



COMMUNITY ORGANISING

Volunteers help our organizations make an even bigger impact. Many of our institutions simply wouldn't be able to survive without the support that volunteers provide.

In order to attract people who are willing to invest their time, we have to first learn what inspires them to serve with us. What are they hoping to accomplish? Once we know their expectations, we must live up to them or risk losing our volunteers.

How to attract volunteers. I believe it's in our DNA to want to help others. Some people come forward right away, ready to give. For others, it takes a bit more coaxing. It is important to create a volunteer experience that is meaningful. And demonstrating the impact a volunteer can make is the first step in attracting quality people. Work hard to create a positive environment so that people want to join the team!

Once you know what kind of participation you're able to provide, begin seeking out volunteers. What avenues of communication does your institution have at its disposal? Can you use social media, and seek out volunteers on Twitter or Facebook? You can send out a monthly newsletter in which you can advertise for volunteers. Or you can create fliers and hang them on community boards in your neighbourhood. Reach out for people who have volunteered with your organization in the past. Make sure your advertising conveys accurately the volunteer experience, and that it highlights the aspects you know will be attractive to people.

How to keep volunteers motivated. It is important to make sure your volunteers' time is well spent while they are working at your organization. Remember that they may not be as experienced as your full- or part-time staff members. For that reason, make sure to be available to answer their questions, provide support, extra training, and encouragement. Take time to teach them about the impact your organization is making, so they feel a connection to the work they are doing. Providing a positive experience for your volunteers and keeping them engaged during their service is key to making sure they come back and work with you again in the future.

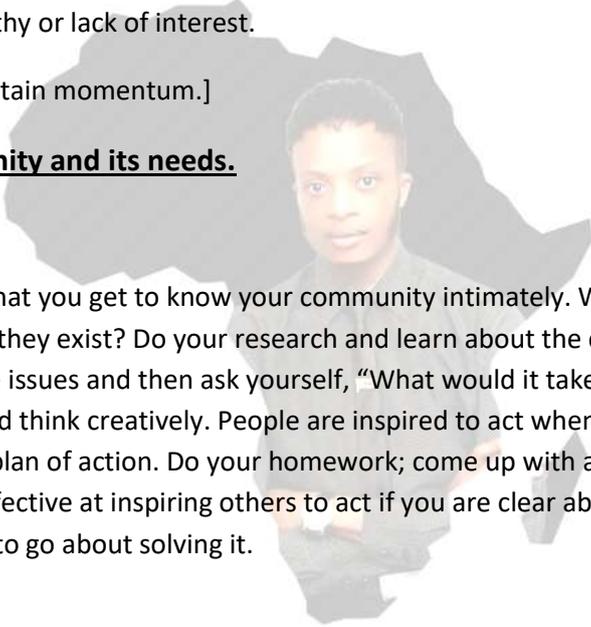
How to keep your volunteers engaged. After the volunteers' time is over, talk with them about what they liked, and what they didn't like. Collect their feedback by giving them a survey. Work hard to learn from the negative comments so that in the future, the volunteer experience can continue to improve. Once a person has volunteered with your organization, work hard to keep them engaged. Keep them on your mailing list. Invite them to volunteer in the future. Encourage them to invite their friends to the next events.

Volunteers are an invaluable resource. Working hard to attract volunteers, and motivating them to want to serve with your organization, can help it grow and have a greater impact.

INSPIRING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

1. Why it's important to know your community and its needs.
2. How to overcome apathy or lack of interest.
3. How to build and maintain momentum.]

Knowing your community and its needs.



It is critically important that you get to know your community intimately. What are its greatest issues and challenges? Why do they exist? Do your research and learn about the causes of the problems. Become an expert on the issues and then ask yourself, "What would it take to solve these problems?" Think big, and think creatively. People are inspired to act when there's a clear vision and they believe you have a plan of action. Do your homework; come up with a plan that is going to work. You will only be effective at inspiring others to act if you are clear about the problem you're trying to solve, and how to go about solving it.

It can be a challenge to inspire community participation and overcome apathy. It's your job to inspire the community to act! There are many reasons why community members choose not to participate. For example, there can be personal barriers. People may feel they lack the skills or knowledge to make a difference. Or, there's a lack of ownership. People feel the problem is not theirs to solve, that somebody else will take care of it.

There are many creative ways to inspire community participation, and each one starts with understanding community members and their motivations. You can trigger these motivations to create a personal link between the community member you want to engage and the issue you're trying to address.

For example, if you're working to improve schools, you can reach out to parents in the community and inspire them to get involved. You could appeal to their emotions as parents, drawing a connection between the students you're serving and their own.

A second strategy for inspiring community participation is to motivate people around a vision of what's possible. Inspire them to think big. Help them imagine what is possible if they work together. Describe what could be achieved if the community came together and solved the problem you're trying to address.

It's likely that your audience will have a limited view of what's possible if they haven't given the problem or solution much thought. Inspiring them to "think big" and be part of transformational community change might be enough to motivate them to act.

Another strategy for inspiring community participation is to invite everyone to be part of finding the solution. Rather than propose a solution yourself, ask all the stakeholders to come together to discuss the problem, and collectively find a way to solve it. By increasing the level of community participation in the process, you're increasing community buy-in and likelihood that they'll see the project through to the end. When people feel involved in the process, they are more likely to stay involved for the long term.

Once you've inspired the community members to act, your next task is to maintain that momentum, keep them motivated. This can be especially challenging when you're working to address big problems that can take weeks, months or even years to solve. It can be easy for community members to become uninterested or disinvested in long-term projects because they may feel they aren't seeing results.

Celebrate small victories throughout the process, to show people that they are making a difference. You can share statistics about how many people your project has served, or how many people are involved. Or, you can share personal stories about the people you have served, and how your work has enhanced the community. In addition, make it easy for community members to stay involved. Don't lose the momentum you gained from the start. Continue to create and communicate opportunities for the community.

Incredible things can happen when communities come together to solve problems. Invest your time and energy into inspiring community participation, and I know you'll be amazed by what's possible!

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