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## How to Recruit and Keep Volunteers

This section addresses these questions and gives you some suggestions for both recruiting and keeping volunteers for your chapter.

### ***Recruiting***

Recruiting is sales. Most people in our profession will quickly say, “I am not a sales person” or “I hate sales.” Their preconceived notions about what sales is limits their ability to recruit. Gone are the days of the used-car sales approach. Nowadays, sales is relationship building, and so is recruiting. The following hints will help in your recruiting efforts:

Make two lists explaining:

- why you joined UPA
- what benefits you have received as a result of being active in UPA

These lists become your selling points when you are engaged in conversation with a recruit.

- Remember how you felt when that first person in UPA asked you to help out. Weren't you flattered? Wasn't it a positive experience?
- Listen to potential volunteers before you recruit them. What are their interests? Is there some position within the organization that can help them meet their personal goals?
- If time is a problem, ask them if they would be willing to do one-time-only or on-call tasks. Then set up a Volunteers Committee for volunteers who can work on an on-call or one-time-only basis.
- Ask one-on-one (either over the phone or in person). Announcements from the podium or articles in the chapter's newsletter rarely result in volunteers. People like the personal attention from someone who is already a leader within the organization.
- Set a goal to meet five members you didn't know before each meeting. Get to know each one. If each of the members of your administrative council does this, your volunteer pool would be larger than you need.
- When you ask someone to volunteer, explain to that person exactly what will be expected. Offer training from the person who previously held the position, if possible.

### ***Retention***

UPA is a volunteer organization. We do not get paid for our efforts. You must be creative when it comes to retaining your volunteers. The following ideas will help you retain your volunteers for the long haul-if you are diligent.

- **Listen.** Your volunteers will let you know if they are approaching burnout. Pay attention to what they are saying about themselves, their personal lives, their professional lives. Note that there are those of us who work on overload all the time. Use your best judgment in knowing when to say something.
- **Guide.** Provide guidance and training for your volunteers. This will help ensure they have a positive experience as an UPA leader. For example, some chapters pay the annual conference registration fee for their incoming president.
- **Reward.** Recognize your volunteers. Thank them in person and at meetings. Thank them in newsletters. Give them small gifts (it's the thought, not the cost, that counts). Some

chapters have annual recognition banquets where volunteers are publicly recognized and thanked.

- **Assess.** Continue to assess each volunteer's needs. Make sure they are meeting their own personal goals while serving the organization. Give a break to those who have been hard working in previous years.

Recruiting and retention are how we grow in our organization. It makes our personal and professional networks strong. Only when we are strong can we best serve our professional community.

### Recruiting Members for Key Positions

If your chapter is going to succeed, you must recruit volunteers for key positions. If you try to do it all yourself, you run the risk of burnout. Look around you. Your chapter has many members. From this extraordinary pool of talent are the makings of a very exciting and dynamic chapter. Ask for help and you will be well on your way to success.

Before you begin recruiting, bear in mind that UPA members have spent time and money to join the chapter and obviously, expect some benefits from it. When people hear the word "volunteer," they tend to flee. Help them to understand what you've come to understand: that the greatest benefits of UPA belong to those who participate. Roll up your sleeves and be enthusiastic about this assignment. This is "selling" at its most rewarding the empowerment of others.

There are two types of recruiting:

- finding volunteers for committees
- finding leaders for chapter office

Many of the following suggestions can be applied to both types of recruiting. However, recruiting leaders for chapter office requires greater circumspection. An ineffective volunteer negatively affects a few people; an ineffective officer affects the entire chapter. The delicate issue of dismissing a dysfunctional leader or volunteer is also discussed in this section.

### Chapter Leaders

Recruiting candidates to run for chapter office is recruitment at a higher level. Take the time necessary to develop future leaders before you perform this task.

A talent for chapter leadership is unique. Look for this talent, rejoice when you find it, and be sure to nurture it. Consider doing the following:

- Give a talented individual opportunities to gain experience, acquire new skills, and grow.
- Sit down with your board and develop a leadership career path for newer members.
- Encourage committee managers to bring volunteers up through the ranks and train them to ensure that future chapter leaders will build on the current leaders' successes.
- Coach those with leadership potential. Doff your leader's hat and don your mentor's cap. Make time in your busy schedule to work with and encourage less-experienced talent. Discuss your current problems and how you plan to handle them. Ask for volunteers' input. Get them to think from your viewpoint as a leader.

- Leadership development is an ongoing process, not a Cinderella transformation. As talented volunteers begin to exercise power, suggest, at some point, that they run for office.

### ***Recruiting Chapter Leaders***

When it is time to recruit a leader, consider that the individual may doubt her or his abilities, may not have enough time, and may also deflect your encouragement in other ways.

Distinguish between good, solid reasons and excuses. You must answer the often unspoken question, “What are the benefits and rewards of leading others?” Present a good case. This is where you put your experience and communication skills on the line. You are justifying your own experience to convince someone else the job is worth doing. Don’t muff it!

If you are still charged up about your leadership role, the benefits and rewards of chapter office will roll off your tongue. If that’s the case, great. Chances are, though, after a half-term of work, you are tired and overburdened. What were once challenges and opportunities may now look like problems. If this sounds like you, step back and take a fresh look at your situation before you open your mouth.

Remember when you first took office? You probably saw many possibilities - more than you could accomplish. That everything you planned for the year has not come to fruition is not the point, nor is it an especially important fact. No one but a brilliant underachiever accomplishes all of her/his plans. Instead, look at your accomplishments and convey your original ideas and vision to your candidate. In the process, you may recover some of your vision.

If you have difficulty feeling enthusiastic about recruiting a new leader, write down the ways in which you have grown as a leader. If you get stuck and can’t get past the problems that beset you, talk to someone you respect who knows your history of leadership. This person will almost certainly give you a balanced perspective on your growth. It may surprise you. It’s amazing how we can forget our accomplishments! This is especially true when we are distracted by the issues of the moment.

With your accomplishments in mind, talk to the candidate. Sure, you have some reservations about the job. We all do. But look at what you’ve gained! This payoff in terms of new skills and opportunities is what your eventual replacement wants and needs to hear. It has been said that we become UPA leaders for one of three reasons: management training, a desire to belong, or power. There’s no better training ground for management than a volunteer organization, where people have to be motivated, not bossed. A sense of belonging is built into elected office, and taking part in the decisions that shape your chapter is what you are elected to do. A chapter leader experiences all of these benefits and more.

If you perform your task well, you will entice the talented candidate toward what may be a major professional and life milestone. He or she will be making a commitment that promises opportunity, growth, challenge, experience, self-esteem, skills development, recognition, and a level of satisfaction that enhances a sense of personal power.

Your role as mentor is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of chapter leadership. Take on this vital task with purpose and enthusiasm.

### ***How to Recruit Leaders***

The biggest problem with recruiting new leaders is that “People are too busy.” New leaders are recruited from the ranks of active volunteers, people with many demands on their time from job, family, chapter, and others. An otherwise acceptable candidate may be over-

committed, burned out, not interested, overconfident, misinformed, afraid, or have some other good reason.

Good recruitment of candidates means: 1) knowing the office (duties), 2) knowing the candidate (wants, needs, strengths, weaknesses, and availability), and 3) correlating the two.

Long-time chapter leaders have made the following suggestions for candidate hunting:

- Pick capable people. Select someone who is ready and able to handle a chapter office.
- Personally ask the potential candidate to run for office. Give this moment the importance it deserves. Ask in person. Using the telephone diminishes your invitation.
- Cite the reasons for selecting the individual and recognize past accomplishments.
- Give a clear description of the job and put it in writing.
- Encourage questions.
- Give the individual time (about a week) to consider the nomination. Encourage, but don't pressure, the person.
- Reassure the wavering candidate. Some highly capable people can be maddeningly unsure of themselves!
- If the candidate is truly over-committed, don't ask. Otherwise, you'll be set up for failure.
- If the candidate is burned out, don't ask. Someone who is burned out will avoid the job at every opportunity.
- If the candidate is overconfident about the job, be clear about the scope of responsibilities. Be specific about the expected results and put it in writing.
- If the candidate seems unsure of her or his capability, calm the worried imagination, carefully review the duties, and suggest acceptable limits of responsibility. If the duties are extensive, consider dividing the job between two or more people. For best results, you must be flexible and imaginative.
- If the candidate is "not interested," try to find out why. Vagueness often suggests shyness, misconceptions, lack of self-confidence, or indifference to the assignment. Proceed gently. Point out the benefits and satisfactions of holding office. Refer to your own experience and growth. Encourage and challenge the candidate. Let him or her know that the nomination was made because you and others had confidence in them.

When you recruit candidates, learn to discriminate between those who are unable or unwilling to serve and those who are quietly waiting to be called out from the wings.

## Getting People to Volunteer

Don't stand up at a chapter meeting and say, "Would anyone who would like to work for the chapter please raise their hand or come and see me after the meeting." You will have better results if you speak one-on-one with potential volunteers.

At each chapter meeting, talk to the individual new members or people you think might be interested in being more involved, and try to get an idea of what their interests are. Then try to get them to do jobs that match their talents and interests. If you find someone who has some experience with mailing lists and likes to talk to people, you could ask that person to be membership manager. Or if a person likes to meet new people, maybe he or she would be a great hospitality manager.

Even if the person has no identifiable interests, suggest that something about the person would make them ideal for whatever position you want to fill. It is important to make a volunteer feel he or she is the ideal candidate for the position you want to fill.

Newly discovered volunteers are best started with oneshot jobs. That way the volunteer has the satisfaction of a quick accomplishment, and you can easily determine if the person does the kind of work that makes him or her worth keeping on your team. And don't be disappointed if someone turns you down now and then. You may actually be pleasantly surprised by how few people will turn you down if you follow this technique, and if you approach potential volunteers in a positive way.

### **Recruiting Volunteers**

Here are some suggestions from experienced chapter leaders about how to recruit someone to accept the role of committee manager or a volunteer on a committee.

- Ask individuals directly. Do not stand up at a meeting and say, "A position has opened and I need a volunteer." Such an announcement is almost always met with silence, but don't think, "Nobody wants to work." This usually is not true. People need to be personally asked. They may be shy or need encouragement. You need to make them understand what their contribution of time and energy will give to them and to others.
- Look over your member roster. Think about who consistently shows up at meetings, but has not yet volunteered. This person is just waiting to be asked. So ask. But don't deliver the request like a death threat or with fear. Your potential volunteer might take it the wrong way.
- Keep biographies of your members: what jobs they've done, what assignments they've liked, and what motivates them. When you need a volunteer, this information is invaluable. If you know of a promising prospective volunteer, find a chapter job that fits that person's knowledge, experience, and interests.
- Hook a volunteer with a small, clearly defined, short-term task.
- Divide big jobs, to make them manageable (e.g., the newsletter, programs, and publicity). Don't throw a fledgling member to the wolves for expedience's sake. Break up the job and spread the tasks around to create more teamwork and less burnout.
- Build new committees or rebuild old committees. Give many people small assignments. Expand your volunteer base as your chapter grows.
- Give good assignments to enthusiastic new members.
- Use the personal touch—the best tool you have—to recruit new volunteers. Call people. Greet them at meetings. Stay in touch with your members.
- Encouragement and sincere praise are powerful techniques for keeping current volunteers active and recruiting new volunteers. In fact, happy volunteers are your best recruiters.
- Be generous with thanks, regardless of the size of the task. Express your thanks at meetings (make notes so you don't forget anyone). Publish your thanks in the newsletter and put names in bold so they will be noticed. It's amazing what people will volunteer for once they see their names in print. You are building their self-esteem.
- Ask someone to perform a seemingly insignificant task and turn yesterday's passive member into today's volunteer and tomorrow's leader.

- Never forget the following principles: 1) you are working with volunteers, and 2) you are supposed to be having fun.

### ***Motivations of Volunteers***

Perhaps no other problem is more perplexing to chapter leaders than finding members to volunteer to run for office or to work on committees, even in the largest chapters. Why is this so?

Marlene Wilson addresses this question in her book, *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs* (Boulder, Colorado: Volunteer Management Associates, 1976). In this book are many constructive and practical guidelines for recruiting and holding good volunteers.

One crucial point made by Wilson is that management of a volunteer-based organization (like UPA) is with and through groups of individuals. Therefore, a priority for chapter leaders should be to understand, as much as possible, why people volunteer to do things. Wilson also points out that volunteer leaders must be able to distinguish between a person's will and a person's ability to do a job.

In the book *Motivation and Organizational Climate*, researchers David C. McClelland and John W. Atkinson identify three distinct motives that influence people's work-related behavior: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation. By looking at some of the characteristics and behavior patterns identified by McClelland and Atkinson, we can better determine the needs our volunteers bring to their jobs. With this information, you can create jobs and climates that better meet those needs. A list of these character and behavior patterns follows.

### ***Achievement-Motivated Person***

#### **Goal**

- to succeed in a situation requiring excellent or improved performance

#### **Characteristics**

- is concerned with excellence and desire to do personal best
- sets moderate goals and takes calculated risks
- likes to take personal responsibility for finding solutions to problems
- has desire to achieve unique accomplishments
- takes pleasure in striving
- is restless and innovative
- wants concrete feedback

#### **Thinks About**

- doing job better
- accomplishing something unusual or important
- advancing career
- overcoming obstacles to achieve goals

## **Power-Motivated Person**

### **Goal**

- to have an impact or influence on others

### **Characteristics**

- has concern for reputation or position (and what others think of power and position)
- gives advice (sometimes unsolicited)
- wants own ideas to predominate
- has strong feelings about status and prestige
- has a strong need to influence others and change people's behavior
- is often verbally fluent (sometimes argumentative)
- is seen by others as forceful, outspoken, and even hard-headed

### **Thinks About**

- having influence and control over others
- using influence to win arguments, change people, and gain status and authority

## **Affiliation-Motivated Person**

### **Goal**

- to be with others and to enjoy mutual friendship

### **Characteristics**

- is concerned about being liked and accepted (interpersonal relationships)
- needs warm and friendly relationships and interaction
- is concerned about being separated from other people (is not a loner)

### **Thinks About**

- being liked and how to achieve this
- consoling or helping people
- having warm and friendly relationships
- the feelings of others and self

The administrative implications of McClelland's and Atkinson's motivation theory are quite dramatic. Managers can select people whose motivational drives fit the job to be done, or a job can be fitted to the motivational needs of a worker. They can do things to a work situation or organization that will help get the job done and change the way they lead others.

Most of the basic needs have probably been met for the majority of the people who volunteer their time and energy. Therefore, we must think about the jobs we offer to ensure that they included motivators. Does the job allow the volunteer opportunities to develop new skills,

gain self-awareness, self-esteem, or the chance to self-actualize? Or, are the jobs too guarded and restrictive, causing the volunteer to feel forced or to want to move on?

Studies have found that the best motivator is the work itself. This is certainly true for volunteer work. Make your volunteer jobs interesting and challenging. Ask your volunteers for suggestions on how to enrich, enlarge, and add more fun to the jobs.

Determine what skills are needed for a job, but also consider the needs and motives of your recruits.

Recruitment can be easy if you offer the right person a meaningful job.

McClelland's research gives us much to think about as volunteers are placed in appropriate positions:

- Do we have achievers in jobs that do not allow for innovation or unique accomplishments?
- Are power-motivated volunteers in jobs where they only take orders and never have the opportunity to direct or influence others?
- Are affiliation-motivated volunteers in jobs where they lack opportunities for close personal interaction with others?

### **Firing a Volunteer: Turn a Crisis into an Opportunity**

Firing a dysfunctional volunteer requires sensitivity and tact. Don't act hostile or cold. The cost of not doing so can be far more substantial than the pain of firing.

If you handle the situation badly, you may discourage others from volunteering. Keep your wits about you and turn a crisis into an opportunity. You have the chance to help someone overcome an apparently insurmountable obstacle and further develop your management skills. Best of all, a successful resolution will reduce the chance of more problems and improve the operation of your chapter.

Here are some thoughts and suggestions from UPA leaders who have faced the situation. (The assumption here is that you are chapter president or the committee manager responsible for recruiting the volunteer in question.)

- First, analyze the situation. Don't silently disapprove of what you observe and don't gossip about it. Is the problem a lack of performance or is it negative interaction with other volunteers?

If it is a lack of performance, ask the individual, "Can I or someone else assist you in any way?" If it is poor interaction with others, ask, "How can we make this interaction work?" If it is a matter of resources add people or divide the duties among several people.

- When you confront the individual, don't be defensive or aggressive, be forthright. Put aside your immediate agenda for the moment. Remain calm. Don't judge; listen. Listening is an art; it requires empathy (understanding), not sympathy (agreement). If you listen with dispassionate interest-confidence in yourself and openness to the other person-you will be able to see the situation from that person's point of view and begin working out a solution.

Speak with genuine concern about the difficulties the person faces and possible solutions. If you demonstrate concern, you will most likely be heard. Clear communication occurs when

people acknowledge each other with respect, and it cannot happen when people are emotional. Creative thinking results in win-win outcomes.

- Sometimes it is possible to work around an intractable person. In one chapter, the other leaders divided and performed the duties of a dysfunctional manager until the end of the term. Though not ideal, this procedure solved the problem.
- If you cannot resolve the problem, you may have to fire the individual. Firing is a last-ditch measure. Use it only to prevent losing other chapter members. A dysfunctional volunteer can alienate other volunteers. A dysfunctional leader can alienate an entire chapter.

Before you take irrevocable action, consult with key Board Members to gain a balanced perspective of your reasons and options. Consider less extreme solutions. Consult your chapter bylaws.

- Firing a volunteer is perhaps your most difficult challenge. If you have decided on it, act with compassion. Thank the individual for contributing time and energy, even though things did not work out. Do not confuse an individual's lack of performance with the individual. Show everyone the respect he or she deserves. The day may come when this person will be better able to serve the chapter. If there is a rule, let it be this: make your criticisms short and to the point, your recognition and thanks generous. If you act generously, with your eyes to the future, you will sow seeds of goodwill. Turn a crisis into an opportunity.
- The individual should be dismissed by the officer (usually the chapter president) or committee manager who has the power to do so. Do not delegate this task. Do it quickly and privately, and be clear about why the person is being relieved of duty. Have a replacement ready. Once the deed is done, announce the replacement at a meeting or in your newsletter. Do not explain or justify the reassignment to the idly curious. Keep the matter in strict confidence and move on to other business. If pushed for more information, focus on that person's reason for needing to know.
- Remember, UPA is a volunteer organization, not a business. Nurture and motivate volunteers with encouragement, praise, and recognition. Overcome difficulties with creative solutions and you will find little need or use for more radical measures. This approach can be effective in business as well.
- A true leader gives praise and recognition to others when they succeed, and accepts responsibility when others fail. This proposition may seem unreasonable at first, but it has great power. Make it your practice, and you will be able to act with appropriate calm, tact, and sureness when difficult situations arise. Act nobly and wisely, and you will find yourself becoming both noble and wise.

The path of leadership unfolds gradually and by a circuitous route, like many good things in life.

### ***Volunteer Viewpoint***

The following is a summary on volunteer motivation by J. Donald Phillips, president of Hillsdale College, Hillsdale, Michigan.

If you want my loyalty, interests, and best efforts, remember:

- I need a sense of belonging, a feeling that I am honestly needed for my total self, not just for my hands, or because I take orders well.

## Nurturing Volunteers

- I need to have a sense of sharing in planning objectives. My need will be satisfied only when I feel that my ideas have had a fair hearing.
- I need to feel that the goals and objectives are within reach and make sense to me. I need to feel that what I am doing has real purpose or contributes to human welfare-that its value extends even beyond my personal gain.
- I need to share in making the rules by which we will live and work toward our goals.
- I need to know in some clear detail what is expected of me and where I have the opportunity to make personal and final decisions.
- I need to have some responsibilities that are challenging within my abilities and interests, and that contribute toward reaching my assigned goal and that cover all goals.
- I need to see progress being made toward the goals we have set.
- I need to be kept informed. This gives me status as an individual.
- I need to have confidence in my superiors based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment, recognition, and trust that loyalty brings increased security.

“In brief, it doesn’t really matter how much sense my part in this organization makes to you; I must feel that the whole deal makes sense to me.” - J. Donald Phillips