

Maintaining a Teenage Volunteer Network

How to manage a large system of teenage volunteers without the large hassle.

By Josh Seides

Out of all age groups under 35, those aged 16 through 19 are the most likely to volunteer.¹ Many organizations fail to partner with this age group to full advantage. Here are suggestions to assure that your organization doesn't miss this crucial opportunity.

Maintain Contact with School Clubs

Many students volunteer because they need the service hours stipulated by local clubs at their schools. Organizations like Beta Club and Key Club create a list each month outlining activities members can sign up for to be considered for service hours. To gain teenage volunteers, make sure your volunteer opportunities are included on school club calendars.

Aside from the monthly events, school clubs often look for additional – “impromptu” – opportunities for members struggling to garner enough hours. If you e-mail a club explaining your need for volunteers in the near future, you'll often receive the help you need. The more urgent your need, the more the school organizations will be inclined to help you. Some clubs will “up the ante” the day before a volunteer activity by doubling the value of the service hours that count toward the club.

Take Advantage of Social Media

The most reliable way to connect with teenage volunteers is through social media. According to the Pew Research Center, around 95% of all people aged 12-17 are online; 81% of those teenagers use social media, with 77% using Facebook.²

School clubs often have a Facebook page or group. That's a great place to post requests for volunteers. Facebook allows for quick messaging; news of your volunteering opportunity will spread fast around the teenage community.

In terms of your organization's Facebook page, make sure it's presentable and updated often. An outdated page will deter students from helping. Regular Facebook updates build credibility and lead to more hits on your organization's website.

FOOTNOTES

¹<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>


²<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/teens-fact-sheet/>



Consider SignUp Genius

SignUp Genius is a useful tool for managing volunteer information. Setting up an account is free. You choose a template and enter information about your organization. SignUp Genius forms can be centered around a single activity or be the “base” for all your activities. You can continually add new activities to the form along with the number of volunteers needed for each activity. SignUp Genius will also send reminders to everyone who has volunteered for an event.

Provide Regular Updates

Be sure to send out constant updates and reminders to students who have volunteered. Such information will assure that busy students don't forget events they've signed up for. While SignUp Genius may have you covered, asking volunteers to send back e-mails confirming they'll be helping out is the best way to ensure they're ready to go. 

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A Volunteer Checklist

For more tips on creating a vibrant volunteer network, see these articles at NonprofitWorld.org:

Common-Sense Answers about Volunteer Involvement (Vol. 34, No. 1)

Should You Pay Your Volunteers? A Voice from the Front (Vol. 33, No. 2)

How to Measure Your Volunteers' Success (Vol. 35, No. 3)

Building Trust with Your Volunteers (Vol. 34, No. 4)

Maximizing Volunteer Participation (Vol. 28, No. 2)

Are You Making It Hard to Volunteer? (Vol. 22, No. 5)

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Volunteer Management (NonprofitWorld.org/LearningInstitute).