



Resource: Top Tips for Advertising a Volunteer Role

Writing an appealing volunteer advertisement is not as simple as it may seem at first. The following tips may help you find the best volunteer for the role.

1. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT THE VOLUNTEER TO DO

When a prospective volunteer reads your advertisement, they should gain a very clear idea of what is required of them - in essence you are painting a picture of the role. Avoid gaps in information, as prospective volunteers will make assumptions about what is involved. These assumptions may mean you attract the wrong applicant – or the right applicant is put off applying.

Avoid misrepresenting the role – if there are mundane aspects to the role, mention them, but balance this by outlining the more enjoyable tasks. Creating a position description prior to listing your role opportunity, will help you define what the tasks are and what kind of skills and attributes are needed.

2. USE THE RIGHT LANGUAGE

Speak directly to the reader of your advertisement – you want to connect with the person on an emotional level. The word “you” is effective in fostering engagement and the word “we” signifies inclusion.

Include some kind of “call to action” which encourages the reader to apply for the role – this might be “We look forward to hearing from you” or “apply now”. Using questions can also be effective – “Would you like to help someone affected by...?”

3. CHOOSE YOUR POSITION TITLE CAREFULLY

Position titles need to accurately reflect the role, but also need to be compelling and fun – not dry and boring! Volunteers want a title they can be proud of. Using the word “Volunteer” is often unnecessary –

for example “CAB interviewer” is preferable to “CAB volunteer”. Many volunteers use verbs to describe what they do – they marshal at events, they sort donations, they foster kittens – so reflect this in your recruitment advertisements.

Some words will draw people to your role listing more than others - hero, champion, whiz, superstar, genius, and expert, are just some examples that can be used to make your role sound appealing and fun.

4. BE UPFRONT ABOUT THE TIME COMMITMENT

Volunteers want to know exactly what you expect from them. Be clear on how long the job will take, how often it needs to be done, and what hours / days it should be carried out. Specify if it is a regular commitment or a one-off project. If there is flexibility in scheduling, say so. By doing this you are addressing possible perceived barriers in your role listing.

5. BE CLEAR ABOUT THE BENEFITS

When a person is considering gifting your organisation some of their discretionary time, they absolutely want to know what is in it for them. This is particularly important for the new breed of volunteer who views volunteering as a reciprocal arrangement.

Training and upskilling, a reference, social connection, workplace experience, discounts at local businesses, and a sense of satisfaction, are all benefits that may appeal to a prospective recruit.

6. MENTION THE IMPACT OR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ROLE

Outlining the tasks of the role is important – but even more important is communicating the outcomes and impact the person will make through volunteering. Every role is part of a bigger picture that is usually linked to the goals and mission of your organisation. Preserving environments for future generations, creating sustainable futures, reducing inequities and social isolation, are just some examples of how volunteers can be impactful. When someone understands the significance of what they are doing, they are more likely to connect with the role and make the decision to apply.

7. BE CONCISE AND AVOID JARGON

Using technical or sector-specific jargon may discourage an applicant – they might feel they won't fit in or will be out of their depth. Finding the right volunteer is important – they can learn new terminology as they become accustomed to the culture of your organisation. Using plain language is helpful, and so is keeping your advertisement concise. Making your advertisement long enough to convey the necessary information – but not so long that someone loses interest – is key. Keep sentences short and eliminate unnecessary detail.

8. WOULD I VOLUNTEER FOR THIS ROLE?

This is the ultimate benchmark you need to address before listing your role. Does it sound appealing? Run the advertisement past someone else in your organisation – or better still, someone who doesn't know anything about the role. What questions do they have about it? Is it a fair reflection of what is needed? What perceived barriers might exist? Does it have some zing – is the wording engaging?

9. FINALLY - PUT YOUR MARKETING HAT ON

We are bombarded by marketing messages every day – and your recruitment message needs to stand out amongst everything else in the digital or print media space – and amongst the sea of other postings. Using humour, making people curious, using language that connects and encourages action, will all help your recruitment message resonate with the right audience.

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