Three Steps to Effective Volunteer Management

A successful chapter involves many people working together. It needs leaders who manage and guide the chapter as well as other volunteers who run events and execute programs. To establish an effective volunteer management system, follow these three steps:

Step 1: Prepare for volunteers.
Building a strong network of volunteers starts before the first chapter member signs up to help. To ensure that each potential volunteer's first impression of the chapter is positive, address the following items prior to making substantial recruitment efforts:

- Establish policies, procedures, and record-keeping systems, and document them in a volunteer handbook.
- Resolve legal and liability issues pertaining to volunteer involvement.
- Create systems for evaluating the performance of volunteers and the outcome of volunteer initiatives.
- Train volunteer recruiters to speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the chapter's goals and programs.
- Review the chapter's upcoming initiatives to identify volunteer needs.
- Create brief position descriptions for each volunteer role, including the benefits and “costs” of volunteering.

Now that you have laid a solid foundation for future volunteers, turn your attention toward recruitment.

Step 2: Recruit volunteers.
Recruiting the right volunteers for your chapter involves more than asking people to help. Before you ask for volunteers, take a closer look at your chapter's volunteer needs. For each assignment, answer these questions:

- Who is qualified and interested in the position?
- Who is able to meet the time requirements of the position?
- Where can you find these people?
- What motivates them to serve?
- What is the best way to approach them?

Your recruitment strategy—either targeted or broad-based—will depend on your answers. Used for such roles as chapter committee chair, targeted recruitment is focused on the audience where you will find people with the skills, interests, and availability needed for the volunteer position. With targeted recruitment, you need to analyze the position and precisely define the type of person you are looking for and the kind of message that will motivate him or her to serve. In fact, you will probably want to identify specific individuals for specific roles.

While targeted recruitment is useful for filling positions that call for special training and distinctive abilities or characteristics, broad-based recruitment is effective for assignments that require a

number of people and that can easily be done with minimal training. The goal in broad-based recruitment is to keep your chapter's volunteer needs in front of the general membership on a regular basis. Effective strategies include highlighting volunteer needs during chapter meetings and in chapter communications.

Step 3: Recognize volunteers.
Recognition is the critical final step in a successful volunteer management system and takes many forms. Try to tailor your recognition efforts to individual volunteers, some of whom may prefer a quiet, personal thank-you over a public commendation. Experiment with many methods, including the following:

- Make an announcement from the podium at chapter events.
- Include a statement of recognition in your chapter newsletter and Web site.
- Send personal thank-you notes from your chapter president.
- Hold an annual dinner celebration for all volunteers.
- Offer complimentary chapter benefits to volunteers.
- Present awards and inexpensive gifts for exceptional contributions.

By taking the time to establish a comprehensive volunteer management system, you will help ensure that your chapter has all the volunteers it can handle. ▲

For more information about volunteer recruitment and recognition, contact the Division of Regional Services at (312) 424-9326 or regionalservices@ache.org. To find out how you can volunteer for your local chapter, contact the chapter official listed in ACHE's online Chapter Directory in the Chapters area of ache.org.

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