

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT-Overview of Dos & Don'ts

(Adapted from Wellstone Training Materials, www.wellstone.org)

- **Know your audience** - Whom are you trying to recruit? What will motivate them? What generation are they a part of? Are they continual or ad hoc volunteers? Remember to customize your message to the individual. One size does not fit all. Consider having conversations with current volunteers to help determine the best recruitment message to reach new volunteers.
- **Don't assume** - When looking at a list of supporters or supposed volunteers, don't assume they are all active volunteers. Until you have seen someone do something for the campaign, each person should be considered a potential volunteer that needs to be recruited and persuaded to help.
- **Prioritize requests** - Limit what you are asking of volunteers. Pick the one or two most important activities. **Avoid overburdening them.**
- **Be specific.** Make a specific request with the activity and time needed (be accurate about the time).
- **Persuade them** - Asking is not enough. Give benefits related to volunteering. What can they help with? Why is the activity important? What might happen if they don't volunteer?
- **Hard counts and reminders** - Record the name, phone number and email of everyone who agrees to volunteer for a specific activity. Remind them at least twice, including the day before they are scheduled to volunteer. People are busy and likely to forget. Probably fewer than half will ever show up. Therefore, **you must over-recruit.** If you have ten phones in a phone bank, you need to recruit at least fifteen people to ensure that you fill ten phones. Follow up with people who don't show up (remove them after three no-shows). However, be ready if 15 people show up.

THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- **Welcome, training, and motivating** - Greet volunteers when they arrive at the event, office, or location. Make sure you allow enough time for training. Don't rush through this process. Explain the task so they understand what is being asked of them. Reiterate the importance of the task and their role. Monitor what the volunteer is doing and provide them with an opportunity for input. *Always be positive and take the time to ask and answer questions.*
- **Fun** - Reward your volunteers with food, a shirt, a button, or "inside information." Create a relaxed atmosphere for your volunteers. They aren't staff. Make sure they feel good and appreciated afterwards.
- **Participate** - **Never ask a volunteer to do something that you are unwilling to do yourself.** Let them see you engaged in the activity. If it's not good enough for you, then it's not good enough for them either. Don't disappear after the welcoming and training; be available. During the phone banks, check with them after 20 minutes for questions. Provide complements. They are working *with*, not for you. Without them, you cannot succeed.
- **Support Your Volunteers** – It is your job as a leader to ensure volunteers get to meet the candidate and any celebrities that come to the office or participate in your event. Do not fail them on this important point.

POST VOLUNTEERING

- **Sign-up for the future** - Ask them to volunteer again immediately. No volunteer should make it out the door without at least being asked to come back on a specific date. It is easier than having to contact them after they leave. Capitalize upon the feelings of goodwill that you previously created.
- **Recognition** - Recognize their contribution; make sure they know how much they've helped, and how crucial that help is. Thank you notes, emails and calls are always appreciated. Invite volunteers to non-fundraising events, informal gatherings, "watch parties", etc.
- **Communicating between asks** - Don't just contact volunteers when you need something. Regular communications will help keep them engaged. Email is a great tool for keeping in touch with volunteers without having to spend money or time to do it; it can also guide them to the web site for ongoing information and updates about the campaign.