

Recruitment of Volunteers Q & A

What do you consider to be a best method practice to recruit volunteers?

The best way to recruit volunteers is to let them see a successful program, project or event that your post is hosting. If they see their time is going to make a difference and have an impact, then they're going to get excited about it.

When a person takes a job and then does not fulfill that job, how do you deal with that person?

First you should ensure the expectations of the position are communicated clearly when they volunteer. If they aren't performing the duties, you can redirect them through constructive feedback. You can also ask them if there is another project more suited to their interest and passion. It's tricky, but if you handle these situations early on, your volunteers will be more apt to stick with you long term.

Have you heard of the 20/80 rule and how do you get around it?

20/80 refers to the theory that 20% of the people in any organization does 80% of the jobs. Putting separate committees in charge of each project/program may encourage a wider variety of participants.

How would you recommend getting volunteers in COVID times?

We need to make sure, as an organization, we're following the local rules and guidelines, so in-person recruiting may be restricted right now. Holding virtual meet-n-greets is an option and provides an opportunity to highlight your post programs that help the community.

Can non-members do volunteer work in a fund raiser? Is there a guideline in writing how many members vs. non-members?

Each department may have different guidelines for a variety of reasons. It's best to check with your department headquarters, but we certainly want to welcome all volunteers as much as possible.

How can one who sees a skill or talent of an individual, excite that individual to be involved beyond just showing up and "hiding behind everyone else"?

Some people are content being "rank and file" who don't want to take on leadership. You may want to start by encouraging them to manage smaller programs or projects which can result in recognition of their talents, paving their path to larger responsibilities.

Does National have a sample of a volunteer handbook?

Many of the programs have guidance publications, which may be found at: www.legion.org/publications

Can you start a pilot program with your volunteers without getting your National or Departments approval?

The best ideas happen at the local level. The American Legion Riders are a great example! Open a dialogue with your department on what your vision and purpose is to see if it can garner some support.

I like the challenge coins idea, but is there not a trademark issue?

National Emblem Sales carries a variety of appreciation coins for purchase at: www.legion.org/emblemsales. You can even design your own via the Special Orders desk. Contact 1-866-632-7131 for details.

Who would not make a good volunteer?

There are some people who only volunteer for the "spotlight", or to gain power. As post leaders, you need to give them opportunities to serve without playing to their desire for recognition.

Many of our posts face hurdles in finding volunteers to fulfill the post officers slate. While current volunteers/post officers fulfill their duties, how can they effectively promote volunteer opportunities that require elections?

You need to express the value of the officer positions as well as program managers. Clearly outlining the responsibilities and importance of the officer positions may help "sell" the idea of running for post offices to your membership.

Would the planning of programs and events lead to better volunteering?

Planning ahead goes a long way to success. If your volunteers see a good plan in place, they feel confident working in an organized team.

Do you think the volunteer chair and co-chair should choose their own volunteers or should the top officers appoint someone to work in the group?

The post's constitution & by-laws may have those guidelines spelled out. Appointing a volunteer coordinator/chairman to gather and distribute your post's volunteer talent is a good practice.

How do you handle the member who wants to volunteer but is constantly negative and unhappy?

There will always be people who aren't happy unless they're miserable. It only becomes a problem if their negativity is affecting others around them. In those instances, it may be time to take them aside and ask them how to help them be more successful, perhaps in another position.

As I try to recruit new younger members, they have kids involved in a tons of different events, which we may not support. So what do we do getting new members?

That is tricky nowadays with all the available outlets for children and families. Try finding the largest demonstrator among them and/or find something that families want to share and experience together. Some posts have hosted Family Game Nights or similar activities.

What do you do when you have a small post where the officers don't move up, but stay in place year after year.

Posts should recognize these long-term positions may result in "burn out", which can be a major problem. Approach them with concern about their well-being. Perhaps they are taking on too much and need a break. Offer to help with projects incrementally to garner trust, so they can step back with confidence that they're handing off the post to capable hands.

What was the website at the Legion that Doug mentioned during his presentation?

www.legion.org/prtoolkit

Do you have a question not listed here? You can email: membership@legion.org