

Volunteer Recruitment & Management

Why People Volunteer

Before you can really begin to create a plan and recruit volunteers it's a good idea to examine reasons why people volunteer for a political campaign. Everyone you will recruit will probably fall into one or more of the categories listed.

Policy - These are people who work for candidates because they care about where he or she stands on an issue or they may want to work against someone who is bad on their favorite issue.

Social - These are people who work for a candidate to extend their social network.

Political - These are people who work for a candidate because they are party loyalists.

Opportunity - These volunteers work for a candidate because they want something out of it - a job, money, or perhaps a political appointment.

Recognition - These are people who work for a candidate because they want something intangible out of the campaign - self-esteem, respect, a change from their routines.

How Many Volunteers You Need for a Given Project

Although budgeting volunteers will be easy for some projects, other projects require a greater understanding of what it takes to get the job done. A good example is voter contact, a part of the campaign that will require lots of volunteers.

For example, if the campaign task is to identify the candidate preference of 5,000 registered voters, your job would be to budget the number of volunteers needed and the amount of time it would take to make the calls.

First, assess your resources:

- How many phones are available for the task? This could be based on how many are in your office or how many can be donated by law firms, labor unions, etc.
- What times you will run the phones? Usually phone banks are run in the evenings and on weekends, it's best to know what is customary in your area. Some operations don't call Friday nights because of the low number of contacts. Others don't call Sunday afternoons because of local sporting events.
- How many contacts can be attempted in an hour? Not all phone contacts take the same amount of time. A persuasion call takes more time than an ID or candidate preference call, which takes more time than a GOTV call. A well-run phone bank with a good supervisor can increase your number of contacts, but you should use numbers from an average night of a phone bank in order to be conservative.

Second, calculate the # of volunteers you need:

STEP 1 – Assess Resources.

For this exercise, assume that your campaign had 10 phones available for the project; the phones operate three hours a night (6-9 p.m.) and average 22 attempted contacts per hour. Assume you want to reach 5,000 voters.

STEP 2 – Determine the total number of calls a **single** volunteer makes in 1 night shift

$$22 \text{ calls per hour} \times 3 \text{ hours per night} = 66 \text{ calls per night per caller}$$

STEP 3 – Determine the total number of **all** calls all the volunteers can make in 1 night.

$$66 \text{ calls per night per caller} \times 10 \text{ phones} = 660 \text{ calls per night by the phone-bank.}$$

STEP 4 – Determine the total number of the nights needed to meet your goal

Divide your overall goal by the number of contacts per night. To reach and identify 5,000 voters, you will need to place approximately 10,000 calls. No matter how good your volunteers are, lists are not perfect, count on wrong numbers, disconnects, people not being home and those who will refuse to answer your questions.

$$10,000 \text{ calls divided by } 660 \text{ calls per night} = 15.1 \text{ nights needed to make the calls.}$$

STEP 5 – Total number of Night Shifts Needed

Multiply the number of nights it will take to complete the project by the number of phones you have available.

$$15.1 \text{ nights} \times 10 \text{ phones} = 151 \text{ phone shifts.}$$

Staffing Your Volunteer Project

Recruit and schedule the volunteers based on the number of phone shifts listed above. Just as it takes twice as many calls to get to the final number of completes you need, you need to recruit twice as many volunteers to account for no shows.

The 50 Percent Rule

Volunteers are not paid, so they are not as likely to follow through on their commitment because of other things in their life taking precedence (a kid's soccer game, a late night at the office, too tired after a long week, etc.) So, for planning purposes, expect to lose half of your volunteers per night. Therefore, always recruit twice as many volunteers as you need to perform a given task. This is the only way to ensure that an adequate number of volunteers will show up. Phoning them the night before helps your turnout, but still expects only half.

How and Where to Find the Volunteers you Need

The best source of volunteers is to contact those already active in politics or groups that have a history of political action. One of the easiest ways to identify community activists and political volunteers is to have the candidate (and/or key staff who are from the area), write the names of people he or she knows who belong to an organization in the community. Some organizations that could be on the list include:

Former Campaign Contributors	Environmental Organizations	Senior Citizen Organizations
Neighborhood Organizations	Volunteer Fire Companies	Fraternal Organizations
Fundraising Groups	Service Organizations	Alumni Associations
Church/Religious Organizations	Veterans Organizations	Sports Organizations
Women's Organization	Democratic Youth Groups	Tenant Organizations
Minority or Ethnic Organizations	Democratic Party Activists	Pro-Choice/Pro-Life Groups
Youth Clubs/ Student Organizations	Labor Unions	Civic Organizations
Trade Organizations	Personal Friends and Family	Professional Groups

Why Volunteers Leave a Campaign

- **Burn Out** - Volunteers may be given too much responsibility too early, or you may be relying on the same volunteers for every project.
- **Exclusion** - A lot of times campaigns turn into an "us vs. them" situation - staff vs. volunteers, primary election volunteers vs. general election volunteers, volunteers who have been working together for years vs. new recruits.
- **Can't win/Can't lose** - Volunteers don't want to waste their time if the campaign seems like a sure thing or a lost cause.
- **No Growth** - Volunteer work shouldn't always be tedious: there are enough interesting assignments to go around.
- **No Appreciation** - Volunteers need to feel appreciated and recognized.
- **External Opposition** - When a person volunteers, their entire family, is impacted.
- **Internal Conflict** - No one wants to work in a place that is full of tension.
- **Not Enough Fun** - Electing officials to public office is serious business, but the volunteer environment can be one of enjoyment.

Sample Volunteer Tasks

Program Area	Volunteer Needs
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptionist (several to work different shifts) • Data entry • Cleaning office • General office work (copying, faxing, etc.) • Assistant volunteer coordinators/recruiters • General mailings
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposition research at libraries/state capitols • Opponent trackers • Issue papers • Compiling materials for a debate preparation book
Communications/Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News clippers • TV news summary writers • Radio actualities • Staffing press conference sign in tables • Advancing press events • TV/radio buy pick ups • Recording ads from TV and radio
Fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls for events • Fundraising direct mail or event mailings • Staffing events • Having a house party • Copying/coding/picking up checks
Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door-to-door canvassing • Literature drops • Phone banking • Phone bank supervision • Visibility activities • Constituency outreach
Candidate Activity/Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance a candidate event • Driver • Staff a candidate at an event • Sit with a candidate during fundraising calls • Scheduling assistant for surrogates • Tracking invitations and responses • Planning and execution of event logistics
GOTV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door knocking • Phone banking • Material runners • Visibility • Poll watchers/checkers • Rides to the polls

Sample Volunteer Calendar

September

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 LABOR DAY Blue Lake picnic 6 vols	3 FR mailing 8 vols	4 office work 4 vols press work 2 vols (one in early AM)	5 office work 4 vols Vol recruitment 10 vols	6 office work 4 vols Vol recruitment 10 vols	7 canvass weekend 30 vols lawn signs 10 vols
8 canvass weekend 30 vols needed vol party - pm	9 phone bank for FR event 15 vols vol recruitment 10 vols	10 phone bank for FR event 15 vols vol recruitment 10 vols	11 phone bank for FR event 15 vols vol recruitment 10 vols	12 FR runthrough 10 vols	13 FR w/Sen Jones 10 vols	14 vol recruitment day 30 vols
15 phone banks start (thru 9/30) 40 vols each night + 2 superstation	16 leafleting for debate 8 vols	17 leafleting for debate 8 vols	18 sign making for debate 15 vols	19 DEBATE	20 press work 4 vols (2 in AM)	21 lawn sign mobilization 20 vols
22 lawn sign mobilization 20 vols	23 campus voter reg drive 10 vols	24 campus voter reg drive 10 vols	25 campus voter reg drive 10 vols	26 Rosh Hashanah Office work 4 vols	27 Rosh Hoshanah Office work 4 vols	28 Italian Festival 8 vols
29 Italian Festival 8 vols	30 office work 4 vols					

Sample Volunteer List

Name	Address	City/State/Zip	Phone	County	Ward/Prec't	Assoc.	Vol. area	Available?
Paula Jones	7 Main Street	Columbia SC 66666	803-652-1234	Union	6/75	NEA	Phone	Evenings
Lucy Adams	10 Oak Road	Columbia SC 66666	803-652-6526	Union	6/75	Sierra	Walk	Sat & Sun
John Roberts	12 Oak Road	Columbia SC 66666	803-652-6666	Union	6/75	Finance	House Pty.	Election Day
Jane Levine	101 Broadway	Columbia SC 66666	803-652-1707	Union	7/12	Walk-in	Office	Sundays
Mike Smith	67 N. 4th St.	Columbia SC 66666	803-955-1888	Union	10/10	Church	Phone	afternoons