

# Spread the Word Electronically

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by Fonda Kendrick | May 8, 2008

Whether your organization seeks to fill weekly, ongoing volunteer positions or wants to staff a large event, it goes without saying that communication with your volunteers is key. When publicizing the need for volunteers, it is not the time to be shy. In fact, a marketing campaign is a must. More specifically, in today's world, an e-marketing campaign can be a great advertising avenue. [Electronic marketing](#) is the concept of using the Internet, email, and other electronic correspondence to drive your marketing efforts. The beauty of this type of marketing is the fact that it is both effective and inexpensive, particularly when compared to many more traditional types. A few simple efforts can be just the thing to put your [volunteer opportunities](#) on everyone's calendar.

## As Simple as Possible

For starters, look inside your agency or organization to make sure you are maximizing your e-marketing efforts there. Take a quick look at your website. Are your upcoming events prominently displayed on the home page? Make things easy for volunteers by creating a Volunteer Now button that links directly to your Hub. (This feature is available to administrators under VolunteerHubs Setup subtab.) Just this one simple step makes it as seamless as possible for your potentials to sign up for an event. As one organization's director puts it, if you want [a volunteer] to do something, you have to make it as simple as possible for them to do it!

## Snail Mail No More

If you haven't already done so, consider making email your primary source of communication. It cuts out the time spent stuffing envelopes and the expense of ever-increasing postage costs. When it comes to email, keep these hints in mind:

- **Don't forget the email options available through your Hub.** Administrators can [send a blanket email](#) to all users about an upcoming event or choose to target only certain user groups.
- **Maximize the effectiveness of your external email.** Make sure everyone in your office has a link to the event in a tagline on all outgoing e-mails. Applications such as Outlook make this easy to do. You may be surprised how fast a link may get around. The person sending the email doesn't even have to be thinking about promoting the event. The tagline does it all.
- **Re-energize inactive volunteers.** Use your records to create an email list of inactive volunteers and touch base via email. Getting them back in the fold is much less time consuming and ultimately less expensive than finding new participants.

## Blogs, Newsletters, and More

In addition to tag lines in emails, make sure all electronic publications your organization produces have a link to your event. For instance, make sure your [blog](#) or e-newsletter at least mentions it. Of course, there's absolutely nothing wrong with writing complete articles based on the upcoming event. Whether you are a hard-charging promoter type or somewhat more subdued, it's most important that you provide a link to the sign up in a very conspicuous place. Again, people don't want to have a difficult time signing up.

Another easy way to keep in contact with volunteers is through your Hubs RSS feed. Promote this feature to current volunteers and make sure to stress its importance to new members. In this way, your Hub's users will be automatically notified of newly-posted volunteer opportunities.

## Networking

Now you've emailed, blogged, and talked up the RSS feed. And, although it's important for your organization to take as many steps as possible to promote volunteer opportunities, you don't need to rely solely on your own agency to get the word out. Also look to resources outside your organization to help recruit and retain volunteers. Seek out or capitalize on your partnerships, asking cooperating organizations to take the same measures as your own. Ask for a link to your home page on your partners websites. Also ask if they have any email lists they would be willing to share. A partner may even add a link to your event on its email tagline.

Another superb way to make inroads is to ask to be included on a partners blog or [electronic newsletter](#). Most organizations will gladly provide a link if you are willing to submit an article. At the very least they may be willing to provide a small, business card sized advertisement if they can't provide a link. Either way, your organization's events will get in front of exponentially more potential attendees.

## Internet-working

Depending on the situation, it may or may not be worth your organizations time and money to try and improve its position on the web. For instance, larger agencies may consider hiring a specialist to help with the search engine optimization (SEO) of its website. Smaller organizations would have difficulty justifying the costs. However, most agencies can benefit from securing a spot on one of the many listing services on the web. These sites serve as a warehouse of volunteer opportunities, where potential volunteers search for events in their area that meet their preferences and are provided with contact information.

Although e-marketing cannot totally replace traditional campaigns, it can certainly super-charge your efforts. Why not take advantage of these tools at your fingertips that can save your organization time and trim your costs, while simultaneously reaching more potential volunteers?

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