

Tips for Effective Volunteer Recruitment

It's no secret that it's easy to get bitten by the "NVC bug." The empowerment, spiritual development, and self-awareness one feels upon either first experiencing NVC, or when the NVC consciousness begins to get into the bones can stir volunteers to give every minute of their spare time to growing your local community. However, as you recruit and support local volunteers it's absolutely essential to consider how you can create a life-serving volunteer experience for all. Where ever you look you can find volunteers who have given more than they enjoyed; were not supported in ways that served there needs; or are confused if their actions are really making a difference. As an NVC group, team or organization, you have the ability to integrate NVC consciousness into all aspects of your volunteer recruitment and support. As a result, volunteers can experience a great NVC learning opportunity just by being involved – and they are sure to influence others to volunteer in the future.

This document contains suggestions for creating effective volunteer recruitment announcements. They are intended to serve as background considerations as you write your announcement. Use this information, the sample position descriptions, and the sample call for volunteers included in the Team Development Toolkit to maximize your recruiting abilities.

TIP #1: MAKE CLEAR, UNDERSTANDABLE REQUESTS.

- Just as the NVC model reminds us – it's important that requests are clear, understandable and doable. Integrate clear requests into your recruitment announcement. It's not necessary to include every request that will ever be made of the volunteer, but be sure to include a general request so the volunteer understands the type of task they will engage in.

TIP #2: TELL A POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM.

- What needs will be met by the volunteer by donating their time and energy? Needs for teamwork, collaboration, community, and learning? What is the most intriguing aspect of volunteering with your group? Would the role provide a learning opportunity to deepen their NVC awareness? Would the volunteer have the opportunity to learn new skills from a mentor?

TIP #3: PROVIDE A CLEAR CALL TO ACTION.

- What next step are you requesting the potential volunteer take to apply for the role? A call to action stirs the reader to act on the information they've read, and provides clear instruction for that action. For instance, "To apply, submit a statement of interest and contact information to – email@nvc.org, or call 503-555-1234."

TIP #4: MAKE IT EASY FOR THE POTENTIAL VOLUNTEER TO APPLY.

- For some volunteer roles (such as web development or media relations) it's important that the applicant have certain applicable skills necessary to fulfill your requests. However, most volunteer roles do not need prior experience. In these cases, make it easy for the volunteer to apply. Avoid asking the volunteer to submit a lot of documents, forms, resume and such. If possible, allow them to submit their information by email.
- When your position does require more than a simple statement of interest, try to keep the process easy. Be clear what skills or experience you think would be helpful in fulfilling the position. Then, ask for documents that correspond with this experience and that the applicant will most likely have easy access to, such as a resume.

TIP #5: BE RESPONSIVE; SHOW YOUR EXCITEMENT ABOUT EACH APPLICANT.

- The best way to turn a potential volunteer's excitement off is to never respond when they express a desire to volunteer. Many organizations that operate almost exclusively with volunteers may be overworked. Accordingly, some "simply don't have time" to respond to all inquiries. Others suggest that accepting help from volunteers sometimes "takes more time than I have." To avoid tons of volunteer inquiries you are unable to fill by being very clear (on your website) what volunteer positions are currently open. Also, be sure to add a statement on your website such as:

"If the volunteer opportunities listed here do not meet your interests or need for contribution, please let us know where you'd enjoy contributing to our organization. Please submit your name, contact information, and a brief description of the type of support you'd enjoy providing us. Since we operate almost exclusively by volunteers, please allow us a few days to respond to your request."

- Try to thank all applicants for their interest in your organization. If you receive 10 applications for one position, ask if any of the volunteers would enjoy sharing the role between two volunteers (to support their need for ease). For the remaining applicants, be sure to let them know about any other opportunities you still have available (including short-term opportunities such as leafleting at a peace rally to promote an NVC workshop), or let them know if/when you expect to have other roles open soon.

TIP #6: CREATE A SUPPORTIVE, NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR VOLUNTEERS.

- Consider finding a core team volunteer who'd enjoy coordinating all other volunteers, especially short-term volunteers. Develop strategies for orienting volunteers to the team, to NVC, and to the work you're trying to accomplish. If possible, match the new volunteer with a mentor for the first month.
- Identify strategies to express gratitude to your volunteers frequently. Perhaps you use a space in your e-newsletter, or 10 minutes at the beginning of each team meeting where people can express gratitude to others in the group.
- Encourage volunteers to always consider their own needs, and to make requests / set boundaries that will help get their needs met. For instance, if you work during the day, you may request that you only be contacted in the evening or weekends to meet your needs for safety, integrity and ease.