



RECRUITING NONPROFIT VOLUNTEERS

The Landscape of Platforms and Services

SEPTEMBER 2019

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FOREWORD

Here at EveryAction, we're proud to support nonprofit organizations in their quest to maximize their impact and raise more money. We believe that in order to be successful, you need the right tools—in fact, we know because we've been there. As former nonprofit professionals, we've felt the frustration of wasting precious hours on clunky, outdated systems, and we're proud to have built a beautiful and intuitive unified CRM with digital, fundraising, advocacy, and organizing tools all at your fingertips.

That's why we're so excited about this new report. Idealware shares our passion for helping organizations like yours make smart technology decisions. They know the importance of having the right tools for the right work to help you succeed, and they provide nonprofits with the details they need to make informed, data-driven decisions.

As you'll see in this report, Idealware takes a deep dive into the landscape of platforms, best practices, and services for recruiting new volunteers. We especially think you'll like the case studies, since they can help illustrate strategies for matching volunteers to organizations, communicating with a range of audiences, scheduling, advertising, and utilizing software solutions to build a thriving volunteer program.

After all, volunteers are the backbone of many nonprofits. They don't just bring their passion for your mission; they bring new skills, help expand the reach of your programming, and ultimately deepen your impact. Volunteers do the hard work of showing up: they provide critical day-to-day support, and they're an invaluable resource for recruiting new supporters, peer-to-peer fundraising, and hosting events.

We know managing a volunteer program can be a bit of a juggling act. Between scheduling shifts, managing reminders, and planning recruitment and other logistics, it's easy to get lost in Excel spreadsheets or systems that just don't meet your needs. We built EveryAction to ensure nonprofits like you have a streamlined place to recruit and mobilize your volunteers, schedule them for shifts, and throw successful community events and fundraisers with powerful, fully-integrated tools.

Cheers,

Stu Trevelyan
CEO, EveryAction



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INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are the strong backs upon which the work of many nonprofits is carried.

Volunteers can bring your organization new skills and expertise, additional support, and many other benefits. While statistics show that the percentage of the U.S. population that volunteers its time to nonprofits is dwindling, there are still a lot of people looking for ways to get involved with mission-related work.

But finding, recruiting, and engaging volunteers can be a challenge.

For this research, Idealware set out to find ways technology can make volunteer recruitment easier for your organization, and more efficient recruitment tools to help you with this process. We spoke with professionals in the field—including consultants, software providers, and volunteer managers—and looked at a wide range of technology solutions. This report summarizes what we learned from our research and from those conversations.

We'll explain how the characteristics of a volunteer opportunity can help inform recruitment methods. We'll show you the many possibilities technology creates for recruiting volunteers. We'll also look at a number of recruitment tools and services available to organizations of varying sizes and budgets.

To start, we'll explore current trends in volunteer recruitment to help understand what options might be worth exploring further, then we'll dive into technology options and how each supports recruitment approaches differently.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, nor is it meant to be—instead, it's a landscape report meant to give you a big picture view.

Maybe you are looking for ways to improve an existing volunteer recruitment process. Maybe you are new to volunteer recruitment and want to build a process from the beginning. Either way, having a more thoughtful, intentional approach to recruiting volunteers can be helpful in multiple ways, both now and in the future.

After reading this report you will be able to make an informed decision about what recruitment methods and technology solutions best fit your nonprofit's needs.

Ready to get started?

“*Having a more thoughtful, intentional approach to recruiting volunteers can be helpful ... now and in the future.*”

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS' BIGGEST CHALLENGE: RECRUITMENT ▶▶▶

There are multiple stages of working with volunteers, from finding and recruiting them to pairing them with the appropriate projects to managing their time and efforts.

Idealware has written about volunteer management systems in the past (<https://www.idealware.org/reports/consumers-guide-volunteer-management-systems/>). This report focuses on the recruitment phase.

Why? Because it's the most difficult area for nonprofits. According to the Volunteer Management Progress Report, published in January 2019 (<https://tinyurl.com/yyc68gqw>),

a survey of 1,500 volunteer administrators found that 33 percent of respondents listed recruitment as the biggest challenge in their work. It notes that recruitment has been the biggest challenge for nonprofit professionals since 2016.

While we are focusing on this specific stage, it is important to remember that recruitment is only one part of the process. There are a number of other elements that work in tandem with recruitment and are essential to building a successful volunteer program. We hope to follow this report with more research covering technology solutions for retaining volunteers, matching volunteers to opportunities, generating reports, and more.

Establishing a Working Definition

Throughout this work, we use the term “volunteer manager,” which can mean different things at different organizations. In the context of this report, a volunteer manager is generally a role within an organization assigned to someone who is leading or helping with volunteer recruitment efforts. The person could be on staff, could be a contractor, or could be a volunteer him- or herself.

At smaller organizations or those that don't work with a lot of volunteers, these responsibilities might be included in other roles within the organization. For example, at one organization we spoke with, the Executive Service

Corps of Southern California, volunteer management responsibilities fell under Meghan Maloney's role as Programs and Training Coordinator. She described herself as the “gatekeeper” to volunteers.

“With any type of nonprofit, oftentimes we are all wearing different hats and a lot of these roles are fluid in nature,” Meghan said. “Sometimes potential volunteers don't come directly through me. I am seen as the volunteer manager in the organization, but that doesn't necessarily mean that I am the primary person stewarding and vetting volunteers. Everyone on staff plays a role.”

LEARNING FROM RECRUITMENT TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES ▶▶▶

Volunteer recruitment is one of the most challenging and important steps of running a successful volunteer management program.

It is the first step in the process of engaging volunteers, and the first interaction a potential volunteer has with your organization. Needless to say, it's important to get it right.

This section provides an overview of the lessons to be learned from current approaches, methods and challenges in nonprofit volunteer recruitment to better prepare you when choosing technology solutions that best meet your organization's needs.

Make opportunities attractive to volunteers.

Volunteerism has changed over the years, and volunteer expectations continue to evolve. Today's volunteers may be looking for specific characteristics in the work they will do or seeking to develop new skills. For guaranteed success with recruitment it is important to know what these preferences are from the start and build them into the recruitment process. Make your volunteer opportunities desirable by offering such benefits as personal growth, increased sense of purpose, clarity on how to get the job done, easy sign up, recognition, training, and connections to other people.

Time your recruitment efforts wisely.

In the U.S. alone, there are at least 15 designated calendar days that involve volunteerism. Consider aligning your own recruitment efforts with one of these designated days or other annual events like holidays, school calendars, election cycles, etc. Other good times to increase your recruitment

efforts might be when your staff becomes smaller, when you are launching a new product, or if you need help dispersing materials.

Volunteering on the Calendar

Here's a list of calendar dates linked to volunteering in the U.S.

January

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
National Mentoring Month

February

Random Acts of Kindness Week

March

AmeriCorps Week

April

National Volunteer Week (usually the third week in April)

May

Join Hands Day
Senior Corps Week

September

National Day of Service and Remembrance
National Voter Registration Day

October

Be the Change Day
Make A Difference Day
National Pro Bono Week

November

National Family Volunteer Day

Personalize your recruiting methods to attract the audience you want.

Traditional methods such as print ads, promoted posts, newspapers, and flyers will reach large audiences, but don't always offer a personal touch. Targeted email marketing and social media marketing can help you attract attention and reach new followers. A good strategy is to appeal to specific people who care about your organization's work—based on commercial marketing practices, it can help you reach the people you want by targeting them with personalized, relevant messages.

Be open to different types of volunteering.

Microvolunteering—short, infrequent volunteer opportunities that take busy work schedules into account—has emerged as a new way to provide meaningful and brief volunteer opportunities for those pressed for time. There is also a shift from short-term volunteering to long-term and project-oriented volunteering. For example, companies like Google, NetSuite and VMware now offer programs in which technologists spend months with nonprofits in need of concentrated tech support. If your organization is open to different models, you might make your opportunities more attractive to potential volunteers.

Don't forget young people.

According to recent statistics, 60 percent of young people are eager to do work that makes a difference in the world. Don't overlook this population when considering volunteers—and when recruiting them, be sure to keep their motivations and preferences in mind. (Learn more about “What Young Volunteers Want From Your Nonprofit” at <https://tinyurl.com/yxgc5r8y>.)

Consider using skilled volunteers.

In its simplest form, pro bono (from the Latin phrase *pro bono publico*, or “for the public good”) is when a person or company donates professional services for the benefit of a community. While many companies offer pro bono services that include one-on-one support with individuals, free or discounted software, free membership services, grant support, etc., some also provide skilled volunteer service to help support nonprofit organizations. Staff at these companies can participate independently or through the companies they work for—these programs are often referred to as employee philanthropy and encourage staff to volunteer during their workday or on their own time.

Use a volunteer matching platform.

Similar to how consumers browse business or commerce marketplaces for products or paid services, nonprofits and individuals can browse volunteer marketplaces for people who've expressed interest in volunteering or high-quality volunteer opportunities. A number of such platforms have come into the forefront in the past decade—we'll look at them more closely later in this report.

SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT ▶▶▶

It is hard to recruit volunteers unless you have the right support and infrastructure in place.

Organizations around the country are reevaluating their volunteer programs in order to meet the diverse needs of potential volunteers, and virtual networks like Cities of Service (www.citiesofservice.org) are making connections between community groups and local volunteers easier. Some organizations are incentivizing volunteer opportunities by offering such benefits as student loan repayment, college credits, or skill training.

Reliable volunteer recruitment services and tools should enable you to do things like collect applicant information, build detailed profiles, communicate on multiple channels, geographically map opportunities, and consolidate data in one place.

- What does successful recruitment look like?
- How will we measure success?
- What kinds of skills are needed?
- What is the recruitment message?
- How many volunteers are needed?
- How much screening is necessary?

Engaging a volunteer the first time is really important, because if it goes really well you can have a volunteer for life.

These answers will help create a vision for what outcomes are desired in order to build a recruitment strategy with specific goals in mind.

There can be a wide variety of individuals within an organization who are responsible for volunteer recruitment even if their roles are not directly tied to volunteer management. Several organizations we spoke with include volunteer recruitment responsibilities within such roles as Training Coordinator, Head of Community Relations, and Program Manager. They also described recruitment as a team effort in which multiple people across different teams and programs participate in the recruitment process.

It is critical that the volunteer opportunity is well-defined from the start, and that the necessary time and resources needed to support the volunteer are set aside in advance.

“If an organization does not think Project Definition through, it can often lead to a volunteer that may drop off either at the beginning of the process or midway,” said Kristin Teti, Taproot’s VP of Program Operations. “But even worse, it really hurts the re-engagement of a volunteer. Engaging a volunteer the first time is really important, because if it goes really well you can have a volunteer for life.”

Research suggests that the best way to recruit a potential volunteer is to make personal contact. While finding volunteers through referrals and local contacts still works well, the use of online volunteer matching sites such as **VolunteerMatch**, **Taproot**, **Points of Light**, **Idealist**, and **GIS Corps** is becoming more common and fruitful. (We’ll look more closely at these later in this report.) Striking a balance between online and offline recruitment seems to be the best and most reliable option.

It's worth noting that you may want to recruit more volunteers than you think you may need—especially for mission critical or large events where volume matters. No-shows—volunteers who commit to helping but don't show up—can leave your organization stranded if you're not careful.

“No shows are a big drain on the volunteer community, said Julie VanDeLinder, VP of Strategy and Client Services for VolunteerMatch. “In fact, I think it is such a pervasive problem that a lot of nonprofits will buffer their recruitment by 30 percent and over-recruit knowing they're going to have a significant drop.”

Recruiting a diverse group of volunteers can broaden the range of opinions and ideas. By encouraging diversity in your organization, you increase its appeal and cultural relevance; different populations are much more likely to respond if they believe that your organization has volunteers that share similarities in race, ethnicity, identity, and experience. Using technology to recruit volunteers can help you reach wider communities than traditional methods of recruitment. Technology can also help you track and report on your organization's efforts at diversity, equality, and inclusion among volunteers so you don't fall behind.

Recruiting for Diversity: Executive Service Corps of Southern California

Executive Service Corps of Southern California has been intentional about increasing the diversity among their volunteers. In 2018, it created a task force to focus on the issue, which ended up having a very positive impact on the organization.

“This was not only good for the diversity of our corps and for our volunteers to learn about the different life experiences that each has had, but to also be representative of the communities that we serve,” said Vicky Foxworth, ESCSC's Vice President of Organizational Consulting.

“

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By building diversity into the recruitment strategy, ESCSC is able to demonstrate to its community that increasing diversity among their volunteers is something it is actively working on and will continue to make a priority.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS ▶▶▶

There are a growing number of easy-to-use, digital tools that can facilitate standard recruitment best practices.

Here are a few ideas for how to pair digital tools with quality planning and methodologies to save time and reach multiple audiences.

Host volunteer meetups.

One way to engage potential volunteers is to invite them to meet with staff members and other volunteers to get a feel for the organization. You could host this in person at a physical location, or in a virtual space using tools like **Skype** (www.skype.com) or **Zoom** (www.zoom.us)—and you can advertise the event through **Meetup.com** (www.meetup.com), **Eventbrite** (www.eventbrite.com), **SignUp Genius** (www.signupgenius.com), or **RSVPify** (rsvpify.com).

Schedule volunteer time.

Flexibility when scheduling volunteer time can make it easier for people to work the hours that best fit their own busy lives. Digital tools like **Youcanbookme.org** (youcanbookme.org), **Doodle.com** (doodle.com), and **Calendly** (calendly.com) are easy to use and can quickly survey the best possible times from individuals and groups of volunteers.

Engage with volunteers.

Interacting with current and potential volunteers on social media sites like **Twitter** (www.twitter.com), **Facebook** (www.facebook.com), and **Instagram** (www.instagram.com) can

be a way to build your community and share mission-related news. On each site, users have different expectations for content—be sure to meet them. For example, a series of digital images or short videos may be very appealing on Instagram while catchy statements with a link to register might be more effective on Twitter.

Target volunteers with Google ads.

Google offers an in-kind advertising options to qualifying nonprofit organizations through its **Google Ad Grants** program (www.google.com/grants/how-it-works/), which provides \$10,000 worth of targeted advertising. Consider using this grant for volunteer recruitment if you want to increase your visibility quickly and have time to review detailed data analytics.

Recruit volunteers in the field.

Digital tools can be helpful when recruiting volunteers at events. Documents that can be collaboratively edited are a great way to collect information from potential volunteers quickly, and both Google and Microsoft have good options that let you, for example, design a spreadsheet or form to collect contact information digitally and with the help of multiple people.

New to Volunteer Management? Tips From the Experts

The good news is, there's no need to reinvent the wheel when designing a volunteer recruitment process. There are multiple resources where you can find sample methods to borrow and build on (you can find some of them in the *Additional Resources* section of this report). Some common methods include the following:

- Tapping your nonprofit's existing network—staff, donors, constituents, board members, etc... to spread the word among their own friends, families, and networks, which can add a degree of familiarity and personalization to your ask.
- Blanket requests that reach a broader audience (such as local radio, flyering, or through social media)—this is better suited to recruiting larger groups of volunteers than skilled volunteers with specific qualifications or expertise.
- Targeting campaigns toward specific audiences to meet specific needs. This approach requires more work upfront to find and reach the volunteers you want, but can yield successful results if you find them.

Your organization's culture may determine the type of volunteers you want to recruit and what methods you decide to use. For example, if your organization relies on a strict set of rules, you may want to find people who are comfortable following procedures and policies; if it is more loosely organized, you may want to look for volunteers who are self-starters and good at time management. Assessing your workplace before you recruit volunteers may help you find a better match.

Even when no specific method is in place, your organization may hear from potential volunteers. Be sure that everyone who comes in contact with a potential volunteer has an updated menu of volunteer opportunities along with a volunteer handbook. (Learn more about creating a volunteer handbook at <https://tinyurl.com/y3j5fr4s>)

Recruiting Volunteers on Facebook

Facebook is an excellent place to build relationships and have conversations with supporters and provides an opportunity to publicly recognize volunteers and invite them to share comments, photos, and experiences that can help you recruit new volunteers. But many nonprofits fail to take advantage of this audience. Kristin Teti, VP of Program Operations at the Taproot Foundation, said she was surprised how frequently people don't think to ask their social media following for help.

"Every individual that follows you on social media or that gives money to your organization is a potential volunteer," she said.

“Every individual that follows you on social media or that gives money to your organization is a potential volunteer.”



RECRUITING THROUGH MARKETPLACES

A growing number of online volunteer marketplaces are helping connect nonprofits and professionals that otherwise might not know how to easily find each other. To ensure that both volunteers and opportunities are high quality, staff at volunteer matching sites invest a lot of time and effort fine-tuning their matching process.

“With skill volunteering, you want to make sure you set aside the time to engage volunteers, introduce them to what you are doing, set aside resources you will need, and really think through the details,” said Lindsay Grubar, President and CEO of the Taproot Foundation.

Similar to how consumers browse business or commerce marketplaces for products or paid services, nonprofits and individuals can browse volunteer marketplaces for people who’ve expressed interest in volunteering or high-quality volunteer opportunities.

In order to decide which volunteer marketplaces to recruit volunteers from, ask the following questions:

- Do you need a volunteer to come to your office in person, or can they work remotely (to help with digital projects, for example)?
- Will you need their help for a long period of time?
- How many volunteers do you need to get the job done?
- How much screening is required in order to find the right volunteer?

The answers to these questions may save you time when posting to various websites. For example, volunteer matching sites like **Catchafire** (catchafire.org), **GISCorps** (www.giscorps.org), and **UN Online Volunteers** (onlinevolunteering.org) connect organizations to virtual volunteers. Websites like **Cities of Service** (citiesofservice.org) and **Executive Service Corps** (www.escus.org) focus on connecting organizations with volunteers who are available for in-person engagements.

Taproot Foundation

<https://taprootfoundation.org/>

The Taproot Foundation helps nonprofits and other social good organizations get connected to the support they need by focusing on critical types of pro bono support such as marketing, information technology, finance, and Human Resources. Organizations and individuals can sign up for Taproot’s online network, **Taproot+** (pronounced Taproot Plus), for free, where they can work with experienced staff at Taproot to better define their projects before they get published to the network. Once posted, Taproot schedules a call between the nonprofit and the volunteer.

All volunteer opportunities six-to-nine-week engagements between one nonprofit and one or two skilled volunteers. Taproot looks for volunteers with no less than two years of professional experience—beyond that, nonprofits are guided on conducting the selection process on their own with help from tutorials and other learning materials. Nonprofits can also request a 60-minute consultation with an expert, which may help with scoping out talent for a larger project.

VolunteerMatch

<https://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/>

VolunteerMatch is a global network that connects millions of volunteers, nonprofits, schools, NGO’s, and social impact organizations through volunteerism. In three easy steps you can sign up for a free account as a volunteer

or as an organization. With a free account, an organization can post volunteer opportunities, search for volunteers, send group alerts, track metrics, and embed content on other websites.

For \$9.95 a month, or \$99 a year, you get access to such additional features as customizing emails, automating correspondence, and creating questionnaires. Volunteers sign up for free and search for thousands of opportunities based on location, skill, cause, and keywords. VolunteerMatch has a robust learning and help center that focuses on assisting organizations with the recruitment process (<https://vmhelp.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/201877757>). In addition to the website, VolunteerMatch works with such partners as **YourCause** (solutions.yourcause.com), **CyberGrants** (www.cybergrants.com), **Causecast** (www.causecast.com), **Bright Funds** (www.brightfunds.org), and LinkedIn to distribute opportunities across other platforms.

Julie VanDeLinder, VP of Strategy and Client Services, said VolunteerMatch puts a lot of investment and energy into recruitment because the better the connection upfront, the more likely that nonprofits will see retention carry through. She said VolunteerMatch provides several tools to help, including editable applicant questionnaires for nonprofits to customize.

There are a number of more specialized volunteer recruitment networks to meet more specific needs:

- **GISCorps** (www.giscorps.org) finds volunteers for short-term projects and partnerships related to developing Geographic Information Systems. By submitting a detailed form, you can request any number of volunteers for service such as humanitarian relief, disaster response, conservation, health, and environmental quality.
- **All For Good** (<https://www.pointsoflight.org/all-for-good/>), a service of Points of Light, is a digital hub for volunteerism and community engagement that pulls opportunities from Idealist, AARP, United Way, the Points of Light Global Network, and more into a comprehensive database of volunteer opportunities around the world.

- **Idealist** ([idealists.org](https://www.idealists.org)) has over 1.4 million monthly visitors to its English and Spanish language sites ([idealistas.org](https://www.idealistas.org)). You can easily add your organization to the network, post opportunities, and search for qualified volunteers for free.

Local Organizations

If your organization works closely with a local community or does not have the capacity to market volunteer opportunities through global marketplaces, a better option might be local volunteer networks. **Executive Service Corps** (<https://www.escus.org/volunteer>) and **Cities of Service** ([citiesofservice.org](https://www.citiesofservice.org)) are examples of affiliate organizations that focus on local impact.

For example, **Executive Service Corps of Southern California** (ESCSC) connects a group of about 100 committed, highly skilled volunteer consultants to nonprofit organizations in Southern California by providing high level of vetting and training with each volunteer over the course of a year before matching them to opportunities. This usually leads to a long-lasting and trusting relationship. Worldwide, Cities of Service is a coalition of more than 260 cities representing over 73 million people across the Americas and Europe that brings members together through civic engagement and community volunteering.

In order to get the most from recruiting on volunteer marketplaces, be sure that at least one person from your organization is responsible for managing and maintaining the account. (At bigger organizations, multiple people might share that responsibility.) When you do connect with a potential volunteer, it is important that the person they are speaking to is knowledgeable about the project and what the outcomes will be to prevent expectations from being misaligned from the start.

RECRUITING USING SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS

If your organization only needs to connect to a handful of volunteers a year, you can do so using volunteer marketplaces, volunteer matching services, social media, and traditional forms of outreach, but if you're hoping to grow a large volunteer base that you will rely on to meet your goals and mission, investing in a software solution might help you meet your goals.

How can software help with volunteer recruitment? Primarily by collecting and managing volunteer data—for example, creating application forms and sorting the information you receive through them, tracking potential volunteers throughout the recruitment process, or create e-learning resources to introduce people to opportunities.

You might also need software that integrates with other services and platforms, including **LinkedIn** (www.linkedin.com) or social media.

If you work with a lot of volunteers, consider dedicated volunteer management software that can also help with recruitment. It's not likely worth the expense for limited projects or if you only work with volunteers occasionally, but if volunteering plays a big role in your work, it can help you find, manage, and track your relationships.

Software platforms that combine Constituent Relationship Management features with web, email, donation processing, and other capabilities can help you create a sophisticated volunteer recruitment-and-management program from the ground up or integrate with your existing tools to expand and improve your efforts.

NOTE: The following are just a few examples of these types of software platforms, and were mentioned by the people we spoke to in our research. This list is meant to be neither exhaustive nor to imply that we recommend these systems over others on the market.

Better Impact

<https://www.betterimpact.com/volunteer-impact-volunteer-management-software/>

Better Impact offers a volunteer management package called Volunteer Impact that can help with recruitment, among other tasks. Monthly subscriptions vary depending on the amount of accounts you need and the number of volunteers you will be recruiting—Better Impact provides an online calculator (<https://www.betterimpact.com/volunteer-software-pricing/>) to help you estimate the cost. The vendor's website also offers a video demonstration (<https://www.betterimpact.tv/VI-demo-usa/recruitment/>) to show you how to use the software to recruit volunteers.

Neon

<https://www.neoncrm.com/volunteer-management-software/>

Neon, a popular provider of CRM software, offers a platform that can help you create custom volunteer applications, send correspondence, and track individual volunteer preferences through your website. The company designs all of its services with nonprofits in mind, and boasts that 85 percent of its staff comes from a nonprofit background. The company offers demonstrations twice a week. Pricing starts at \$50 per month.

NationBuilder

<https://nationbuilder.com/software>

NationBuilder is a cross between a Content Management System and a Constituent Relationship Management system built as a membership management platform geared more toward attracting and recruiting people than managing them. This hybrid purpose suits it well in the political sphere, where it counts high profile campaigns among its customers, but it can also serve nonprofits well as a volunteer recruitment tool. Pages can be optimized for peer-to-peer outreach with social prompts and recruiter links, and the software integrates with a collection of mobile apps that help with door-to-door canvassing, text messaging, and RSVP needs. Pricing starts at \$29 per month.

Salesforce

<https://salesforce.com>

Salesforce is a well-known CRM platform that offers a specific software package to nonprofit organizations that helps engage community, track analytics, and build networks. Features are supported by educational materials from videos and e-books to learning kits and more. The company also provides support to nonprofits through its pro bono services program (<https://www.salesforce.org/volunteers/>). While the platform is free for qualifying nonprofits, you will need to invest in implementation and maintenance costs, which can get expensive.

Which Recruitment Method Should You Use?

If you are looking to recruit a large group of non-skilled volunteers, prepare a recruitment strategy that takes advantage of technology to appeal to a wide audience.

- Create a simple message and market it through email, social media and volunteer networks like Cities of Service, Idealist, and All for Good.
- Include a one-click sign up to make it easy for potential volunteers to say “yes.”

If you are looking for a small group of skilled professionals, you will need to take extra time defining the opportunities and job descriptions, just as you would for staff roles.

- Design an application process that is approachable, but thorough enough to get the information you need.
- Submit the opportunity to networks like VolunteerMatch or LinkedIn.

If you are looking for a specialized volunteer to work on specific project for five months or more consider connecting with an organization like Taproot+ or Executive Service Corps. Depending on the opportunity they can provide recruitment coaching and skill matching. Organizations like these may also include vetting, background checks and training for volunteers.

Pro Bono Services

We've already explained pro bono programs in theory, but in practice, they each look a little different. They might include one-on-one tech support, free software packages, staff training, or grant support, for example. Several of the programs we researched focus on project-specific support.

It may be worthwhile to investigate pro bono support to assist with volunteer recruitment efforts at your organization, but keep in mind, many of these programs are considered sales-lead generation programs—which is to say, there's no such thing as a free lunch. Liz Hamburg, former Taproot CEO, cautioned that pro bono services that aren't designed well can be "the gift that keeps on taking." Jennifer Cho, Head of Community Relations at Barclay's US Consumer Bank, said nonprofits can sometimes use pro bono programs as a development fundraising tool.

"If you get employees from a corporation involved, a lot of times corporate dollars will follow," she said—"especially as employees get more engaged."

Technology companies are a good place to start if you're looking for pro bono support. Many offer CSR programs, and for those that do, you can read about them on their websites or use their chat features to talk to volunteers. The following are just a few examples of CSR pro bono programs:

Oracle Netsuite's Social Impact

<http://www.netsuite.com/portal/industries/nonprofit/social-impact.shtml#probono>

Netsuite's pro bono program offers product donations and discounts, pro bono services, and capacity building to support nonprofit organizations of all sizes.

Organizations can connect with employees, partners, and customers from the Netsuite community, and depending on the project and program, receive guidance on Netsuite tools, technology planning, financial management, capacity building, and more. Netsuite also organizes annual events that bring experts together to create solutions for social impact organizations. You can apply to one of these programs directly on their website or email Netsuite for more information.

VMware

www.vmware.com/company/foundation.html

The VMware Foundation provides cloud computing, security solutions, and platform virtualization software and services for nonprofits by offering a suite of pro bono services for help with identifying and solving difficult challenges. The foundation's "Good Gig" program connects VMware employees with organizations that are looking for support with adopting digital solutions. In collaboration with Taproot Foundation, it is also developing a framework to help nonprofits run more efficiently with technology.

You can also find unexpected pro bono opportunities through your existing volunteer base. Before you recruit more volunteers find out if the companies they work for have any employee volunteer grant programs. If they do, it may help to build a recruitment strategy that includes both individual and corporate volunteer opportunities. This can help make it easier for people to engage and open the door for more types of volunteerism.

CASE STUDIES ▶▶▶

On the following pages, you'll find three case studies of fictional organizations.

We imagined them using components of several real world organizations we learned about in our research as a way to illustrate common needs and practices for nonprofits in the area of volunteer recruitment, typical challenges and barriers to success, and to show what's possible.

Community Bicycle Workshop

Creating access to bikes and the opportunities they provide for our whole community.

*Two staff members, \$100,000 annual budget/
Needs 20 skilled volunteers every week to
help refurbish bikes and mentor youth during
workshops.*

Launched two years ago, Community Bicycle Workshop is funded through individual donations and grants. Sharon, the executive director, manages all the development and fundraising, while program manager Ahmed manages the day-to-day responsibilities of the organization.

As a new organization with a small budget, CBW's volunteer recruitment process is still evolving. Right now both Sharon and Ahmed spend a significant amount of time reaching out to potential volunteers via email, by phone, and in person. It is time consuming for both of them, and Sharon would like Ahmed to redesign the volunteer recruitment process so it is more efficient, automated, and consistent. But with no budget to buy new software or hire a contractor to help, he'll need to rely on existing resources and make use of free tools.

Ahmed starts by assessing needs across the organization to determine how many volunteers are needed to sustain their work, arriving at a minimum of 20 to participate in various roles

each week. To account for attrition rates, he aims for 30 active volunteers available at all times. To make this possible he needs to fill weekly time slots with people interested in refurbishing bicycles and adults willing to serve as mentors for youth in the CBW's afterschool program.

Several technological factors influence Ahmed's thinking as he redesigns the recruitment process. In addition to its website, the org uses web applications like Mailchimp, Google Forms, and Eventbrite for outreach. It communicates with volunteers via monthly email newsletters and weekly updates, and Facebook and Instagram to post pictures and make announcements. Before he can start making changes to the volunteer recruitment process, Ahmed identifies opportunities to make it more efficient, and decides to focus his efforts on improving four specific stages of his workflow.



First, he makes it easier to find and share volunteer opportunities through the organization's WordPress site. He updates the volunteer page by adding a detailed description of each volunteer opportunity along with a list of needed skills, and installs a plugin that allows each opportunity to be shared on social media. This makes it possible for people to easily share opportunities with one click, and for Ahmed to share the URL across multiple platforms.

Second, Ahmed creates a centralized database to collect and store details about volunteers. The number of active volunteers is relatively low, so he can use free tools through Google Drive and manually make edits if needed. He creates a volunteer signup form in Google drive and embeds it on the website where he can direct perspective volunteers instead of sending them an anonymous link via email. This also gives web visitors a way to sign up without having to connect in person. Content submitted through the form is collected in a Google sheet where Ahmed can see detailed information and make note of which volunteers are active and inactive. He sets up notifications so that both he and whoever submitted the form receive an email. Automating the signup process lets Ahmed spend less time on individual outreach and more time following up with applicants.

Third, Ahmed finds a way to reach people outside of the organization's immediate community and network. He creates accounts on various volunteer marketplaces like Idealist, VolunteerMatch and LinkedIn in order to share volunteer opportunities with a larger audience. Once the accounts are created Ahmed posts details about the opportunities along with a link to the application on their website. People come across the listings while searching for specific keywords and locations. Simultaneously, Ahmed prepares a series of digital flyers to advertise the opportunities through social media sites, local newspapers and more.

Fourth, he builds a strategy to weave volunteer recruitment efforts into day-to-day operations by adding a "volunteer impact" section at the top of every newsletter that highlights volunteer work from the month. This showcases the hard work volunteers do and recognizes their contribution in a public way. Ahmed collects content for this section himself, but also tries to crowdsource pictures and quotes. He encourages volunteers to share their experiences and stories online using specific hashtags that he can search for as he showcases them in the newsletter. Right below the "volunteer impact" section of the newsletter, Ahmed links to a digital survey to gauge interest in future volunteer opportunities

and to collect recommendations for who to showcase in the future.

Collectively these changes help automate the recruitment process and give Ahmed more time to focus on programs. Experimenting with different methods gives him a chance to learn about the benefits of using a database, volunteer marketplace, and online form to recruit volunteers. Ahmed has a deeper understanding about what features to look for in technology when the organization grows and is ready to invest in more sophisticated software.



Run New England

Committed to building a community of people passionate about running.

*10 staff members, \$850,000 annual budget/
Needs 1,500 volunteers to help support City
Marathons across three states.*

Run New England (RNE) relies heavily on volunteers. Every year it organizes large marathons in several states, and at each race, at least 1,500 volunteers help with everything from setting up the route to handing out supplies and cleaning up after. Volunteer recruitment efforts start in January in order to leave enough time to plan for the first race in May. A single staff member is responsible for volunteer coordination and recruitment. With so many volunteers to organize it is essential that the recruitment process is as seamless as possible so more time can be dedicated to event logistics.

RNE uses the Salesforce CRM to track recruitment efforts. As a nonprofit, it qualifies for Salesforce's discounted Nonprofit Success Pack (NPSP), which includes all the features and tools it needs to engage with constituents, manage data, and build recruitment campaigns. Sarah, the volunteer coordinator, relies on this software to understand how each volunteer is involved and where others are needed. This is especially important as RNE prepares for large events throughout the year.

Like many CRMs, Sarah uses Salesforce features to automate communications, enable virtual collaborations with staff in other locations, build email campaigns to help with recruitment, and more. With such a high number of volunteers, she needs to keep track of what each volunteer is doing, where they are doing it, and how long they are doing it for. The CRM lets her track and measure volunteer activity and generate reports to inform future



needs. She's created a dashboard that she can customize to show the specific data she needs to direct recruitment efforts toward target audiences.

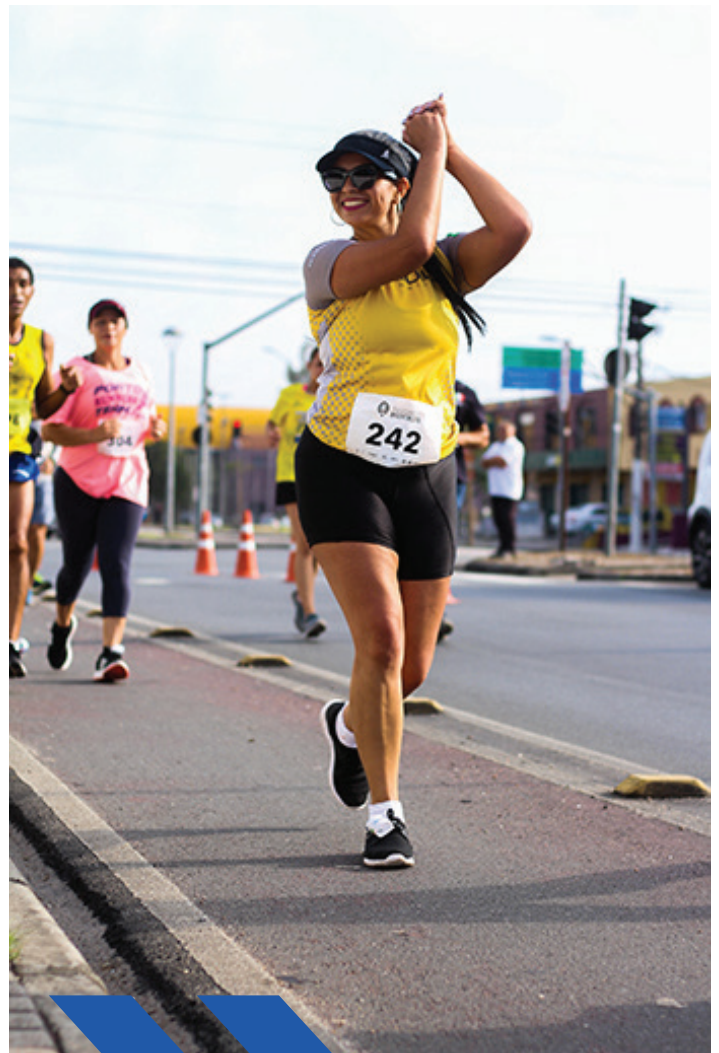
Each year, Sarah does a lot of promotion for recruiting efforts both on- and offline. She also works with corporate sponsors to organize volunteer signup days that encourage employees to volunteer. She uses the CRM to coordinate social media campaigns with other staff through a shared calendar. She also uses a third party application to automatically import new volunteer information from the online application form into the RNE database. Because there is a high no-show rate at volunteer recruitment events, she always aims for 20 percent more signups than she anticipates needing.

Because Sarah needs such a high number of volunteers, she posts application forms through multiple sites and tools, including Eventbrite, MeetUp, Facebook, and Google Forms. She uses Zapier, a web application that helps automate software integration, to pull incoming applications from each of these sites into the CRM, which automatically builds a profile of the new volunteer. She can browse individual profiles using filters such as skills, location, interests, experience, and more. This is really helpful when Sarah needs to know if specific volunteer roles are or aren't filled.

Leading up to a recruitment campaign, Sarah creates digital newsletters and advertisements to cast a wide net beyond the people already in their contact list. Salesforce has a built in newsletter layout tool, but she could also use a number of free online tools. Last year she applied for a Google Ad Grant, which helps nonprofits receive up to \$10,000 worth of text-based advertisements that will appear in Google search results. The ads can only include text, no images, so she drafts a series of short ads using keywords that match the volunteer opportunities she is looking to fill and uses an analytics tracking feature through the CRM to track and document the results of the advertisements.

Run New England partners with each city to coordinate background checks of registered volunteers. Because of the high volume of volunteers, Sarah uses the CRM's built-in communication features to automate the process. Once a volunteer application is received, a follow-up email goes out with information about the background check process for that specific location, and she relies on data collected in the CRM to know when the process is complete and what stage each volunteer is in.

While it's possible to accomplish the same goals using multiple software platforms, using a CRM consolidates recruitment data into a central location and helps automate it so she spends half as much time monitoring the application process, leaving her more time to plan detailed and complex volunteer logistics.



The Center for Media Advocacy and Public Access

A progressive watchdog and advocacy organization devoted to securing the future of free speech, public access and open networks.

*25 staff members, \$2.3 Million annual budget/
Needs two highly skilled volunteers (one local,
one remote) to build an online digital archive.*

For 25 years, The Center for Media Advocacy and Public Access has been advocating for free speech through local media, education, and programming. It supports a public access channel that covers local government, elections, community events, and more. It maintains an archive of programming coverage, which now contains over 100,000 hours of footage.

The Center received a grant from the National Public Access Network Association to digitize the archive and make it publicly available online. The Center needs to find two skilled volunteers committed to help.

The Center's Channel Director, Jahn timer, takes the lead on recruitment. First he writes a description of each role, including the hours that are required and skills needed. One role involves web development and database work, which can be filled by a volunteer who works entirely remotely and can join by video or conference calls. The other includes digitizing video and setting up a viewing library, which needs to happen at The Center's office.

Jahn timer wants to broaden the search for these roles beyond the immediate community. After a brief conversation with a colleague and some online searching, he learns about a few organizations that focus on matching volunteers with opportunities: VolunteerMatch, Catchafire, and Taproot. Each of these sites has a strong focus on helping nonprofit organizations find skilled volunteers for specific projects.



The sites all have tiered membership levels, but are all free to join. Each has unique features to help with the recruitment process, including project management support, free training, and helpful guides. In order for the project to be successful, The Center needs help with Search Engine Optimization, web development, file compression and its Content Management System. Jahnie has a description of the roles but does not have the technical background to list the specific skills required—he also needs help integrating content across platforms like social media sites, but isn't sure about what questions to ask a candidate in order to know if they are proficient in these areas.

Because this is fairly common among people seeking volunteers, matching sites understand it and are prepared to help. Once Jahnie creates a free account and adds a detailed description of the project and roles, he receives a followup email from a staffer is reviewing the project description before it is made public. The review process is intended to help make the description as appealing and specific as possible. Jahnie requests a consultation with the staff member to get guidance about how to articulate the scope for the role and prepare for a successful interview. During their conversation, the staffer gives him tips and best practices for recruiting and understanding what volunteers are looking for in an opportunity. He also gets guidance on what terminology is necessary to describe relevant technical skills.

The project description is finalized after Jahnie incorporates the feedback for how to make it more appealing to potential volunteers. He adjusts to the scope of the project, outcomes, and required skills by adding as much specificity as possible, and once it is posted, he shares it across all social media channel, links to the posting on the website, and includes it in the monthly newsletter.

Once Jahnie starts to receive applications from potential volunteers, he browses their profiles and reaches out to anyone that seems like a good fit. Simultaneously, the contact that Jahnie consulted with sends potential matches and arranges interviews with candidates. When the roles have been filled, the volunteer matching site provides Jahnie with a package of resources to help set a timeline and scope out deliverables for the project. The service helps expedite the time it would take Jahnie to find people with the skillsets needed to complete the project, and the resources and tools help create successful collaboration with the volunteer.



CONCLUSION

Millions of people around the country are looking for ways to get involved with nonprofits and causes and volunteer their time to support organizations and work in which they believe. Help is out there, but finding it—and competing with hundreds of thousands of other nonprofits—takes thoughtfulness and strategy. Start by asking guiding questions to determine recruitment goals, how you will measure success, what the recruitment message will be, and what type of skills you are looking for. The answers to questions like these will lead you to the recruitment method that works best for you.

You may choose to focus your recruitment efforts on social media sites and volunteer marketplaces if you are trying to reach a wide audience. Or you may choose to develop a targeted email marketing campaign that goes to individuals you have already worked with. Either way be sure to take advantages of existing resources. You can find some of them in the Additional Resources section of this report, or on the websites of organizations like Volunteer Pro, Taproot, and VolunteerMatch.

There are no shortage of tools and software to choose from. Picking the right one depends on multiple factors like your recruitment strategy, timeline, and budget. Many vendors offer pro bono support and/or nonprofit rates—don't be afraid to ask them for help. It may also be worthwhile to recruit a skilled volunteer to help you choose the tech solution that is best for you.

Help is out there, but finding it—and competing with hundreds of thousands of other nonprofits—takes thoughtfulness and strategy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Look at America's Widespread Decline in Volunteering in Cities and States,
School of Public Policy University of Maryland, October 2018

The Benefits of Volunteering Get Renewed Attention,
Chelsea Dennis, February 2019

Google.org's Fellowship Program Doubles Down on Skilled Volunteering,
Danielle Holly, January 2019

Four Strategies for Engaging Your Volunteers on Facebook,
Tess Srebro, March 2016

Estimated National Value of Each Volunteer Hour by State,
Independent Sector

A Different Look at Volunteer Recruitment: Using the Science of Influence, VolunteerPro

What Your Volunteers Need to be Happy,
The Balance

Is Microvolunteering Right for Your Nonprofit?,
Guide Star

Microvolunteering: The Magic of Engaging Time-Strapped Supporters in Meaningful Nonprofit Tasks,
Nonprofit Quarterly

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Authors

Julia Vallera, Researcher

Julia is a technology and instructional design consultant who creates and implements digital media solutions for small businesses and nonprofit organizations, and has achieved success with well-established organizations such as Mozilla, Vermont State College, Digital Opportunity Trust, Metropolitan New York Library Council, and Burlington Telecom.

After spending more than 10 years growing virtual communities for multiple organizations, Julia understands what drives online engagement and how to spread mission-focused work efficiently for the greatest impact. She holds a Master's Degree in Design and Technology from Parsons School of Design in New York City. She has received several grants and speaking invitations from organizations including Allied Media Project, Generator Vermont, Brooklyn Arts Council, BTV Ignite, and Mozilla Festival.

Chris Bernard, Managing Editor

Chris is a career writer and journalist with two decades of experience in newspapers, magazines, advertising, corporate and nonprofit marketing and communications, and freelance writing. Prior to Idealware, he was managing editor of a newspaper and a senior copywriter at an ad agency. For the past eight years, he's overseen Idealware's editorial and communications efforts, driving the creation and publication of more than a hundred articles, reports, and other resources and managing the communications calendar. Outside of his work at Idealware, he's an award-winning author and a frequent speaker and lecturer at literary conferences and festivals around the country.

Contributors

We're grateful for the input and generosity of the subject matter experts who volunteered their time and shared their materials with us:

Hal Colston

Founder, Good News Garage

Rebecca Wang

Customer Service Representative, NVIDIA

Julie VanDeLinder

VP of Strategy and Client Services, Volunteer Match

Vicky Foxworth

Vice President of Organizational Consulting, Executive Service Corps of Southern California

Megan Maloney

Programs and Training Coordinator, Executive Service Corps of Southern California

Poney Carpenter

Philanthropy.io

Debra Askanase

Social Impact Program Manager Capacity-Building Initiatives, Oracle NetSuite

Jennifer Cho

Barclays

Jessamine Chin

VMware

Lindsay Grubar and Kristin Teti

Taproot

Bari Saltman

Linkedin

Brian Mattos and Cheyenne King

Salesforce



About Tech Impact

Tech Impact is a nonprofit on a mission to empower communities and nonprofits to use technology to better serve the world. The organization is a leading provider of technology education and solutions for nonprofits and operates award-winning IT and customer experience training programs designed to help young adults launch their careers. Tech Impact offers a comprehensive suite of technology services that includes managed IT support, data and strategy services, telecommunications, and cloud computing integration and support. In 2018, it expanded its education and outreach capabilities by merging with Idealware, an authoritative source for independent, thoroughly researched technology resources for the social sector. Tech Impact's ITWorks and CXWorks training programs have graduated hundreds of young adults with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to start their careers in the technology and customer experience industries. The organization also operates Punchcode, a coding bootcamp based in Las Vegas, NV. Learn more at www.techimpact.org.

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