

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

A Handbook for Unit Officials



American Contract Bridge League

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The three *Rs* of Volunteering are:

Recruitment

Retention

Recognition

The three *Rs* to volunteering:

If you have been asked to recruit others to volunteer, don't worry. After all, someone was successful in recruiting you, right?

Here are some tips in motivating people to say yes:

- Be motivated yourself. Sincerity wins out over technique every time.
- Be clear on what you want people to do. Make job descriptions whenever possible.
- Use titles. The word “volunteer” is a pay category, not a function. It is much more appealing to be asked to become a “New Player Services Committee Member” or “Education Committee Member” or something else definable, than to simply be asked to become a “volunteer.”
- The more specific you can be, the better. If you ask the general question, “Who wants to volunteer?” what are you telling people about the job you need to fill? On the other hand, if you ask, “Who would like to work on the bridge in schools program?” you give people a chance to consider if they might be interested in a specific task they might be ideal for.
- Be honest. Tell prospective volunteers what the work entails including time lines and deadlines. This should be an honest but upbeat picture of the work.
- Volunteering should be fun!
- Identify and express the benefits to the volunteer of accomplishing the task. Every job has its payoffs and it is OK to discuss these. The best volunteering occurs when the giver benefits as well as the recipient.
- Explain why you decided to ask this particular person to help – what skills or personality traits make him or her a good candidate for the position. Keep in mind that you can never insult people by asking them to volunteer. In fact, you are usually flattering them because you imply that they have the talent to do the job.

**Look to teachers, club owners and newer players
as sources for your volunteers!**

Just Ask – They Will Say Yes!

Finally, the best way to recruit volunteers is to ask people to help. If you never have the conversation, how can someone say yes? And if you are turned down, keep in mind that you have still helped others by reaching out to people, explaining projects underway and making others feel important for having been asked.

DESIGNING VOLUNTEER WORK ASSIGNMENTS

The single most important factor in the success of volunteer involvement is the design of the work to be done by volunteers. The challenge is one of “task analysis,” breaking down a project or projects into defined steps, since volunteer work is done in limited chunks of time. It is not enough to say “we need volunteer help.” Unless work is defined specifically in advance, you run the very real risk of wasting volunteers’ time. To meet your organization’s goals and to respect the desire of volunteers to be productive, take the time to plan volunteer assignments.

Tips for Coordinating Your Volunteer Efforts!

- Burnout of valued volunteers is the inevitable result of going back again and again and again to the same people.
- Move volunteers up the ranks – have a leadership development plan for rewarding exemplary volunteers.
- Be sure you are truly welcoming to new volunteers.
- Make the most of your written communications. In addition, make sure you have prepared in advance for your organizational meetings. Don’t waste the volunteers’ time!
- Ask your volunteers to bring along a friend to expand your volunteer base.
- Recognition is much more than a thank you. Appreciation and recognition are different. While it is important to say thank you sincerely, the most effective form of recognition is to utilize a volunteer’s ideas and credit the source!

Volunteers feel thanked when:

- Someone actually says “thank you.”
- They are told how something they did had a positive impact on the organization.
- They are invited to join in on a formal recognition event in front of their peers.
- They get a personalized note from the unit president thanking them for their contribution.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

GREAT IDEA ON VOLUNTEERING!

The Volunteer Recruitment Book

By Susan Ellis

Most organizations use a “**Nominating Committee**” to develop a ballot of candidates for office or to recommend prospective board members. Usually such a committee is mandated by the by-laws. Unfortunately, Nominating Committees too often convene themselves at the last minute, scramble around for names of people to select and breathe a sigh of relief when the ballot is “in the mail.”

A more effective idea is to make the work of the Nominating Committee a year-round, pro-active function. One of the earliest articles on the continuous role of the nominating process was written by Phyllis Acker in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* (Winter 1983-84).

A good first step is to change the committee’s name to something like **Leadership Development Committee**. Among the tasks that could be handled within a broader capacity are:

- Keeping job descriptions updated for all board and officer positions, committee chair positions and project roles.
- Being responsible for the gathering and tracking of member volunteer service history.
- Monitoring recognition needed and received (which often is an indicator of when a member is ready to be asked to assume a new position.)
- Defining volunteer “career ladders” in which members who wish can advance in degree of responsibility.

NPS Member → NPS Coordinator → IN Coordinator → Education Liaison

Make a list of the reasons why some members love to volunteer and why others do not.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| • Family Affair | • _____ |
| • Groups Working Together | • _____ |
| • Feeling Wanted | • _____ |
| • Honored To Be Asked | • _____ |
| • Bored | • _____ |

It is important to reward hard-working volunteers with increased responsibility. The goal of a nominating committee member is to make sure the benefits and fun outweigh the problems of accepting a leadership position in your unit.

COMMUNICATING WITH VOLUNTEERS

Often disagreements and difficulties on a team may be the result of a communications breakdown. Understanding how communication is received by the listener and how to resolve disagreements are keys to maintaining a healthy working relationship for your team.

COMMUNICATION

Verbal	7%
Vocal	38%
Visual	55%

CAUSES OF CONFLICT

- Communication problems
- Differences in objectives (what)
- Differences in methodology (how)
- Personality differences

SOLUTIONS

- Give feedback
- Acknowledge what they are saying

HOW TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENTS

- Offer other ideas, suggestions
- Make it okay for others to feel the way they do
- Make it easy for them to change positions without losing face
- Do not force the proof that you are right
- Say what you want through someone else



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