

# Serious Tips on Volunteer Recruitment



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## Other tips coming soon in this series:

- Volunteer Interviewing
- Volunteer Recognition
- Volunteer Retention
- Volunteer Training
- User-Friendly Volunteer Experience


Recruitment is basically a two-stage decision: first, persuading people to contact you so you can talk to them directly; second, giving them a reason to say “yes” to volunteering with you. Here are some practical tips:

1. Don’t assume that anyone who has contacted you has already made a firm decision to volunteer – they don’t have enough information to make that decision.
2. The hidden secret to a great recruiting system is having an immediate response system in place. Get back to inquiries ASAP. Get preliminary materials and forms to people quickly so they can start “being involved.” Keep people informed about what is happening and how long it will take. Communicate, even if about the inconsequential, frequently so that applicants will know you haven’t forgotten about them.
3. All of the methods for disseminating information about volunteering (social media, advertisements, flyers, etc.) work. Try to find the one that works most cheaply and efficiently for you and that you can stay on top of.
4. Word-of-mouth recruitment works most efficiently and is best delivered by your current volunteers. Videos of volunteers talking about what they do are a pretty good substitute for real life. If your volunteers are happy with their experience, they will automatically recruit for you without even knowing it.
5. There are a lot of strengths to mention when talking about SMP and SHIP: We’re national programs with national standards; we’re locally run; volunteers are the core of our programs; we promote a better knowledge of Medicare that benefits everyone. But what’s most important is that SMPs and SHIPs offer volunteers a role where they will make a difference in people’s lives.
6. You never know what will motivate someone, and often it may not be the thing that would motivate you. Remember that you’re not trying to recruit yourself. We already have you. The fact that you got involved because you care most deeply about

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serving the needs of the elderly does not in any way diminish the importance or enthusiasm of a potential volunteer who just loves learning new things and sharing them with others and would be happy to do that with any topic and any audience but just happened to come see you because a friend said you were a good program. Once you enroll them, you can turn them into a true believer.

7. Play the long game. Think past getting an initial “yes.” “Successful” recruitment only happens about a month after the volunteer has started in the role and determines that they made a good decision. Anything that happens before that is just testing out the decision to volunteer and can be revoked at any time.
8. If you have a person on the fence about volunteering for your program, think about “two-stepping” them in: Offer them a smaller, less challenging role, let them try it out, have them get to know you, and then “invite” them to take on the larger role. Sometimes you have to invest in the volunteer before you can get any return.
9. Remember that successful people like challenges. You’re looking for volunteers who are self-confident, used to solving problems, and resilient. Don’t try to make the role look too easy.
10. Don’t downplay training requirements. For a lot of volunteers, such requirements can be a turnoff; for the ones you’re really looking for in SMP/SHIP, they can be an attraction. SMP/SHIP volunteers like knowing things, they are used to succeeding in learning new things, and they enjoy telling others about the new things they know and helping them.
11. Don’t ever try to cheat on recruitment; don’t ever offer anyone a volunteer role you aren’t sure they will like and succeed at. When that volunteer discovers that you sold them on a role they really don’t want, they will leave, wasting both a lot of their time and a lot of yours.
12. Recruitment is supposed to be hard because it reminds you of how much more you ought to be doing to foster retention. ➡



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