

# Converting Suspects into Raving Fans

## 10 Ideas to Get You Thinking about Volunteer Recruitment!

### **Your Customers**

Ever thought of volunteers as your customers? Volunteer recruitment and volunteer retention is all about selling the volunteering experience. Question is...what is the volunteering experience that you and your organization are selling your volunteers? Is it a positive experience or a negative one?

### **5 Types of Customers**

Let's look deeper at that volunteer base. Do you think of your volunteer base as being only those volunteers already on board? It's much more than this. People in sales and marketing understand that their customer base goes beyond those who are existing customers. It also includes people to whom they've yet to make a sale. They "grade" customers according to their relationship to the business into categories termed *suspects*, *prospects*, *new*, *repeat* or *raving fans*.

### **Suspects**

Suspects are people you don't even know – yet. You don't know if they are interested in volunteering, so you need to begin by attracting their attention. To make contact with suspects, you can use a broad-based approach (such as direct bulk-mail or newspaper advertising) or a more selective approach (such as advertising in trade journals or professional publications).

### **Prospects**

Prospects are people who have shown an interest in volunteering but have not yet signed on. Maintain regular contact with prospects to encourage them to take the next step and volunteer. Send them your newsletter, invite them to your functions and call periodically to see if they're now ready to make a commitment.

### **Newbies**

New volunteers are like new customers to a business. First impressions are vital if you are to retain their custom and keep them coming back. Devote part of your recruitment plan to ensuring that all new volunteers immediately feel like they belong.

## **Repeat**

Repeat and long-term volunteers are as valuable as repeat customers in a business. Look after them and never take them for granted. Recognize them publicly in your recruitment campaign, as people are inspired by stories of such dedication.

## **Raving Fans**

Raving fans are satisfied volunteers who are so impressed with your organization that they tell everyone they meet how great you are. They blow your trumpet for you and actively recruit others to volunteer. Encourage raving fans by providing satisfying volunteer work, ongoing support and regular recognition.

## **Make or Break**

Customer service can make or break a business. It can also make or break your volunteer programs. Volunteers tell others about their volunteering experience. Are they raving fans? What are they saying about your organization right now? Would it be something to fear or to cheer?

## **28 Years Plus**

Research suggests that we tell six or more people when we have experienced bad customer service. Recent research has found that we tell others about good customer service for an average of 1.5 years afterwards. For how many years after do you think we tell others about bad customer service? On average for 28 years afterwards!

## **Your Mission**

Here is the mission for your highly successful volunteer management, volunteer recruitment and volunteer recognition program. Aim to convert

- your suspects into prospects
- your prospects into new volunteers
- your new volunteers into repeat volunteers
- your repeat volunteers into raving fans!

Dr Judy Esmond is a leading international expert on volunteering. You are invited to share this article with others and get a great free downloadable book with over 100 more ideas for you on volunteer management, volunteer recruitment and volunteer recognition at her website <http://www.morevolunteers.com>