



## Attracting Volunteers

### Attracting and recruiting volunteers is not the same

Most organisations think that 'attracting' and 'recruiting' volunteers is the same thing. It's not! You first have to attract a person's attention before you can recruit them to become a volunteer for you. So how do you attract people's attention?

### We are constantly bombarded with messages

Many organisations can't understand why their past 'attraction' techniques are no longer working. Well, it's not because less people are volunteering - countrywide these numbers have remained fairly steady over many years. It's because we're now part of the 'information age' and are constantly being bombarded with information.

Every year there are approximately 300,000 new books published worldwide; let's not even think about the number of magazines, catalogues, direct mail and then there's the internet! No wonder it's a challenge to attract people's attention!

### Spice up your message

So how do you break through the 'information overload'? There are numerous ways to attract people's attention. Review your written advertising - brochures, flyers, etc. If you're going to produce it, you might as well aim at attracting people's attention and getting them to read it.

### It's always the Headline

If you have only a limited time to work on a brochure or flyer then spend most of that time on only one thing - the HEADLINE. Just look at any newspaper - it is the headlines that dominate the print.

The overwhelming purpose of a headline is to catch people's attention. It is not to tell your whole story. It is not to convince people to volunteer. It is to get people's attention to read on to your next paragraph, and then your next paragraph and hopefully the whole brochure or flyer.

### “Volunteers Wanted”

The most used and least eye catching of headlines found on volunteer recruitment material is 'Volunteers Wanted'. Does this really 'fire you up' to read on? It is really time to get more creative with headlines. There are eight main types of headlines used to capture attention.

### **No 1 - The Direct Headline**

This headline aims to be short, sharp and to the point and as the name implies is very direct; i.e. 'the shocking truth about how volunteering affects your health'.

### **No 2 - The Indirect Headline**

This headline aims to arouse your curiosity and interest to read on by using an indirect teasing and tempting headline; i.e. 'the best things in life are waiting for you'

### **No 3 - The Command Headline**

This headline is a direct command, an order to get you out of your 'comfort zone' and to take direct and specific action; i.e. 'join up now and find out why hundreds of people already have'.

### **No 4 - The Reason Why Headline**

This headline promises to provide really important and vital information that you just have to know about. This headline often starts with very specific numbers that will further arouse your curiosity; i.e. 'the six reasons why volunteering will improve your sex life'.

### **No 5 - The 'How To' Headline**

This is often the easiest and most effective form headline to create. It begins with how to and then follows with an important list of benefits. Examples of this type of headline would be: 'how to have the best life experience imaginable' or 'find out how to turn volunteering into a full-time interest'.

### **No 6 - The Testimonial Headline**

This headline is where a third party offers proof of something - using the actual words from a satisfied customer. An example of this headline would be: 'volunteering was the best thing that ever happened in my life'.

### **No 7 - The News Headline**

This headline responds to people's natural interest and fascination with news. It is often must-have and valuable information and it is used in many press releases. An example of this headline would be: 'doctors astounded at the proven power of volunteering to prolong life'.

### **No 8 - The Question Headline**

This headline often calls for a spontaneous reflex action from the reader and is focused on the person. An example of this headline would be: 'which one of the following five excuses do you use for not volunteering?'

## **What's unique about your organisation?**

After the headline, there are many other aspects to consider when writing your advertising content. But in some way your content has to explain what's unique, what's special about your organisation or group, in order to maintain interest. What will make the reader think "I want to know more about this organisation"?

## People always buy on emotion, so sell it

If you want your written material to be unique then write from the heart and not the head. People always buy on emotion, so sell it. The decision to volunteer is most often an emotional decision - to help people, animals, the environment, etc.

Stop writing emotionless jargon and talk to people's emotions. Tell a story of what your volunteers have done to change people's lives, save the planet, etc. so that the reader says "I want to be part of that"

### Best Practice example:

**Cruelty to children must stop. FULL STOP**  NSPCC™

Please see the NSPCC website, [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk).

