet other people and get out
- Enjoy reading
- Value - You visit your library
- Love of libraries and books
- Give back/contribute
- Make connection with professionals (retired)
- Community service – compassionate
- Put it on a resume (young people)
- Political aspirations – leadership experience
- Public service

Recruitment methods that have worked:

- Feed them
- Give and take – benefits of service
- Bring a buddy night. Sponsorship of new members (offer free drink or meal)
- Shuttle service to brings friends to events
- Invite people to come to coffee hour, to learn about new books and have a friendly time
- Information night/talks – mention need for volunteers
- Work with high school guidance counselors

Recruitment Tips

- Write clear, comprehensive job descriptions
- Be honest about the position
- Use the “targeted” versus “warm body” approach
- Appeal to motivations and describe benefits
- Show impact of volunteer participation
- Tie into existing marketing practices
- Make sure everyone knows what you are looking for
- Use technology to recruit