

Design Volunteer Recruitment Web Pages that Convert Browsers to Joiners

By Tobi Johnson and Associates

There's no doubt that the internet is now commonly used for gathering information, making purchases, connecting with others, and supporting causes. And, it's not just the "young-uns" anymore — people of all ages surf. In fact, for the first time in history, [over half of older adults are online](#). And more people are contributing to causes via [online giving](#).

So, it stands to reason that volunteers look to the web for information about new opportunities. But do our existing volunteer recruitment pages actually inspire visitors to join us?

Does Your Online Information Inspire Visitors to Act?

Take a moment to review the volunteer recruitment information that's posted on your website.

- Are your current openings listed?
- Is it easy to find directly from your agency home page?
- Is a compelling case made for the need for your volunteer-led services?
- Is there sufficient information about what volunteering actually entails?
- Is there social proof that others have benefited from the volunteer program (as volunteers and service beneficiaries)?
- Do visitors have a clear picture of what to do next?

What Do You Want Your Visitors to Experience?

Now, take a moment to envision the experience you'd like your visitors to have. What do you want it to feel like? If your website were a storefront, would you want it to feel like a haphazard, dusty junk shop where you have to dig for hours to find treasures? Or would you rather invite users into the elegant comfort of your local Pottery Barn where everything is well organized, curated, and within easy reach? Or, does your local Ben & Jerry's ice cream scoop shop suit your fancy where quirky, delicious variety is the spice of life? Or, is it something else altogether?

Your web site, or "virtual storefront," can communicate your brand experience either very effectively or with disastrous results. So, take care to create a volunteer recruitment landing page that successfully plays the part — It's got to have curb appeal and some effective merchandising to draw new folks in, or your audience isn't going to be compelled to step inside, browse, and make a commitment.

Actions You Want Visitors to Take

Your goal for each online visitor is that they take some kind of action. Here are four positive actions volunteers can take, each building on the next:

1. **Browsing** – People who visit your website for the first time are most likely there to check you out. They want to learn more about your organization, cause, and volunteer opportunities. Hopefully, they'll do more than just look you over, but that's up to you. If you don't have enough compelling information posted, they may abandon your site for something more appealing.
2. **Investigating** — If you've piqued a visitor's interest, then they will want to know more about you, either by reading in-depth info you present or contacting you to get answers to specific questions.
3. **Joining** — Once they've checked you out, and perhaps visited your website a few times, some visitors will take the leap and submit an application. If these are quick and easy to complete online, versus waiting for a packet to arrive in the mail, the more likely your prospect will follow through.
4. **Sharing** — Friends enjoy sharing what they're up to and asking for advice. Prospective volunteers may want to share your info with others either while they are still investigating you or after they've applied.

Below are ways to promote these actions.

Landing Page Design to Promote Engagement and Action

- **Include Clickable Call-to-Action Buttons** — I suggest three buttons — **Learn More About Volunteering**, **Contact Us**, and **Apply to Join Our Team** – with the final highlighted in some way as the preferred choice. For more info on the art and science of Calls to Action, check out Hubspot's free eBook ["Mastering the Design and Copy of Calls-to-Action."](#)
- **Make Every Page Shareable** — Help your visitors (and current volunteers) spread the word about your volunteer openings. Your landing page, and every subpage, should have a [Share This](#) widget embedded. Also, to make your opportunities easy to send to others and printable, place short paragraphs about each current opening together on one page.
- **Embed a Welcome Video** — Make it a brief and energetic one minute of fun. Feature enthusiastic volunteers sharing quick snippets about why they volunteer and what accomplishments they're proud of. If you can't get a video made, create a photo slide show of volunteers with hand-held signs and put it to music. [Animoto](#) is my favorite inexpensive and easy tool to use to create dynamic, eye catching slideshows.
- **Include Client Testimonials** — No one says it better than the people who have benefitted from your program. Ask clients to share short quotes about how they have overcome a

problem with the help of a volunteer. Get their permission to post and include first names and last initials if you want to protect their anonymity.

- **Share a Photo Gallery** — Post photos of volunteers in action. Take photos of small groups of smiling people who are looking at the camera, versus large groups from far away involved in indeterminate activities. Also, include descriptive captions under each photo — your audience will [read captions twice as often](#) as the rest of your body copy. Plus, you can include added detail that describes the context for people who are not familiar with your work. Be sure to get releases from all who are pictured.
- **Use QR Codes to Attract Online Visitors** — Help potential supporters link your volunteer recruitment landing page by using QR codes on all of your print materials such as business cards, fliers, rack cards, brochures, event posters, etc. Mashable has a slide show on how to [easily set up QR codes](#) for free. The use of mobile devices to surf the net is on the rise, so be sure anyone can access your site from any device. This means your website must be optimized for mobile use.
- **Design for Frictionless Browsing**
 - **Use Simple Typefaces** — Although it's tempting to get fancy with the fonts, resist the urge. The easiest to read are Arial and Verdana, so use them and keep them consistent throughout.
 - **Chunk Text & Add Subheadings** — Most of your audience will scan versus read your copy in depth, so help them do this quickly. Create subheadings that can be read with the body copy or without. Whenever possible, simplify long text into bulleted lists.
 - **Include Links to Deeper Info** — For those who want to research more, include links to your Volunteer Position Descriptions, a list of staff and their photos, your agency's Annual Report, the Volunteer Handbook, etc.
- **Test & Evaluate** — Have your current volunteers test different web design layouts and copy. Also, switch things up from time to time and see what works best for your audience. To track conversions set up Google Analytics. The [Google Conversion Suite](#) can help you check whether your landing page design actually results in valued actions on the part of visitors. Also, ask every volunteer applicant how they heard about you to track the differences between online and offline referral effectiveness.

Remember that your web site represents you more often than you think. Invest in making your online experience an exceptional one and watch your visitors and volunteer recruitment results soar.

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