



The Ultimate Guide to **Volunteer Management**

For many associations, volunteers make the world go 'round.

No, seriously.

They plan and coordinate events, help with publicity and recruitment, and even lend special skill sets, like videography and writing. Volunteers are truly the backbone of most organizations.



That being said, volunteers are hard to come by. There isn't an endless supply of them, and once you have them, they can be hard to keep.

We totally understand the struggle. That's why we've put together this comprehensive guide to volunteer management. From volunteer recruitment to onboarding and retention, we've got tips and best practices for every step of the way.

Take a look!

Recruitment tips

Volunteer recruitment is a critical aspect of association management, and finding the right volunteers can make all the difference. But how do you go about finding those volunteers?

Well, for starters, try posting something on your organization's website. Let people know that you're always looking for volunteers and provide them with a link to more information.

Next, try reaching out to your members via email. Again, let them know that you need volunteers and encourage them to take that next step. It's also not a bad idea to promote volunteer opportunities on your organization's social media sites. Remember, the more you share your message, the more likely it will be seen.

And speaking of messaging, here are a few other recruitment recommendations:

Be specific

You will always be more successful in recruiting volunteers if you tell people exactly what they'll be doing. Rather than saying "just give us your free

time," be specific about the job at hand. Think about it: Would you apply for a job that just said "Company XYZ needs employees?" Probably not. The same is true for volunteers.

Describe the desired outcome

Volunteers want to know that they're contributing to a greater cause. Inspire potential volunteers by letting them know how their role will help with your organization's overall goal or mission.

Have "different strokes for different folks"

Not all volunteer opportunities will appeal to everyone. Some people may prefer to work outside while others would rather work indoors. Don't take someone's "no" as a "never." Just make sure you're providing them with a wide variety of opportunities.

Provide more information online

Trust us, people WILL go looking, and if they can't easily find more information, they'll ditch the idea of volunteering altogether. Put more information on your organization's website as well as on your social media pages.

Onboarding tips

Yay! You have new volunteers! Now what? Well, just as onboarding new members is an essential part of the association management process, so is onboarding new volunteers.

You'll want to start by sending your new volunteers a warm welcome message. A personalized email is good, but a quick one-on-one call is better. That being said, if you have a lot of new volunteers and can't call them all individually, you can easily send them a personalized email using an association management system. An AMS can integrate with your organization's database, allowing you to pull any of the information you're tracking into a clean and personalized email. Plus, you can automate those emails to go out at any time — immediately after a member signs up to volunteer, before a big event, etc.

In addition to sending out a warm welcome, it's important to have some type of orientation process in place. This is ultimately the best way to bring your new volunteers up to speed. Now depending on your organization and the type of volunteer work at hand, this could either be an in-person session or a simple orientation packet.

But regardless of the format, your orientation should include:

- **An overview of your organization, including its mission, vision and values.**
- **A who's who for your organization, including key staff members and leadership volunteers.**
- **A general overview of the types of volunteer jobs performed at your organization.**
- **An overview of policies, rules, and procedures.**

Retention Tips

Ok, you have your team of volunteers on board and active. Now the trick is keeping your volunteers on board and active.

To do this, it's important to remain engaged with them over time. Even if they haven't volunteered in a while, be sure to keep the conversation going. You can easily do this by creating a volunteers-only social community. Post updates, new volunteer opportunities, and even a few thank you messages every so often. Which brings us to our next point...

When it comes to retention, it's SO important to thank your volunteers and recognize their efforts. Remember, volunteers are under no obligation to continue sharing their time and talents. They continue because they want to and because they know their efforts are appreciated.

To let your volunteers know you appreciate them, why not...

- **Send them a simple, handwritten thank you card.**
- **Feature them on your association's website or blog.**
- **Nominate them for an award, such as "Volunteer of the Year."**
- **Give them a small gift, such as a Starbucks gift card.**
- **Feed them. (Hey, everybody loves free food!)**
- **Give them a mug or t-shirt with your organization's logo on it.**
- **Host a special volunteers-only event.**
- **Mention them on social media.**
- **Give them a shout out at your next member meeting.**
- **Endorse them on LinkedIn.**

Trust us, showing appreciation will increase your volunteer retention rates, so don't put this off!

If recruiting, onboarding, and retaining volunteers sounds overwhelming, perhaps an association management system is right for you. With the help of an AMS, you can send out automated, personalized welcome emails, remind volunteers about upcoming events, and stay connected with your volunteers via a volunteers-only social community.

Want to know what else an association management system can do?

Check out our free guide, **What Is an AMS?** here!



Click here to check it out!

More about MemberClicks

MemberClicks offers all the tools that membership organizations need to make the most of the web. From online databases and event registrations to custom-designed websites and member communities, our products are tailor-made for small-staff organizations.

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