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"Are You Passionate About The Work Of Your Volunteers?"

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By 'passionate' I mean are you excited about the opportunities you are offering to volunteers and about the difference they will make?

I remember a woman on a recruitment workshop who was really struggling to come up with a strong recruitment message for an advertisement. We talked for a bit about the work her volunteers did and the ways in which it was rewarding. It wasn't long before she said, in frustration; "The real problem is that I feel embarrassed asking volunteers to do this work. And I don't really believe we should be asking people to do this for nothing - the government should employ people to provide this service."

And there was her recruitment problem - not that she couldn't find people, but that she felt awkward about asking for help and that she was ideologically opposed to the role her volunteers undertook. No wonder she couldn't find the right words to put in her ad. If you lack passion or belief in the work of your volunteers you're not going to feel energized, motivated or creative enough to engage properly with the task of recruitment. But where you have genuine enthusiasm for your organization and the work volunteers contribute to it, you will more easily be able to convey the right message to prospective volunteers. Tap into your natural excitement about volunteering and let it infuse your recruitment activity.

Action

1. What is exciting about the work your volunteers do? Take a sheet of paper and list numbers 1 to 25. Against each number write down one positive aspect about your volunteers and the work they do.

2. Can you think of any aspects of your volunteer programme that you feel disappointed, awkward or embarrassed about? If so, you need to fix these before you can really be enthusiastic about asking people to volunteer. Take time to list any issues that come to mind, and put together an action plan that will address these problems. Even if you haven't got them

completely fixed you will start to feel more enthusiastic about recruitment when you know you are taking action to make things better.

Your passion for volunteering doesn't need to end with the work they do for your organization. Your recruitment and management of volunteers will benefit if anchored in the context of wider community and social involvement.

I'm excited about the work of volunteers in society for lots of reasons. Here are just a few:

- It is democratic. The individual can take direct action to address a need or cause they feel strongly about. They don't have to wait for a law to be passed or a government agency to solve the problem. They can go out right now and do something about it.
- I believe that people find a sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment from the work they do -whether paid or unpaid. Volunteering (if well organized) offers us the opportunity to get more out of life while at the same time making a positive contribution to the needs of others.
- It is inclusive. Many people who feel marginalized by society have been given the opportunity to get involved and be accepted. They might be people who have made mistakes in the past and are seeking rehabilitation. Or they might be people who have been made to feel different, unwelcome or seen as having little to contribute - seniors, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian volunteers, troubled young people, and so on. Volunteering builds communities and encourages cooperative relationships between people who might not otherwise interact.

When you are clear about your volunteer programme's contribution to society you will be better placed to sell the volunteering opportunities you have available. If, say, part of your philosophy is about being inclusive you will be more focused on recruiting people from the margins of society. This will open up your recruitment activity to a wider audience and will encourage you to look in places you wouldn't perhaps have considered when seeking volunteers.

So tap into your own enthusiasm and passion for volunteerism and make your recruitment activity truly magnetic.

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