



Managing volunteers - the essentials

Factsheet 6 - Promoting your volunteering opportunities

1. Title

Your opportunity title is really important. It will immediately draw the attention of potential volunteers. Choose a dull or unappealing title and volunteers may not proceed to read the description of your volunteering opportunity. It is advisable to keep the opportunity title short to a maximum of 3 words.

Try to avoid the word 'volunteer' in the opportunity title. The opportunity title should be descriptive and concise. You can choose an opportunity title that resembles a 'job title'. This will draw the attention of volunteers interested in improving their employability. For example you could use titles like 'Press Officer', 'Marketing Assistant', 'Teaching Assistant' and 'Trainee Social Worker'.

You could instead decide to be more creative. By being creative you can help your role stand out. Consider including power words like 'Guru', 'Fashionista', 'Boutique Assistant', 'Trouble shooter' and 'Wizard', but don't over-use them.

2. The description

You should reach this stage after having thought about the role in detail and analysed which skills the volunteers need to have and which will be developed. In our experience, generic roles, tasks and skills not properly specified, reduce the number and quality of volunteering applicants. You run the risk of recruiting volunteers that won't have the skills you require, while offering them a role that is not suitable, and this will affect volunteer retention. If you need help developing your volunteering opportunities email info@vcth.org.uk

2.1. '8 seconds to decide'

Most volunteering opportunities are advertised online. The web requires your content to be top-heavy, i.e. move all the important information to the top. On average users spend 8 seconds to decide if they are interested in what they're reading. Even if you grab a reader's attention you need to be aware that 8 out of 10 internet users skim read. Therefore, move the important part of the role description towards the top. If you think you have many important things to say, you will need to prioritise.

2.2. 'If in doubt, leave it out'

In your role description you should include facts that are necessary to understand the role. Always apply the 'if in doubt, leave it out' principle. If you are asking yourself if parts of the role description are necessary, they probably aren't.



2.3. Who is it for?

Now that your role is developed, and skills, tasks and requirements are clarified, start thinking about the selling points of your volunteering role. Put yourself in the potential volunteer's shoes and think what would interest them, why they would want to volunteer for you and what they are looking for. The role description is not the place to describe your past achievements as a project/organisation, but your opportunity to recruit more volunteers.

2.4. What to include

You should be able to include all the necessary information in 3 paragraphs. Use the first paragraph to describe the volunteer tasks and responsibilities. At this stage you should capitalise on the time spent on developing the role and highlighting rewarding and meaningful tasks, qualifications and training you may be offering.

In the second paragraph you should briefly talk about the organisation and the project. Focus on what volunteers need to know and on what is relevant to them. Focus more on your organisation's selling points, and less on its history, founders and funders.

Use the third paragraph to describe practicalities, commitment and any qualifications you expect volunteers to have

Use power words like;

- You
- Do
- Yes
- How to
- Hate
- New
- Now
- Amazing
- Protect
- Discover
- Excellent
- Must
- Need

3. How and where to advertise

3.1. Via VCTH

Free promotion of your volunteering opportunities is one of the many benefits of registering with Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets. If you have a new volunteering opportunity, or if you are thinking about creating a new one, get in touch with the Volunteer Centre. We will advertise your opportunity for you on www.do-it.org.uk, the national volunteering database. On this database we list hundreds of local volunteering opportunities, and potential volunteers can browse them by postcode, area of interest and type of activity. They can also search according to their availability.

At VCTH we also update the 'Opportunity of the Week' page on the VCTH website. We include 3 opportunities that are new or need to recruit quickly. We also use Facebook and Twitter to advertise opportunities to a large cohort of potential volunteers. If you need to advertise a new opportunity or update an old one, please email info@vcth.org.uk



3.2. Other free advertisement methods

You can list your volunteering opportunities on the London Events Volunteering website. This website is for one-off volunteering events like clean-ups, collections, and for specific events like marathons and concerts. It's free and easy. Visit www.2012volunteeringlegacy.org.uk/web/home

If you are trying to recruit volunteers with specific skills, related to subjects taught in Universities and Colleges you can contact education establishments directly. Many will have volunteering officers that will be able to advertise your roles internally. You could also contact specific departments to approach current students. Local education establishments include Queen Mary University and London Metropolitan University.

If you are trying to reach young people over 16 you may want to consider local Youth Centres, schools and Idea stores.

3.3. Paying for advertisements

When selecting an advertising method you should first consider if you are looking for volunteers that live locally, and if you will be able to cope with the extra demand adverts generate.

East End Life is the local weekly newspaper published and produced by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. It is very popular in Tower Hamlets and is delivered weekly to 99,000 households and businesses in the borough. Costs vary according to the size of your advertisement. A well written advertisement is likely to work, but expect many phone calls, 50% of which are likely not to be related to the volunteering opportunity. www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/news/east_end_life.aspx

The Guardian is the national newspaper which has established itself as a very popular recruitment resource and is well trusted in the charity and voluntary sector. You can decide to advertise online or in print. It is costly and very helpful if you have a national focus.

CharityJob. www.charityjob.co.uk is a very popular website with people working or interested in working in the voluntary and community sector. Along with thousands of jobs, they also advertise volunteering opportunities for free. This is a good channel to recruit for trustee roles.

If you need help recruiting a large number of volunteers you could consider running open days, recruitment days and recruitment campaigns on a wider scale. VCTH is able to help with large scale projects, and offers its expertise at a very reasonable price. Email info@vcth.org.uk if you need help, or call Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets on 020 7377 0956.