

inspiring volunteers

A guide to recruitment and communications



foreword

We are a compassionate nation. A mighty 21 million Britons – around two thirds of the working population – care enough about the problems and challenges faced by our communities, our country and our planet to volunteer on a regular basis.

But over 10 million do not, although surveys suggest that many of them would like to. That lack of engagement may be because they have not yet realised how simple it is in this internet age, with its easy marshalling and filtering of information, to connect with the volunteering opportunities of their choice; but it is also the responsibility of the many organisations which have not yet embraced – or fully realised – the potential for volunteers to enhance, in all kinds of ways, the work that they do. Perhaps the thought has never occurred to them; or maybe they worry that legal and other responsibilities might make it all too complex and burdensome.

This book comprehensively and splendidly removes that as an excuse by providing a much-needed step-by-step guide through the opportunities, pitfalls and processes involved in taking volunteers on board.

It is timely too – coinciding as it does with David Cameron’s “Big Society” promise “to devolve power to individuals and communities”. By definition, volunteering has a major part to play in that.

Here too are case studies that will encourage, inspire and help the creation of this new army of volunteers. Volunteering organisations already driving change in our society will find a complete and invaluable checklist for what to do and how to do it. But above all, this definitive guide to volunteering will make it quick, easy and simple for even more people and organisations to become involved in a grassroots movement that shapes the kind of country we are.

Doing volunteering well is a transformative experience for both organisations and the people they recruit.

Rather than tackling it in an ad hoc way, it makes sense to do it “by the book”...and you could not do better than make it this book.

Martyn Lewis CBE

Chairman & Founder, YouthNet (including www.do-it.org.uk)
Chairman, Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service Committee

introduction

Inspiring Volunteers draws on the best practice and learning developed through Volunteering for All, and the work of the Volunteering for All Opportunity Partners. The guide aims to inspire small to medium sized charities and community organisations who may struggle to effectively market volunteering to a wider, more diverse audience and is full of ideas on recruiting, communicating with and retaining volunteers.

Volunteering for All was a three-year cross-government programme initiated by the Cabinet Office, led by Media Trust. It was made up of three core strands of activity aimed to:

- identify and tackle barriers to volunteering; with monitoring and evaluation studies carried out by GfK Nop Social Research
- establish high quality 'exemplar' volunteering opportunities. As a result, six agencies were recruited as Volunteering for All Opportunity Partners
- raise positive awareness of voluntary activity through a series of high profile volunteering campaigns

I hope you enjoy using this guide and I wish you every success in inspiring your volunteers.

Caroline Diehl

chief executive, Media Trust

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This guide is aimed at charities and communities, to help inspire your communications with volunteers and signpost you to best practice. The legal status of volunteers is complex and to be sure where you, your organisation and your volunteers stand within the law, read *Volunteers and the Law*, downloadable from www.volunteering.org.uk

why volunteers?

Strengthen and breathe life
into your organisation



Volunteers can transform your organisation. Not only can they enhance your services and help you do more in different ways, they can bring new vitality and insight to everything you do.

If you have never involved volunteers, this guide will help you plan your first recruitment campaign.

If you already have a volunteering programme, this guide will show you some new approaches that could help you improve your communications with existing volunteers and attract new recruits.

We will also point you towards the very best resources that exist elsewhere – frequently available online and for free.

What can volunteers do?

Volunteering is normally defined as giving time for free (other than out of pocket expenses) to help other people or a good cause. Some volunteers carry out highly skilled activities that require extensive training and supervision; others do simple tasks from their own home.

There are some great possibilities!

Your organisation might want to ask:

- which areas of existing work could volunteers help to extend?
- what new work could volunteers do?
- can volunteers contribute something different?
- can volunteers help paid staff deliver a campaign?
- what's in it for the volunteers?

Bear in mind that managing volunteers costs time and money (see 'Before You Start Recruiting') and that existing staff can feel undermined if volunteers are seen to be replacing work that they do.

Who volunteers?

Volunteering is everywhere. In every part of the country, among people of all ages and from all backgrounds, volunteering transforms lives. Whether the amount of time is small or large, one-off or ongoing, the same spirit unites what volunteers do: the desire to help other people and make a positive difference.

There are approximately 20 million volunteers in this country, doing everything from clearing canals to coaching football teams. Most volunteers say that they get a huge amount back from volunteering; the satisfaction of giving time constructively, sharing skills and experiences, the social buzz from a group working together, new skills learned and new experiences undertaken. And in the current economic climate we've seen a huge surge of people looking to volunteering to develop their CVs and enhance their employment prospects.

The impact of volunteers

Volunteers bring a wide range of benefits to an organisation. The fact that they have chosen to be there for no monetary reward means that their work can have a huge impact on those who benefit from it.

They can bring diversity and new or differing perspectives to the organisation. When they are well integrated into an organisation this can make a significant contribution to day-to-day work and longer term planning.

Volunteers can be an organisation's strongest advocates and its most honest critics. They are there because they care and harnessing this passion will bring tremendous benefits all round.

Communicate!

Organisations choose different ways to work with volunteers depending on the kind of work they are engaged with. Some will need quite formal procedures, others almost nothing. But all will need to communicate with volunteers, and the quality of this communication can determine how effective these volunteers will be.

Email makes regular communication relatively straightforward, however the real challenge is not just to pass on information but to receive it as well. Volunteers often have real insights, not just into their own activities but the wider work of the organisation, so the effective use of social networking tools, such as i-volunteer.org and Facebook, can bring a whole new stream of useful intelligence.

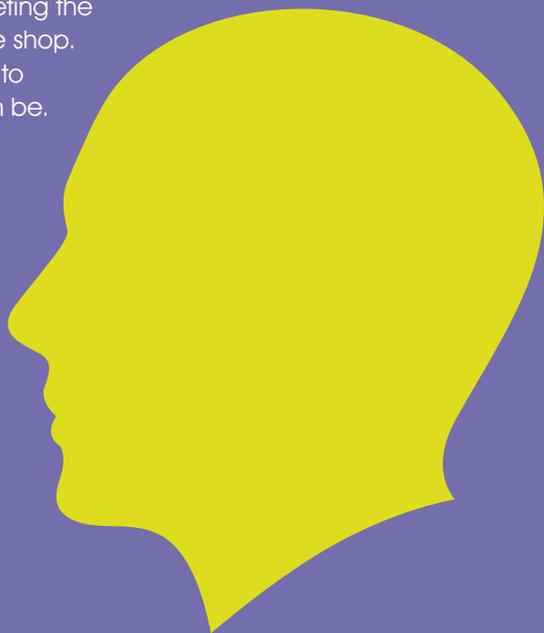
case study

Susan Philip, volunteer

Having had it in my head to volunteer for ages, I finally made a move around six months ago and started sussing out local opportunities. The first charity I approached didn't quite feel right. Everyone was very nice but the atmosphere was a bit stuffy. The second - well I was daunted by the length of time the reference checking was going to take. I had time to give and just wanted to get on with it!

In the end, I went into a charity shop at the end of my road (really should have tried this easiest/closest option first!), not even a five minute walk away and luckily, finally, it clicked! I've been volunteering there almost two months now and am finding it a bit addictive! One to two mornings per week has quickly doubled as I find myself offering more and more of my time between temp placements and job hunting.

The best bit has been meeting the people who come into the shop. It's really opened my eyes to how generous people can be.



Penny Crook, former head of PR, Community Channel

Tips for recruitment events

No stale coffee. The idea of volunteering is often loaded with old-fashioned ideas about things like coffee mornings, and it's best to steer away from this. So try to find something new and interesting if you can.

Joint promotion with other organisations is a good idea, as it ensures that resources and focus are given to one day or a week event. Journalists often receive a lot of pitches around volunteering from various charities, so some joined up approaches can have more impact. Obviously it would be important to showcase a range of opportunities.

Think digital. Obviously digital media and social networks are important in terms of reaching youth audiences. These opportunities are often linked to how you package and market the concept of volunteering and tie it into a larger campaign.



**For a guide to the rules and regulations
– Volunteers and the Law**

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/publications/volunteersandthelaw

The Volunteering England Good Practice Bank

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank

Volunteer policies and agreements

[www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/
Core+Themes/volunteerpolicies](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/Core+Themes/volunteerpolicies)

The Association of Volunteer Managers

access to a wide range of volunteer management resources
and peer networking with other volunteer managers
www.volunteermanagers.org.uk

Volunteer Management Portal – by Volunteering England

[www.i-volunteer.org.uk/groups/volunteering-england-
volunteer-management-programm/whats-the-volunteer-
management-portal/](http://www.i-volunteer.org.uk/groups/volunteering-england-volunteer-management-programm/whats-the-volunteer-management-portal/)

before you start recruiting

Doing some groundwork
will ensure a smoother ride



Once you've decided that your organisation is ready to recruit volunteers, it's worth spending some time making sure you've got some basics in place ready for when they start.

What will they do?

Of all the many things that volunteers might be able to do, what is it that will make the biggest contribution to your organisation? If your organisation is quite small it might be a case of looking for key individuals to help with specific tasks such as setting up a website or helping raise funds. For bigger charities it might be about assisting with a new programme of work that meets your objectives in new and innovative ways.

Management and supervision of volunteers

There's a common misconception that volunteers are 'free'. They're not. Whatever the size of your organisation and whatever activities volunteers are to be involved with, there is some cost in recruiting and managing them.

For the simplest volunteer tasks on a small scale this cost might be relatively insignificant – although it's easy to under-estimate how much time organising even a small number of people can take.

For activities where volunteers are taking on a higher degree of responsibility there will be the requirement for more formal management and supervision. Indeed, some organisations like to manage their volunteers in ways that are as similar as possible to management of paid staff – although others prefer to maintain a clear distinction.

Managing volunteers with special needs may require a higher level of supervision initially, but if you have a clear, inclusive volunteer policy this should help take everyone through what is expected and lead to positive benefits for all involved.

Bear in mind that anyone supervising or managing volunteers might require training before they start – whether they are a paid member of staff or a volunteer themselves. Volunteer management is not the same as managing employees, so try to ensure that appropriate training and support is in place for those who need it.

Health and safety

One of the most important parts of managing and supervising volunteers is awareness of the requirements around health and safety. Your organisation will have a legal responsibility towards volunteers in this respect and so it's important to be fully aware of health and safety requirements and to research any new ones that might come about from the activities that volunteers undertake. Appropriate insurance policies will also need to be in place.

Selection procedures

It can be easy to overlook how you will choose volunteers until after they have started applying to your organisation, so it's much better to think it through in advance.

Will you need to meet or even interview potential new recruits? On what basis will you accept or reject people? Do you have an equal opportunities policy to ensure that people get fairly treated and, if so, does it need to be adapted in any way to apply to volunteers?

Again, all of this will depend to some extent on what activities you are seeking volunteers to do. But even for the simplest tasks you're likely to need to consider what to do if you get too many applicants. Make sure you have your interview process decided in advance and what the assessment criteria will be.

Expenses

It is recognised as good practice, wherever possible, to pay 'out-of-pocket' expenses to volunteers covering their travel costs and, if they volunteer for more than a certain number of hours, some food. This helps to ensure that anyone can volunteer, not just those able to afford it.

To make sure that any welfare benefits they receive are not compromised, and to avoid any confusion with tax, they should be paid directly according to what they spend, rather than any lump sum.

Expenses costs are another reason why volunteering should not be considered as 'free'. If your organisation can't afford to pay volunteers' expenses, you might consider fundraising to cover them.

For a guide to the rules and regulations covering expenses

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/publications/volunteersandthelaw

Volunteering policy

Developing a volunteering policy for your organisation can be a good way to consider all the issues associated with volunteer involvement and to ensure that they are discussed throughout your organisation. It could cover all of the elements mentioned in this chapter as well as things like training for volunteers, confidentiality and grievance procedures.

Your local Volunteer Centre should be able to advise you about developing a volunteering policy, and there is also lots of information online.



case study

Roy Bustin, volunteer manager, The SEND Project, Nottingham

SEND aim to provide enjoyable and engaging sessions where young people are able to develop transferable skills whilst exploring their creativity.

By taking the time to get to know our volunteers on a personal level, we feel that we are able to truly support them in their roles and personal development.

The majority of our volunteers are recruited through word of mouth from current volunteers who speak about their experiences and the difference that they have made, individually and collectively, to our organisation and the community as a whole.

The diversity of our volunteer team is important to us. We have developed a naturally diverse team by engaging with the local community that in itself has a rich cultural heritage. From this, we foster an environment whereby staff and volunteers can learn from each other and develop at a pace that is suitable for the individual.

A recent project has involved volunteers working together to make audio recordings of our policies and procedures, which ensured that our recruitment materials are as accessible as possible. Also, it was a great way of getting volunteers working together and learning about the technical aspects of audio recording, and so it was a valued project in itself.

By providing practical training and ongoing support, our volunteers feel empowered to take on responsibilities and are able to think creatively in developing their own roles with us. This has long term benefits to both the volunteer and our organisation. It is this holistic approach that has ultimately led to our successful volunteer programme.

Debbie Usiskin, **associate director** **(Volunteer Management),** **Red Foundation**

and formerly interim head
of volunteering at Scope

At Scope we worked with a range of disabled volunteers to develop toolkits designed to enable organisations to become disabled volunteer ready, and to encourage and enable disabled people into volunteering.

Led by the actual experiences of disabled volunteers these include a range of training exercises, information and tips that can be used to get your organisation to be more inclusive not only to disabled volunteers, but to volunteers from many different communities. Ask your target group how to reach them and involve them in the design and delivery of the solutions: they, after all, are the experts.

Disabled volunteers

It is important that you involve as many of the community as much as possible. But you need to ensure the experience is a positive one. To do this you need to become more aware of the needs of disabled volunteers. If you are in any doubt as to how to achieve this and what the benefits are, take a look at the section on Disabled People as Volunteers on www.volunteering.org.uk or www.scope.org.uk/support/volunteer/ or for profiles of exemplar volunteering projects and case studies about good practice www.goldstar.org.uk/

|| An 'inclusive volunteering' approach to engaging disabled people in volunteering was piloted at Scope.

Taster days for individuals or groups provided an opportunity for disabled people to explore whether volunteering, or the particular activity they engaged in, was what they wanted to do or not. We also provided supported placements for disabled volunteers.

This approach was important for disabled people who had never thought that volunteering was possible and helped ensure a positive experience. ||

**Nikki Squelch
head of volunteering strategy,
Scope**

Scope is a charity that supports disabled people and their families.

knowing your audience

Understand your audience
to target them effectively



LET'S GET TOGETHER
FOR THE BEST OF
HONOLULU
ISLAND

Class
Introduction
For "The"

Whatever budget you have (or don't have!) for a volunteer recruitment campaign, it's important to learn as much as you can about your audience.

Research

Online communications have made it much easier to find out what people want and how they will respond to certain messages.

If you have an existing database of volunteers, members or donors, you could send them a simple survey by email about what might persuade them to volunteer. It might even be worth asking them about their current impressions of volunteering with your organisation – are they aware of the opportunities you have, and what has persuaded them to volunteer, or not, so far?

To reach a wider audience, blogs and social networking sites can be incredibly useful. It takes time to build up an audience online, but if you put in the effort to provide people with useful information on sites like Twitter and Facebook, you will be rewarded by the presence of an instant free-of-charge focus group happy to consider any questions you put to them.

Of course, surveys on social networking sites aren't scientific – you often don't know who you are reaching or what the circumstances are of those who choose to reply – but they provide an opportunity to create a public dialogue that can be incredibly helpful in your planning.

Specialist sites like i-volunteer.org.uk can also be used at this stage to get a mix of views from both the general public and volunteering professionals.

Remember though, that it's hard to arrive at these sites cold and expect lots of responses. If you want to be active in social media then you need to be a contributor as well as a recipient of the community's help.

Motivation for volunteers

One of the main questions to consider is what motivates volunteers. This can help you design attractive volunteering activities and should influence your recruitment message.

You could ask people what would encourage them to volunteer, what is preventing them and what has led them to volunteer in the past. You can also be quite specific: for example, 'Would you be more likely to volunteer with us if you could get accredited training?'

Hard-to-reach groups

Volunteer involvement is a great way to diversify your organisation, but it's not always easy to reach people who aren't already in contact with you. If you're keen to do this, identify your target audience and try to learn as much as you can about them:

- What do they read? Try to get articles in this press.
- Where do they go? Place leaflets where people go, rather than in your office waiting for them to come to you.
- What languages do they speak? You may need to translate your volunteering messages into other languages. Also, pictures are a great way to reach people who have difficulty reading English.
- What other groups already work with them? Perhaps you can partner with other groups in the communities you want to reach and, where possible, actively work within disadvantaged communities promoting volunteering.

Again, online communications can help with certain sections of society who you might find hard to reach face-to-face.

case study

Help From Home

Mike Bright on how bite-sized opportunities can engage new volunteers

Help From Home encourages people to volunteer by showing them that you don't have to wear a lycra costume with your pants on the outside to be a hero and change the world. All you need is a pair of pyjamas! As all of the opportunities on Help From Home can be conducted from a person's own home, it sends a message out there to suggest to people that it really is so easy to volunteer their time. Each action also has a pyjama rating, just to add a bit of fun to the proceedings!

'Do Good' Suggestions - They're all free to do!
Click to give free child healthcare - www.thechildhealthsite.com
Play games that feed the hungry for free - www.freerice.com
Earn money for charities for free - www.superdonate.org

For more 'Do Good' ideas, visit www.helpfromhome.org

Help From Home's aim is to inspire people to volunteer their time for worthy causes from the comfort of their home, by providing free information on easy commitment home based volunteering opportunities.



Do Good!

Spread random acts of kindness.
Do a good deed,
Pass this card on,
Track it's travels

Tracker ID

To follow this card's travels and the deeds associated with it, enter the ID number above at:
www.helpfromhome.org/dogood.htm

The whole focus of Help From Home is centred around encouraging people to engage in non-traditional volunteer opportunities. Personally, I've been involved in making sick kids smile with just a letter, hunting for galaxies via the internet, fighting cancer with my PC, proofreading pages from public domain books for conversion to e-books etc, etc, etc. Some of the more unusual micro volunteer opportunities on Help From Home are:

- hunting for the Loch Ness Monster via webcams
- playing games that train computers to become smarter
- turning your PC into an global network earthquake monitor
- making 'fat' origami cranes to campaign against Japan's decision to measure everybody's waist

Another angle I use to involve volunteers is to encourage people to spend their work lunch breaks in a more meaningful way. I use a café-styled food menu to list the various actions that can be performed in the short space of time that people have for their lunch breaks. Suggested actions take no more than 20 minutes to accomplish.

To help promote Help From Home we created 'Do Good' cards. These free downloadable cards have suggestions to perform micro volunteer actions and the card is passed on to family, friends or a complete stranger, so each owner is encouraged to record a good deed they have performed onto a webpage on Help From Home. Each card has a unique ID number assigned to them and thus it travels around the world and the good deeds associated with it can be tracked online. I have found these 'Do Good' cards are a great free way of promoting Help From Home and encouraging people to volunteer.

www.helpfromhome.org

insight

Gemma Parmar for LeapAnywhere.com

Leap Anywhere - "If it's not fun, you're not doing it right"

At Leap Anywhere, our aim is to make volunteering fun - the idea of charity has never been really appealing to most people so we're revolutionising the way people interact and give back to charity.

We know how hard it is to start volunteering, and this frustration led our founder Malcolm Scovil to set up Leap Anywhere in June last year, with the simple premise of making doing good fun. A year later we're now proud to have 350 charities and 8,000 followers on Twitter who feel the same way!

Our motto is "If it's not fun, you're not doing it right" so we list only the best events (or Leaps as we like to call them) in London where you can have fun doing good. Once you've been to an event you can record your efforts on our Resume of Good, where you can 'show off' about just how good you really are! Record all the events you've been to, good actions you have done and earn virtual trophies for your efforts.

Whether you want to experience unique events in London for free, fundraising ideas for charity or simply want to make a difference, we can help you get involved with people who think outside the box when it comes to charity.



Links

Volunteer Genie

www.volunteergenie.org.uk/recruiting-volunteers

www.resources.mediatrust.org/blogging/

www.resources.mediatrust.org/social-networking/

www.i-volunteer.org.uk

www.leapanywhere.com/events/in/london

developing a clear message

Clarify your message when
reaching out to your audience

All good communications depend on clarity – use what you have learned about your target audience and then develop a clear and simple message.

Review volunteering activities

Before developing your recruitment message, you should consider whether, in the light of the research you have done into your potential volunteers, you need to review your current volunteering activities.

If you have spent time getting to know your audience then you need to be prepared to act on what you have learnt. For example, if you hear time and again that people want short or one-off volunteer assignments then it might be a good idea to design some.

As an organisation you will have your own needs and capabilities but, in order to attract recruits, you need to match these with what potential volunteers are willing to do. So, if necessary, go back to the drawing board and think about how you can make your volunteering opportunities more appealing.

There might be relatively simple things you can do; for example, offering one-off 'taster' sessions for those reluctant to make a big commitment.

Key themes

Your research should have suggested some of the key elements that might motivate people to volunteer for your organisation. These should be the key themes for your recruitment message.

Some common motivations and benefits for volunteering include:

- making a positive difference to other people or a good cause
- sharing and learning new skills
- boosting a CV
- meeting new people
- having fun

If these or other motivations seem relevant to your audience think about how they might apply to the volunteering activities you have designed.

Most recruitment campaigns use short headline messages backed up by more detail. Don't over-complicate or over-sell what you are offering. Be clear, concise and honest.

Originality

The very best campaigns are more than just clear and concise – they attract attention by being surprising and original as well.

If you have the budget to employ an agency then you might expect them to deliver a campaign with these attributes, but even if you are developing recruitment messages yourself it's still worth trying to think as creatively as possible. Or you could ask your existing volunteers to come up with ideas – perhaps with a prize for the best one.

Tailoring your message

The tone and substance of your message will depend on the audience. Think about the style of communications that seem to work well with your target audience and see if you can develop something in keeping with this.

However, beware of seeming fake. People are very good at spotting communications that don't ring true – use appropriate language and imagery, but don't compromise the integrity of the organisation.

Seek advice if you need to, especially if you are aiming your message at an audience that is relatively new to you.

And don't be afraid to test messages out with your existing volunteers or with your social media contacts.

insight

Reemer Bailey, director, Voluntary Arts England

Voluntary Arts England, the national development agency for arts participation, ran 'Up for Arts', a national campaign in partnership with Community Channel and Media Trust which aimed to increase levels of participation and volunteering in amateur arts and crafts activities.

Up for Arts gave small grants to local arts and crafts groups to help them widen their membership, offered those groups training in media and communication and showcased their work at a number of high profile festival events. Up for Arts highlighted that, in order to develop volunteering in the community and provide encouragement and services that enable people to take part locally, we must tap into the energies of the millions of people giving their time freely to the community through voluntary arts activities.

Voluntary Arts England raise awareness of the contribution that the voluntary and amateur arts and crafts make to the well-being of communities, social inclusion, lifelong learning, active citizenship and volunteering.



case study

Real Parents

Real people with real parenting experience can make a real difference to families struggling to cope.

TimeBank delivered the Real Parents campaign for Home-Start, the UK's leading family support charity. The campaign ran between September 2008 and January 2009. It built on the previous volunteer campaign that TimeBank developed and delivered for the charity in 2006.

The aim was to recruit 900 volunteers with parenting experience from Northern Ireland and London specifically. To focus on recruiting women over 45, but the age was lowered following discussion to include younger parents also.

TimeBank implemented an integrated media and marketing campaign (using print, broadcast and online media channels) to drive volunteers to sign up via a bespoke Real Parents website. (www.realparents.org.uk)

Media relations were an essential part of the Real Parents campaign. We ensured media and marketing was integrated so that it enabled us to maximise opportunities by using advertising to secure editorial coverage.

To meet the aim of recruiting volunteers specifically in Northern Ireland and London media activity focused on local and regional press in these areas. We also targeted national media focusing primarily on family supplements and parenting sections.

Key to the success of using the media to meet our objective of recruiting volunteers were:

1. A call to action – we aimed to ensure that all media coverage included a message designed to drive traffic to the website and also included an 0800 telephone number.
2. Identifying and supporting Home-Start volunteers to act as 'media ambassadors' and talk to the media about their experiences of being a Home Start volunteer so as to encourage more volunteers. Podcasts of their experiences were also created.
3. Identifying various celebrities to support the campaign by providing quotes, drafting 'letters to the editors' and using them as media spokespeople.

TimeBank encouraged and supported local and regional schemes to draft their own press releases. We did this through:

1. A template press release
2. A 'campaign toolkit' in the form of a CD, in order for schemes to target local media directly

Results

We achieved press coverage that would have cost almost £60,000 if we had to buy the space. The total number of registrations after five months for the 2008/09 campaign was 1,465.

www.realparents.org.uk

planning your recruitment campaign

A little time spent planning
goes a long way



It can be tempting to launch into a recruitment campaign as soon as possible, but some time spent planning how it will unfold will pay off in the long run.

Make sure you have clear and achievable campaign objectives, such as:

- the target number of volunteers you wish to recruit
- how long the campaign will run for
- which sections of the community do you intend to recruit from
- what skills would you like them to have

Testing

If possible, get reactions to your recruitment materials at every stage. This can be difficult to manage if you're getting a lot of different opinions, but it helps minimise the chance of getting it wrong and also makes people feel that they have been included.

Don't be afraid to open the consultation out to your stakeholders and the wider public if you can access their views online. Most people won't mind if you make mistakes at this stage and their insights can help you get words and images just right.

Start close to home

Unless you are addressing an entirely new audience, don't forget to start by targeting those people you already have contact with.

Can existing volunteers take on new roles? Do they have friends who might like to get involved? And what about donors, members, service-users or other people your organisation is involved with – all might be potential volunteers who are relatively easy to attract.

Free outlets for volunteer requests

There are many free outlets for volunteer recruitment and even if you have a budget for a paid campaign it would be foolish to overlook them.

These can include:

- your local Volunteer Centre
- Jobsite.co.uk
- do-it.org.uk
- i-volunteer.org.uk
- local community websites

Other organisations connected with the work you do or connected with the audience you are targeting, might also be willing to get your recruitment message out for no charge. You might even suggest writing articles for certain websites or magazines that are popular with your target audience – better still get one of your existing volunteers to write about why it's so great to be involved.

National campaigns

As with free outlets, linking to an existing volunteering recruitment campaign can give you vital back-up for little or no expense. Try teaming up with others to fund a joint volunteer recruitment campaign.

Paid outlets

If you're planning to pay to get your message out in some way, then it's probably sensible to take specialist advice.

There's a vast array of different advertising possibilities, from posters to search-related text adverts and if you don't have experience in the field then it can be worthwhile getting some help.

As a general rule it's a good idea to try things and see what works best. Pay-per-click advertising, such as that organised by Google, enables you to try numerous variables such as different wording and different search terms.

Other materials

Before launching your recruitment campaign you'll also need to be sure that you have other materials ready, such as information packs or relevant pages on your website. Try to anticipate what a potential volunteer might need to know and then provide answers as clearly as possible.

You should also consider what alternative formats or languages you could make your recruitment and support materials available in. You should be able to make your materials available in audio, large-print and easy-English versions yourself with some advice from a relevant organisation, and you might need to think about languages other than English depending on the needs of your volunteers or of those you wish to attract.

Louise Belinfante, manager of the Energise Centre Salford, Big Life Group

Big Life Centres partnered with Media Trust to deliver a special event for people living in Salford to find out more about volunteering opportunities within the area. We specifically targeted individuals with special needs, including disabled people and vulnerable adults.

The Energise Centre provides a range of services to improve and maintain your health and happiness. It's also a place for people to come along, meet other people and find out what's going on in their local community. The event included offering a range of health and well being activities and representatives from a range of local and national organisations with information stalls.

One of the benefits of working together was bringing different skills and knowledge together, combined with shared resources, which enabled the event to have a wider impact.

The Big Life group creates opportunities for people to change their lives for the better.

www.thebiglifegroup.com

Links

Charity Jobs allows you to place adverts for volunteers for free
www.charityjobs.co.uk

Jobsite – one of the largest job recruitment sites in the country offers free advertising for charities
www.jobsite.co.uk

Do-it – the UK's database of available volunteering opportunities, free to use for local charities
www.do-it.org.uk

i-volunteer – a social network that connects volunteers and organisations; charities can browse 'available volunteers' by skill and location as well as post an activity or event
www.i-volunteer.org.uk

Volunteers Week
www.volunteersweek.org.uk

Make A Difference Day
www.csv.org.uk/campaigns/csv-make-difference-day

recruitment ideas

Communicate creatively
when recruiting



While the traditional approach to recruitment, using methods such as word-of-mouth, leaflets, stalls at events and advertisements, is still valid, some organisations are finding new ways to attract volunteers.

Social media can be a powerful tool for engaging people with an interest in your cause, and eye-catching events like speedmatching volunteers with charities and community organisations can help attract free press coverage.

Be inspired by the example of those who've done things differently...

case study

Community Connected

Twitter

Jamie Thomas, founder and CEO of Red Foundation, on using Twitter to launch the i-volunteer social network

When we launched i-volunteer in December 2009, we had zero budget other than the time and goodwill of a few volunteers. So we looked to Twitter to help us tell people about it and get them to join. A few months before we launched we set up a Twitter profile @ivolunteeruk and used this to establish an identity and voice. Over the months we tweeted about volunteer stories, opportunities and opinion, mainly gleaned from news and blog sites across the internet. This meant that when we finally launched we had a readymade audience of potential members and supporters and in just under 5 months are fast approaching 1,000 members and 3,000 visitors a week.

Twitter is a great – and free - way to get your voice heard but it's not a typical broadcast medium. See it as a relational rather than transactional tool where for every marketing withdrawal you want to make you need to make around twenty relational deposits. Take time to share with the network and build relationships – pass on useful information, respond to calls for help, comment on other blogs – then when you want promote your event or project your followers will be far more likely to help you. Social networks are about engagement - real people having real conversations and exchanges - and not about spamming each other so it's important to make your 'Tweets' appropriate and relevant.

Of course, like any communications channel you need to invest some time with social networks. But instead of seeing this as extra work, just see it as doing what you already do differently. For example we have found that Twitter yields much higher response rates than sending out traditional email bulletins so we don't do that anymore.

Love at first sight

The media matching team at Media Trust speak about 'speedmatching' media professional volunteers with charities and communities in need of support.

As part of our media matching service, speedmatching events provide a fun way for charities, voluntary organisations and volunteers from the media to find their perfect match.

Speedmatching events are free networking opportunities where representatives from voluntary organisations get to meet face-to-face with media professionals (volunteers) looking to volunteer their time.

- speedmatching works in a similar way to speed dating
- ten voluntary organisations each get five minute slots to talk with ten different media professionals
- voluntary organisations discuss what kind of support they're looking for, while the media professionals try to give on the spot help and advice, as well as looking for longer term volunteering opportunities
- if a media professional and voluntary organisation would like to go on to work more together, they indicate their interest on a match card and the media matching team put them in touch after the event
- it's as simple as that!

To make the evening more relaxed and enjoyable, we provide drinks, snacks and a friendly environment. Events are generally held in the evenings at a range of exciting venues including the BBC, ITV, Warner Brothers, Channel 4 and the Guardian.



|| The event was a great opportunity to meet a diverse range of organisations looking for a variety of skills. I definitely hope to be able to challenge my own knowledge in working with some of them. ||

Daniel Andrews,
Warner Brothers (media professional)

|| I have come away feeling really positive from all the conversations I had with everyone. These types of events are exactly what I was looking for and the support received is extremely valuable to the charity. ||

Sean Mendez,
Solidarity Sports

|| Brilliant, made some great contacts, got what I came to achieve. My head's spinning – never knew I could talk so much in five minutes! ||

Gemma Finch,
Volunteer Centre Newcastle

To find out more or sign up for Speedmatching, visit www.mediatrust.org/speedmatching

case study

RockCorps reaching for young stars

RockCorps communications manager, Nicky Hobbs, explains how they work with brands and musicians to attract young people to volunteer.

How did you build such successful corporate partnerships?

RockCorps has built successful brand partnerships by taking time to understand how the brands communicate and are positioned to their consumers. RockCorps then brings a partnership that integrates into existing brand objectives. The time invested in understanding the brand objectives is where success is built.

Is this something you think other volunteering organisations could do?

Absolutely. Spend time understanding brand objectives and how they might align with your social mission. Often, we start with our mission and take it to the brand; we would suggest reversing that equation.

What feedback did you get from your volunteers about how you communicated with them?

Over 50% of our volunteers learn about the opportunity via word of mouth. We work very hard to ensure that our volunteer experience matches our communication. The invaluable word of mouth is developed by the grassroots volunteering experience matching the top level communication, and this process includes clear descriptions about what volunteering for Orange RockCorps entails. We target mainly 16 to 25-year-old first time or relatively new volunteers. So, we use specific tools to reach them: social networking, text message, event marketing and radio.

During the recruitment phase those people who registered with us were contacted by our team up to 8-10 times, by phone, email and with text messages that reminded them of the project they had registered to complete. This support throughout was popular with volunteers who felt able to ask questions and have them answered in a timely and understanding way.

What really worked in targeting those who would not normally volunteer their time?

- RockCorps uses the power of music to motivate volunteers and speak to them
- word of mouth: encouragement from RockCorps staff to those already registering to tell their friends and get them to sign up, worked well throughout the programme
- the projects were fun, and always fully supported by RockCorps staff, this level of care is something that people tell their friends about
- targeted radio, digital and event promotion

What do you think the volunteering sector could do better in regards to promoting volunteering and how?

- put the volunteering opportunities in as many different times and formats to enable people to come when they can: evenings, weekends, short segments of time
- target communication to each sector and decide what is the best way in that particular case to reach that person, i.e. young people via online, social networking, radio partnerships, seeding
- clearly communicate the outcome of the volunteer time as well as the mission of the organisation: what will be accomplished, who will be impacted



Hitting the headlines

Stories in the press can be a great way to raise the profile of your volunteering programme and attract new recruits. But what's the best way to target local or national papers?

|| When pitching to press, I've found that hard-hitting stories about people who have turned their lives around, or done something amazing can be impactful. Normally, however, I have found that volunteering shouldn't be the main thrust of these stories, but part of the narrative. Stories about young people can also fit into this category - specifically where they are breaking the norm or doing something amazing that challenges the normal assumptions. In terms of other things that have worked - a news hook or national day can help, as it gives journalists something wider to tap into.

One recent story that worked very well for me was pitching a volunteer who worked for a Premiership football club – it offered a different viewpoint to the sport and the regional radio outlets loved this. I could see this working across other sectors – ie business, national institutions etc – and sport offers a lot of opportunities.

Again in the current economic climate, I think people are re-evaluating how they spend their time and money and this offers opportunities for volunteering. ||

Penny Crook, senior publicist, BBC World Service and former head of PR for Media Trust and Community Channel

Getting into social media

Facebook and other social media platforms can provide free and very effective ways to get volunteers to support your campaign, get involved in an event or a new project.

case study

Busts 4 Justice

Beckie Williams on going from E-cup to e-campaigner through harnessing the power of Facebook.

By the end of 2007 I'd spent enough time moaning about Marks & Spencer charging up to £4.50 more for a DD cup bra, so I took action. As a true Brit, my first move was the strongly worded letter, but my letter was met only with a generic customer service response. I read about a Facebook group successfully lobbying Cadbury to bring back Wispa. If Facebook-power could resurrect a chocolate treat, perhaps it could also do something about the price of my bras? I sat down at my laptop and Busts 4 Justice was born.

Membership grew steadily, but after a brief mention in the Evening Standard our numbers exploded to almost 8,000.

We bombarded M&S with reports of poor fitting, poor service and poor availability. We were their customers, and we deserved to be listened to.

M&S started to engage with the group and it felt like we were getting somewhere, but their interest in us began to dwindle. Frustrated, I bought an M&S share; determined to take the argument to the AGM and fight them in the trenches. I never made it there. Just three days and over 11,000 new members later M&S announced a back-down. We'd won.

It felt amazing to stand in M&S and see all bras costing the same for every woman. Not only had we changed their pricing policy but encouraged them to retrain their 11,000 fitters too. One tiny little Facebook group had snowballed into something so much bigger and effected a real change.



evaluating your campaign

Measure your achievements
for improving your success



Evaluation of your campaign should take place throughout, not just at the end. Monitor closely to see if your campaign objectives have been achieved and look at what is working to help you going forward.

Planning for evaluation

Evaluation is too important to leave to the end. Even though evaluation of the campaign will be done during and after it runs, it needs to be built in from the start.

Even if you can't be precise, make your best guess for what you hope that your recruitment campaign will achieve. This might include the amount of exposure it receives, the number of enquiries you get, the number of applications and the number of actual recruits.

While you can evaluate success against these objectives as you go, it's also a good idea to plan from the start to do a full evaluation when the campaign is over. This might be a relatively informal group discussion if it's a small campaign, or a more thorough piece of research if a lot of money and time has been put into it.

Ask around

As with other aspects of your recruitment campaign, it's good to get the views of members, volunteers and other contacts via meetings, emails and social media websites as well.

Polls surveys and threads on blogs or sites like i-volunteer and Facebook can all be good ways to help evaluate what you did. And, if you're running a campaign online, then make use of free tools such as Google Analytics, Facebook Insights and Twitter search to assess your success.

It might be relevant to include an evaluation of any agencies and partners that worked with you in the campaign, in terms of assessing the results of their efforts. Ask partners to evaluate their input into the campaign too – you will be surprised how interesting this feedback can be.

A prompt and comprehensive campaign evaluation will allow you to learn how to amend and improve future campaigns, as well as help you with your internal and external reporting systems.

Broader evaluation

Evaluation of a recruitment campaign should only be a part of a broader evaluation of your volunteering programme. The Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit, from the Institute for Volunteering Research, provides an excellent framework.

Links

Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit

from the Institute for Volunteering Research

www.ivr.org.uk/booksandlibrary/Impact+Assessment+Toolkit

retaining volunteers - keep communicating

Use communication
to make volunteers feel
supported and valued



Once you've recruited volunteers it's important to help make their experience with your organisation a positive one. **Communications can play a key role.**

Management and supervision

The most important method of communication is face-to-face. Whatever activities your volunteers are undertaking, make sure they have someone they can talk to if they need to ask questions or raise concerns. Someone should also be asking them how they are getting on and saying 'thank you' for the time they are giving.

Group meetings or events can also play a role – even a 'thank you' party for volunteers can be a chance to get informal feedback about how things are going.

Email newsletters

Most people who volunteer have an interest in the work of your organisation so are likely to be keen to sign up to some form of regular email bulletin – whether it is specifically for volunteers or goes across the whole organisation.

Regular emails can be a good way of keeping volunteers up-to-date with anything that directly affects them and also the broader work of the organisation. People tend to feel more motivated when they can see how their work fits in with broader objectives, so don't limit communications solely to their area of activity.

Email can also be a good way to ask for feedback and comments.

Case studies

If your organisation has a website or magazine, include case studies of volunteers. It will help paid staff understand what volunteers do, and make everyone appreciate the contribution that volunteers make.

Social media

If you're active online it's a good idea to keep tabs on everything that's being said about your organisation – in social media, in particular, opinions can be published by anyone at any time.

You can use social media to communicate with your volunteers alongside everyone else and on Twitter, for example, you could create a Twitter List of your volunteers who tweet.

And, if people are commenting about their volunteering you will be able to respond to them if necessary.

case study

YouthNet online peer advisors

TheSite.org is a website dedicated to youth information run by YouthNet. They run a volunteering programme for 18-29 year olds to support their peers via the website's askTheSite section. The volunteer advisors answer questions in the relationships section of the service - a place where empathy, understanding and emotional support are often the most important elements of an answer. The role is a virtual one which means, after training which takes place over three Saturdays in YouthNet's offices, the volunteers can work flexibly from home - or wherever they have access to the internet.

They can work during the day, in the evenings or at weekends. This means the role is ideal for students looking to gain experience and to fit a volunteering role around their busy timetable and also for people in full time work. We also have a number of new mothers who volunteer from their home computer when their child is napping - they often say it keeps their brains active and gives them something to think about besides mothering.

Some volunteers are motivated to get involved by having had similar experiences themselves, understanding the importance of the service and wanting to help provide support that they felt they did not receive. Others are looking for experience to complement their psychology studies or are thinking about a career change.

As one said: 'I'm at a critical point in my life where I'd like to offer people advice and provide a net that at times wasn't there for me'

The volunteers receive training from YouthNet in areas such as emotional support, communicating online, researching options and providing signposting. Once they start answering questions - usually one a week – they are supported by a team of mentors: professional relationships advisors from a range of backgrounds including psychotherapy, counselling and journalism. There is an option to get their training and experience accredited by an OCNLR course in Giving Online Relationships advice developed at YouthNet.

|| It's different to the other voluntary things I do, more direct and personal. At the same time as (hopefully) helping others, I think the process of sitting down and thinking carefully about an issue, placing myself in a situation I probably would not otherwise have to deal with, deepens my sense of empathy for others and makes me feel more able to help people in my own life. This is a great thing to force oneself to do on a regular basis, and I'd even go as far as to say it helps me to be a better person. ||

YouthNet volunteer

www.youthnet.org



insight

Hannah Knight, chief operating officer, OxFizz

At OxFizz, an Oxford-based social enterprise, where people donate their time and talents to provide one of their professional services with profits generated going to the charity of their choice.

Pioneering personalised communication is integral to volunteer welfare and retention. We take extra time to address emails to individuals and try to include a friendly note about things that may be going on their lives, such as 'How did the exam go?' or 'Did you enjoy your holiday?'. We have a multi-layered approach to communicating with volunteers so that they feel appreciated by all levels of staff. As an example, after volunteers have helped at a key event, we will thank them on the day with a little gift such as some chocolate. They will then receive an email from the volunteer coordinator and a 'thank you' text from one of the Directors.

OxFizz reap the rewards of personalisation as volunteers know that we're interested in them as people and characters, not just in their ability to help the organisation. It means that they're willing to help us out of tricky spots as they feel valued and supported as individuals.

www.oxfizz.org





conclusion

Increased focus on
cost-effectiveness

As public funding for volunteering organisations becomes increasingly scarce, the focus on cost-effective recruitment is likely to grow.

This guide has sought to show that with a combination of clear thinking, effective communications and inspiration, all organisations should be able to attract the people they need – including those from groups that they have sometimes found hard-to-reach.

Clear thinking matters when identifying why you want to involve volunteers and what they will do. You need to make sure your organisation is ready to receive the volunteers you recruit and that you have considered the costs involved with managing volunteers.

Good communications matter at every stage. With a clear message about what volunteers will do, why it matters and what they will get out of it, you will maximise your appeal. Thinking about your target audience will help you to focus your recruitment efforts. And making the most of the opportunities offered by free social media will give you a powerful new way to communicate with potential and existing volunteers.

Inspiration is what will make your volunteer recruitment take-off. It might be an insight into a new role volunteers will take, or how they will be managed or organised. It might be the creation of a simple phrase that perfectly captures your recruitment message. Or it might be an ongoing process of communication with supporters online that turns your organisation truly interactive.

Share your inspirational recruitment ideas at www.mediatrust.org or i-volunteer.org.uk, or by contacting [@ivolunteeruk](https://twitter.com/ivolunteeruk) on Twitter.

useful contacts and references

Further information
and ongoing support



Some useful organisations

Media Trust

We work with media organisations and charities to enhance their communications and enable communities to find their voice and make it heard. www.mediatrust.org

Find us on **Twitter @Media_Trust**

Community Channel

Community Channel is the UK's only national TV and online platform dedicated to communities, their stories and the organisations that support them.

SKY 539, Virgin Media TV 233 and Freeview 87

www.communitychannel.org

Find us on **Twitter @ComChanTV**

Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

Volunteering opportunities and free training courses.

www.csv.org.uk

do-it.org.uk

A national online database of volunteering opportunities.

www.do-it.org.uk

Energize Inc

Publications and advice for leaders of volunteers from American author and trainer, Susan Ellis.

www.energizeinc.com

Good Practice

Volunteering England good practice bank

Includes a section on recruiting volunteers.

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank

i-volunteer

A social network that connects volunteers, charities and volunteer managers across the UK

www.i-volunteer.org.uk

The Association of Volunteer Managers (AVM)

An independent body that aims to support, represent and champion people who manage volunteers in England.

www.volunteermanagers.org.uk

TimeBank

Providing volunteers with information on voluntary work and volunteering projects in the UK.

www.timebank.org.uk

Volunteering England

For a guide to the rules and regulations surrounding volunteers.

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/publications/volunteersandthelaw

Volunteer Centres

Find your local Volunteer Centre on the Volunteering England website.

www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Local+and+Regional/VolunteerCentreFinderGoogle

About Media Trust

At Media Trust we believe that everyone should have a voice and the opportunity to be heard.

We are the UK's leading communications charity. Our corporate members include BBC, Channel 4, Daily Mail and General Trust, Guardian Media Group, IPC Media, ITV plc, LIVING TV Group, MTV Networks UK and Ireland, News International, OMD, Sky and Warner Bros.

We work with media organisations and charities to enhance their communications and enable communities to find their voice and make it heard.

Our unique mix of services includes

- communications resources and training
- free professional support
- free news distribution service
- film and content production
- multi-media channels
- support and funding for media projects

www.mediatrust.org

Images courtesy of Press Association Images



Written by Tom Green, Features Editor for i-volunteer.org.uk and a freelance writer who has worked for Volunteering England, YouthNet and the Refugee Council

i-volunteer is a social network that connects volunteers and people that work with them across the UK. Also known as the 'Facebook for volunteering', i-volunteer enables voluntary groups, volunteer managers and other organisations looking for volunteers to learn from and support each other, and provides a number of social networking tools such as groups, document sharing, event planning and easy ways to search for and find colleagues by location and email address.

In addition, i-volunteer enables volunteers to register their availability so that charity recruiters can 'head hunt' them for skills by location, age and gender.

Our corporate members include:

BBC

Channel 4

Daily Mail and General Trust

Guardian Media Group

IPC Media

ITV plc

LIVING TV Group

MTV Networks UK and Ireland

News International

OMD

Sky

Warner Bros.

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