

Finding the Right One

SUSAN DETWEILER

VOLUNTEER/FOOD DRIVE COORDINATOR

SOUTHEAST TEXAS FOOD BANK

WWW.SETXFOODBANK.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/VOLUNTEER

1 Plan

1.1 Plot out your strategy

Think about your situation and your needs. Make a list of them and then go over your list again. Make goals. Seek the advice of your leadership, then follow it!

1.2 Think logistically

You cannot plan for volunteers with emotions or feelings. If you are not usually a logical thinker and you think using your emotions, ask for help. The first thing a good volunteer manager does is appoint a second in command.

1.3 Time is important

I once worked for a millionaire and he taught me about how valuable your time is. I learned this lesson and use my time wisely. I also know what times of the day I work best and when I should rest.

1.4 Make a process

Set your plan in motion and keep to it. Re-evaluate in 3 months then again in 6. Keep this up until you find a process which works for you.

2 Search

2.1 Volunteer Match

This is just one example of places to seek out volunteers. There are many. Southeast Texas.com will be glad to set up a volunteer page, they have done it for me before. Try Facebook and other social media. If you are not comfortable I guarantee there is someone in your group who is and might be more than happy to volunteer for you in this way. Not everyone who volunteers are in your office or at your pantry. Have some flexibility.

2.2 Local chambers of commerce

And even some not so local chambers. There are many in this area and lots of groups and companies wish to help in their community. Don't be greedy! Share your volunteers. If you have one you don't need in one area tell them about another opportunity somewhere else. Network with other volunteer agencies and let them know if you have an extra person or two. You may be compensated in a much better way than you could expect.

2.3 Church

Of course, if you are a church you will focus your main recruiting in your own church. But don't limit yourself to just your church. I know many people who volunteer with other groups that they don't belong to. Besides you never know, you may even catch a new member or two.

2.4 Civic originations

These orgs are great places to get new volunteers especially with specific skills. Test the water, give them a call, and tell them you need, well not all of them, don't overwhelm them. But it is easy to target one place you need someone.

3 Interview

3.1 Study up on human resources

A volunteer is an employee who does not get paid. They are governed by the same rules the employees are governed by and the same rights have afforded them as well. THIS IS IMPORTANT.

3.2 Pull in another

Never interview alone. This serves many purposes. If you are a woman and the potential volunteer is a man, call in someone else and vice versa. Never be in a closed office while you are interviewing someone unless you have an extra person there. Make sure they all know that everything said is confidential AND KEEP IT THAT WAY!

3.3 Mind what you say

Be careful about what you say and how you say it. The best way is to write down some questions you want answers to and stick to the list as much as possible. Your list will grow with time. Take your time, when I was interviewed for the job I have with the Food Bank my interview lasted over 1 ½ hours. That was very long but take enough time to get a feel for that person. Put them at ease early and you will get better answers. Don't make them feel that they are on trial.

Be careful what you ask because many questions or simple statements sometimes may be perceived as racial or bigoted.

3.4 Let the interviewee ask questions of you

I love for the person seeking the position to ask me questions. This shows me they have thought about who we are and what we do. Don't think any question is silly or unreasonable. You don't know the motivation behind the question. Maybe they have a sick parent they are caring for or a child at home.

4 Explain

4.1 Who are you?

Give them a little history about your organization. Then explain how you got where you are.

4.2 What do you do?

There may be many opportunities for this person within your organization. Give them an overview of what you do and why you do it.

4.3 What is your mission statement?

Do you have a mission statement? If you do not you might wish to make one.

4.4 What is your size and number of personnel and volunteers?

Give them an idea of how large, or small, your organization is.

5 Try

5.1 Give yourself a breaking in period

Try before you buy!

5.2 Assess conduct and interaction with staff and other volunteers

Make others aware of the trial period and ask them to let you know if something is going on that may not seem kosher.

5.3 Get feedback with others working in the same area

Ask those who are working with the new person how that newbie is doing. Don't wait for them to come to you. People don't want to feel that they are tattling on someone.

5.4 Watch for sloppiness

These things WON'T change. If they have sloppy work habits, they will keep having sloppy work habits.

6 “Hire”

6.1 Volunteers are employees who are not paid.

Remember this and know how YOU pay them. How do you pay them?

6.2 Be sure the new “hire” knows your policies and rules.

They cannot follow the rules unless they have them. (Share our policy hand out)

6.3 Know what you need to do should you need to “fire” a volunteer.

This must follow the guides as if they are an employee. Texas is an at will state so you don't have to give a reason but if you do be sure you can back it up.

6.4 Keep good and throw out the bad.

Don't drag down your org by keeping those who are dragging down the others. Get rid of them. Your group will be happier in the long run.