

Recruiting Volunteers – Podcast Transcript

Opening:

Hi, I'm Annie Klug, the communications manager here at Oregon Mentors. I am here today in partnership with the Oregon Student Assistance Commission, also called OSAC for short. Today I am going to talk to you about effective volunteer recruitment strategies.

Body:

Here at Oregon Mentors, we always say that if you want a volunteer to have a relationship with your program, you need to build a relationship with them.

Rather than thinking about “volunteer recruitment”, think about building relationships. The Center for Applied Research Solutions surveyed people to find out how they learned about the volunteer opportunity and, overwhelmingly, more than 50% said word of mouth, whether it was from a friend, coworker, teacher or other personal relationship. So look for ways to create a more personal connection with your potential volunteers and don't hesitate to use your existing volunteers to create those connections and ask for you.

Also, think about the size of your potential volunteer pool. It's important to remember that not every possible participant you approach will convert into a volunteer, so you need to plan your outreach to a much larger group than you'll need to support your program. As an example, you may approach 50 people with your recruitment message, 20 will sign up to learn more about the opportunity, of those 20, 10 will apply, and maybe only five will either pass your screening process or decide to ultimately volunteer. It's important to think about this process when planning your recruitment strategy and the initial number of potential volunteers that you'll need to engage.

In Oregon, we know from our data that more women than men are mentoring on a ratio of 3 to 1. If you would like to increase the number of male mentors within your program, there is a great resource from Mentor Michigan called the “Men in Mentoring Toolkit” that you can find at www.michigan.gov/mentormichigan that gives you tips on male recruitment.

Another important group to remember during your recruitment are those in service professions – social workers, fireman, policeman, etc.. Research shows that they're likely to last longer in their volunteer role because they understand the importance of the commitment to youth.

When thinking about building relationships with your potential volunteers, it's critical to understand their motivations. They'll likely all be coming from different perspectives, but this will help you cater your messages to their interests and needs.

You may be thinking – how can I possibly know what motivation drives my volunteers? Remember, you can always ask! There are a number of ways including focus groups with current or potential volunteers, exit surveys with loyal volunteers, and entry surveys with new volunteers that could garner you very helpful information for future outreach.

Now that we've thought about the way you'll recruit volunteers, who to approach and what motivates them, it's time to craft a message or pitch that will help you draw them to your program. The most important thing to remember is that if your recruitment message is aimed at no one in particular; don't be surprised if no one in particular responds. Now is the time to focus in on who you want as a volunteer and what information is most applicable to their motivation.

Often recruiters want to be able to succinctly share their recruitment message, but don't know how to craft their pitch. Luckily, there is an easy formula to creating a new pitch. There are three parts. First, you create a statement of your need, then you explain how to help, and finally, you state the benefits.

Here is a great example from Betty Stallings' curriculum: *They have gloves, bats and softballs, but no coach. 75 boys and girls are waiting for a coach. Don't let them strike out. Join our Special Olympics Team! Call 1-800-Gold today! You'll never feel more appreciated (and you'll get some exercise, too!).*

Let's break it down:

First, provide the **Statement of client need:** *They have gloves, bats and softballs, but no coach. 75 boys and girls are waiting for a coach.*

This simply states what it is you're asking for.

Then, explain how to help: *Don't let them strike out. Join our Special Olympics Team! Call 1-800-Gold today!*

This is your call to action for anyone who wants to respond to your need.

And finally, the benefits: *You'll never feel more appreciated (and you'll get some exercise, too!).*

Make it clear that these are the benefits to volunteers, even if they seem obvious to you.

By using this simple formula, you can create a number of different pitches and use them with different groups. It's always great to run your potential pitches by outside participants for feedback so they can help direct you to which will be most effective.

Closing:

I hope this podcast has given you a new way to look at volunteer recruitment. The most important things to remember:

1. Mentor recruitment is best when it's approached as relationship building. Seek personal connections with your potential volunteers so asking them to make a commitment will be the easy part.
2. Think about the pool of potential volunteers; how many people should you try to reach, and who should you focus your attention on?
3. Understand the motivations of your volunteers so you can speak to them directly.
4. Create various pitches based on those motivations so it's easy for you to convey your message to potential volunteers.

Closing:

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