

Voluntary and Community Action

Marketing your Volunteering Opportunities

Volunteering Information Sheet No.5

March 2009

Volunteering Information Sheets

The Volunteer Centre has produced a series of Information Sheets on:

- setting up and managing a volunteer programme
- recruitment and development of volunteers and trustees.



They are available to download from our website or by contacting the Volunteer Centre (details on back page).



Finding the right volunteers for the opportunities that exist in your organisation is a two step process: writing and advertising. This information sheet explains what any good advert should contain and where to advertise to get maximum benefit. It also explains how the Volunteer Centre can help in recruiting volunteers.

Writing an advert

There are four elements that should be included in any volunteer recruitment marketing material to ensure a chance of success. These are:

- a statement of need
- how the reader can help
- dispelling of any fears
- benefits to potential volunteer.

A statement of need makes people sit up and think about a particular issue and hopefully come to the conclusion that somebody should be doing something about it.

This should be followed by a description of the activities that can be carried out to help address this need. Enough information should be included for people to picture themselves in this role.

The next step is to dispel all the reasons that people come up with for not volunteering, e.g. age, experience, culture etc. So make sure you tell them that no experience is necessary and that full training is given if this is the case and that you welcome applications from all sections of the community.

Lastly, all volunteers volunteer for a reason. Make sure you sell all of the positive aspects of volunteering in the advert, from learning new skills to making friends.

Where to advertise

Most volunteers are recruited by word of mouth, through existing staff, volunteers, supporters and clients, so make sure everybody involved within your organisation knows which roles you are recruiting for.

Posters are a useful way to reach as many people as possible and leaflets can provide more information to potential volunteers. It is important when designing printed material to keep it simple, avoid jargon, make it easy to read and reflect the nature of the opportunities in your design.

Once designed, why not contact some of the following places to ask if they would consider displaying and promoting your materials:

- schools and colleges
- libraries
- town halls and other public buildings
- GP and dental surgeries
- sports, leisure centres and



- community buildings
- places of worship
- shop windows/notice boards
- bars
- job centres
- Voluntary and Community Action.

After letting 'friends' know, and general poster and leaflet advertising, you need to decide if it is worth advertising further. Is the role ideally suited to somebody with a particular skill or hobby. It might be worth investigating opportunities within particular networks and institutions or advertising in trade journals/specialist magazines. You may also be able to arrange a talk or presentation to a particular group of people that would be interested in volunteering for you, for example, local youth groups, schools, community centres, and businesses.

An effective way of letting local people in your area know about opportunities within your group is through your local Volunteer Centre, who offer a free, confidential service to voluntary and community groups, to help them recruit new volunteers.

Media

Building up good relations with the local media can pay huge dividends when trying to recruit volunteers. If you can feed the media with a steady stream of 'human interest' stories about the good work that you and your volunteers are doing, it can only help raise your profile and assist in recruitment. Volunteers' Week (1-7 June) is always a good time to

try and schedule a PR stunt or event to get some free publicity. The Volunteer Centre also regularly write articles for local press regarding groups.

Consider:

- websites
- organisation, staff or parish newsletters
- newspaper advertorial or advert (free or paid for).

Advertising

Newspaper advertising may spring to mind but there are a number of other, often free ways, to advertise. Consider cards in shop windows, notice boards in supermarkets/shops, or hospital or community radio.

Press Releases

Write a Press Release about your organisation or event of no more than two pages and send to the local media. You can appeal for volunteers and promote activities.

Make sure you research the publications beforehand to ascertain the type of information they publish for their readership. An information sheet on local media is available. See the panel on the left of this page for more tips on writing Press Releases.

Advertorial

Advertorials are when a publication writes a story about your organisation and advertises your message. Think what publications are read by the kind of people you want as volunteers. It could be a local sports paper, Rotary club circular or the town's newspaper. Whatever the publication, make

TIPS ON WRITING PRESS RELEASES

- USE A STRONG HEADLINE OF 10 WORDS OR LESS
- TRY TO KEEP IT TO TWO SIDES OF A4 1.5 OR DOUBLED SPACED
- USE "HE" AND "THEY" NOT "WE" AND "US"
- DON'T FORGET TO ADD THE DATE, CONTACT INFORMATION AND WEBSITE
- SEND A GOOD, HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTO IF POSSIBLE
- PLACE THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION AT THE TOP

contact and explain why their readers should be interested in your organisation - and see if they will write a few lines or even a feature. They will be more interested if there is a newsworthy angle for example a "human interest" story that appeals to peoples emotions, a local link, something topical, new, or something slightly quirky.

Websites

The internet provides lots of opportunities. If you have a website, make sure you advertise your vacancy there.

Networks

Think of the networks that your ideal volunteer could be involved in. This could be a professional network, a local book club or sports club, local faith community group or professional group. Enquire if the network can distribute information for you. This could be as an announcement at a meeting, mailing or by email.

Your members and supporters can also apply for/publicise the volunteer opportunity as there may be an ideal candidate in their ranks. If not, they may well know someone who would be well suited. Ask them to spread the word.

Volunteer Centre Central Bedfordshire

Your local volunteer centre can help promote your volunteering opportunities in a number of ways. They can upload any opportunities to a national online database (www.do-it.org.uk) where potential volunteers can search for opportunities that interest them.

They also produce a Directory of Volunteer Opportunities that potential volunteers are given listing all of the opportunities throughout southern Bedfordshire

The Volunteer Centre regularly have stands at local events to promote volunteering and use the Directory to highlight available opportunities. Members of the public also come into the Volunteer Centre offices in Leighton Buzzard and register as volunteers to get placed with suitable organisations.

Contact the Volunteer Centre on 01525 850559 or volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk to promote your opportunities or for help in developing and marketing your volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer Brokering Services

Professional bodies, employers, and public sector organisations such as REACH, Rotary and Lions may be able to help publicise your opportunities. Some organisations also provide a brokering service for volunteers from their profession, such as accountants, secretaries and personnel specialists.

Further information and resources

Before writing your advert make sure your recruitment procedures are up to date and that you have a volunteer role description and person specification ready to give out (information sheets on both these subjects are available).

- The Good Practice Guide For Everyone Who Works With Volunteers, K Bowgett, K Dickie and M Restall, 2nd Edition, 2002, Volunteering England, www.volunteeringengland.org.uk



GOOD REASONS FOR VOLUNTEERING

- MAKE NEW FRIENDS
- DEVELOP NEW SKILLS
- HAVE FUN
- MAKE A DIFFERENCE
- USE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE EFFECTIVELY
- IMPROVE PROSPECTS

Do's and Don'ts for Promoting your Opportunities

Do	Don't
Keep it brief	Be too formal
Describe your organisation and what you do	Use acronyms
Describe the role, especially what the time commitment is	Assume people know about your organisation or what you do
Make clear it's vocabulary	Include unnecessary detail
Be clear about the qualities you are looking for	Forget to include how to respond and by when
Stress the benefits of getting involved	Oversell - be realistic about any benefits
Sound welcoming and use upbeat words like "opportunity" and "inspiring"	Forget to include details of your open session if you decide to hold one
Get someone to proof read it for you	Disguise the commitment required
Put your ad or notice in places your "target" audience is likely to see	
If you are a registered charity, make sure you include your registered charity number	



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How can the Volunteer Centre help?

If you are a voluntary organisation or community group operating in southern Bedfordshire, we can help by:

- promoting your volunteering opportunities and signposting volunteers to your organisation
- providing information, guidance and training in all aspects of good practice and volunteer management.

Please give us a call on 01525 850559 or email volunteer@action-centralbeds.org.uk to arrange a meeting.