

{THE MEETINGS COACH}

## 9 SECRETS *to* BUILDING a VOLUNTEER SURPLUS

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Q: AS A PLANNER, HOW CAN I MAKE THE MOST OF MY VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM? A: I'm often asked to share with colleagues and clients the secret to successful volunteer management, particularly as it relates to meeting and event design.

**1 OBJECTIVES**— Clearly establish your meeting or event's goals and objectives, then determine how best to leverage volunteers in support of this mission. Do this annually to ensure signature programs offer fresh experiences for volunteers and attendees alike.

**2 POSITIONS**— Determine the type, number and length of each available volunteer post. Be sure to create a variety of opportunities that align with the resource limitations (e.g., time constraints) of your prospective volunteers.

**3 RESOURCES**— Take the time to identify the financial and human resources necessary to adequately support your volunteers. At a minimum, plan for communications, supplies and recognition, as well as for training and supervision.

**4 EXPECTATIONS**— Establish clear expectations, in writing, from the very beginning to ensure everyone is on the same page with regard to anticipated time and financial commitments, workload and volunteer benefits.

**5 RECRUITMENT**— Consider the ideal skill sets for each volunteer position and personally contact individuals matching these profiles. Alternatively, disseminate a clear and concise call for volunteers and implement a thoughtful screening and selection process.

**6 ORIENTATION**— Host an initial orientation call or meeting during which expectations may be reviewed and questions may be asked and answered. Use this opportunity to set the tone for a fun and rewarding experience.

**7 STRUCTURE**— Provide structure and organization during each volunteer touch point and come to meetings having done the necessary legwork. To the extent possible, ensure your volunteers are successful and their time is used effectively.

**8 RECOGNITION**— Volunteers want to be recognized for a job well done. A simple, handwritten thank-you note can go a long way toward making someone feel appreciated.

**9 EVALUATION**— Finally, perform your due diligence. Evaluate the program, your volunteers and their contributions to the program. Likewise, gather feedback from these individuals about their volunteer experience.

Although the benefits of a successful volunteer management program are many and varied, the complexities should not be underestimated. Given the right approach, however, the investment can be well worth it. Therefore, make it easy, enjoyable and beneficial for your volunteers to give back—and you will be rewarded tenfold. ☺



EDITOR'S NOTE:  
*This is the first installment of a regular advice column by meetings expert Aaron Wolowiec. Have a meetings dilemma you need help solving? Email your questions to Aaron at [aaron@eventgarde.com](mailto:aaron@eventgarde.com); please write "Meetings Mag" in the subject line.*



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