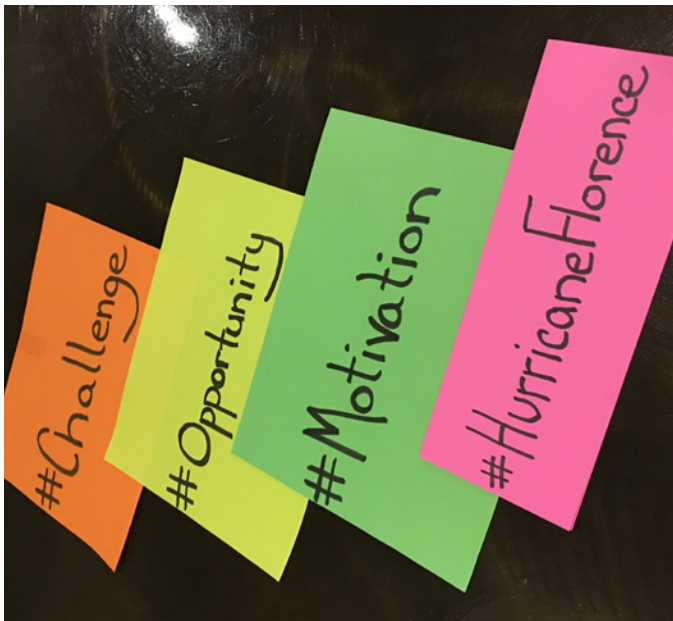


THE NEW REALITIES OF **VOLUNTEER RECRUITING**

Finding Volunteer Passion for Your Event



- Not enough middle age people, the X Gen, in our community to take the place of the Boomers.
- Trouble connecting with those who are 20s-30s, the Millennials, now the largest generation in the workforce. Are they not interested in events? They seem more interested in causes.
- Trying to communicate with the Boomers, Xers and Millennials using consistent communication tools is difficult.
- Must expand our volunteer pool.
- Volunteer motivation is needed. How do I explain “Why” people should volunteer with us?
- Need to communicate our relevance if we wish to connect with younger volunteers. What impact are we making as an organization in our community?

Volunteer Management #Opportunities

The Millennials are now the largest generation in the workforce. Their volunteer efforts look different than previous generations. I asked the volunteer managers to consider each of these opportunities and determine which trends might provide volunteer growth potential in their community.

My passion is helping event managers find and finesse great volunteer solutions for their specific needs. You likely know that my company, TRS, helps events discover the right combination of technical solutions – online volunteer management, background check, online training, databases, surveys and communications tools.

What you might not realize is that most of my time is not spent on technology. Most of my time is spent one-on-one, in webinars and leading workshops with a focus on problem solving. No, not technical problem solving. That comes last.

First, you must understand the volunteer recruiting-registration-communications-retention plans and timeline for your event. At a recent conference workshop, a group of 35 volunteer managers broke into small teams.

Their initial task? To explore their volunteer challenges and opportunities.

Volunteer Management #Challenges

The event volunteer managers discussed their challenges at length. I listened as the managers laid out their frustrations. The themes were consistent at each table.

- We count on our older volunteers, the Boomers. But many are aging out. And others aren't physically able to do the tasks.



Younger Volunteers are ...

- Seeking life balance means volunteering with friends and family.
- Looking for that great selfie with high visibility volunteer experiences.
- Making choices about what they will do (volunteer positions) and when (volunteer timing) they will do it. Critical to match volunteer skills and interest.
- Seeking big impact projects that make a difference.

Younger Volunteers are Likely to be Introduced to Volunteer Opportunities in Groups

- Growth in *Corporate, Church and Convention* sponsored Days of Service.
- Focus on *high school and college* volunteer group activities for building experience, networks and resumes.
- Growth in *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)* programs, Volunteer Time Off (VTO) and Employee Resource Groups (ERG) within large businesses.
- *Charitable groups* (e.g. Health Causes, Dads Clubs, Rotary, Optimists) who supply volunteers for festivals and endurance events *in return for charitable donations*. (Yes, you may have to pay for your volunteers.)

Volunteer Management #Motivation

Our final task was looking at volunteer motivation and impact communication. Unfortunately, most events still focus on economic impact statements when discussing why they are important to the community. These are important. But how many people are staying in your hotels, eating in your restaurants and shopping in your department stores are simply not relatable to most volunteers. Volunteer interest typically leads back to self-interest (see opportunity trends above).

Our group of volunteer managers were asked to assess their programs using the following questions:

The First Interaction

- What impression do you make?
- What message are you sending?
- Is there a truly local component to your event?
- Are the volunteer registration and communication tools effective and efficient for the volunteer manager? User friendly for the volunteer? (*If you have the right message but it is too much work to volunteer... you will likely still have problems recruiting*)

Purposeful Volunteer Recruitment and Training

- Are you recruiting the right people? Skill set? Enthusiasm? Influencers?
- Do you offer opportunities for school groups?
- Do you partner with charitable organizations?

- Do you reach out to corporate connections?
- Are you developing Parent/Child or Grandparent/Grandchild areas?

Clear and Consistent Communication

- How and what are you communicating?
- Are you creating community connections?
- Are you speaking to the impact your organization/event makes locally?
- Are you timely?

Volunteer Recognition and Reward

- Do you have short-term vs. long-term recognition programs?
- Are you rewarding the volunteer behaviors that you value?

Long-Term Volunteer Engagement

- What is your volunteer retention plan?
- Do your volunteers come back?
- Do you survey your volunteers?

Closing

Consider where you have opportunities to create new connections in your community.

Cause based? Educational opportunities? Group interactions? Social recognition? Corporate responsibility? And of course, personal interests?

Discuss the options with your leadership team. Don't try them all at once. Pick a few and test them out. Which sources are the right fit for your organization, events and mission?

Remember the goal isn't to have the most volunteers. The goal is to have the right volunteers.

I, **Florence May**, love volunteers. Maybe it is the 15 years spent managing events with Visit Indy, Simply Hospitality and the United States Grand Prix (F1). Or maybe it is the 16 years delivering online volunteer management systems for many of the largest and most complex events in North America.

Over the past few years my company, TRS – The Registration System, has provided volunteer management systems for the 500 Festival, the Kentucky Derby Festival, the Republican National Convention, the Democratic National Convention, Celebrate Fairfax, the Gilroy Garlic Festival, the US Mayors Conference, the Azalea Festival, USA Special Olympics National Games and hundreds of smaller events. In the process of supporting events, I study and discuss the trends that make certain events successful while others struggle.

May I Help you?

For information on Volunteer Management Workshops and Webinars, contact Florence May at fmay@my-trs.com or visit www.my-trs.com for information on next offering.