

Winsome Words:

Crafting Effective Recruitment Messages



Words matter. Words have power:

- When you send an email, or speak to someone, inviting them to consider a specific volunteer opportunity
- When you follow up with someone who's expressed interest
- When you write about the opportunity in Fully Alive or a parent newsletter

Effective recruitment messages speak to what matters:

- Volunteers are drawn to experiences more than tasks. (Will it be Interesting?)
- Volunteers care about impact. (Does it matter? Is it worth my time and energy?)
- Our emotions often drive our actions. (Is there a heart connection?)

When describing the task:

- Initially, give a brief, general description. The details are for follow-up conversations and are in the position description.
- Always be honest. Don't sugarcoat things.

Three key elements increase the effectiveness of your message:

1. the need
2. why you're asking them
3. how the volunteer benefits

Look for all three in each of these examples.

Providing snacks for youth group: "Snacks help the kids relax and feel comfortable and homemade snacks are a real hit! Jennifer told me you love to bake, and I know you'd get a kick out of seeing the kids scarf them down!"

Data entry: "All this record keeping wears me out and limits the time I can give to the kids, which is what I'm best at. You told the office once you like doing spreadsheets, so this might be easy for you. And you can do it any time during the week while you're at home, relaxing in your pajamas!"

Listening to kids read: “Edgar told me you love books and I can see you enjoy being with kids. I’m looking for volunteers to come in once or twice a week and listen to a student read aloud. You would see their skills improve week by week, and reading skills are critical for success as adults.”

What’s your next step:

- In your next few everyday conversations, keep in mind that words matter. What is the impact of the words you used?
- Describe a task a volunteer could do with or for you. Include the need and how they would benefit.
- How might you recruit a volunteer for this task? (See “Treasure Hunt: Finding the Right Volunteer”)

A Winsome Words story:

I recruited some volunteers for a team tasked with finding a way to coordinate the scheduling of volunteers for worship-related ministries. At our first meeting, as part of getting to know each other, I asked each to share what led them to say ‘yes’ to joining this team. About half of them mentioned the sentence I put at the end of the email which invited them to consider this opportunity. After describing the need, and the complexities involved, I had said, “If your mind is already churning through possible solutions, you’re the right person for this team!”

Also in this series:

1. Powerful Partnership: What Could the Right Volunteer Do for You?
2. Treasure Hunt: Finding the Right Volunteer
3. Dig into Data: How to search for Volunteers’ Gifts in the Volunteer Impact Database
4. The Care and Feeding of Volunteers
5. Shared Knowledge: Filling our Treasure Chest

Volunteer Engagement: We’re on the move!

From ...

- Volunteering
- “Same old” volunteer roles
- Generalized recruitment
- Isolated knowledge of peoples’ gifts

To ...

- Serving everywhere
- Creative, flexible, customized roles
- Personalized recruitment
- Shared knowledge of peoples’ gifts

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