

Six Major Tasks for Volunteer Success

1. Define Responsibilities

Volunteers must know what is expected for them to be successful. Carefully define, in writing, the responsibilities for each position. Use Commissioner Volunteer Duties cards, District Committee Responsibility cards, and the district committee guidebooks to assist you.

2. Select and Recruit

Fit the right person to the position. Consider each prospect's skills, interests, and other relevant factors. Consider the variety of motivating factors for people getting involved in Scouting. Use all the prescribed steps in recruiting district volunteers and use the recruiting resources of the BSA. Helpful recruiting resources include Selecting District People and the District Nominating Committee Worksheet.

3. Orient and Train

Provide each person with prompt orientation on the individual assignment and with adequate training to be successful. Use the *District Committee Training Workshop* and *Administration of Commissioner Service* manual, which now includes the *Continuing Education for Commissioners* and the *Commissioner Basic Training Manual*.

4. Coach Volunteers

Provide ongoing coaching as needed. Build a volunteer's confidence and self-esteem. Help conserve a volunteer's time. Coaching should be provided by the appropriate committee chair or professional.

5. Recognize Achievement

Prompt volunteer recognition has an important impact on the tenure and quality of service in the district. Recognition must be sincere, timely, and earned. Use the great variety of formal BSA recognition items, but also be creative with frequent locally devised thank-you's. Even more effective may be the personal "pat on the back" for a job well done. Recognize volunteers on a face-to-face basis, from a person of status, and preferably in front of the volunteer's peers.

6. Evaluate Performance

Help district volunteers regularly evaluate how they're doing. Use the Self-Evaluation for Unit Commissioners in the *Commissioner Fieldbook for Unit Service* and *A Self-Evaluation Guide for Successful District Operation*

Section I

A Guide to Selecting and Recruiting District Scouters

Selecting district volunteers can be a rewarding experience and is an important task for district and council leaders. It is a personal achievement. Most recruiting involves a “rifle-shot approach”—focusing on individuals—recruiting one person at a time. There are certain principles to follow, but maintain your own style and personality during the process. This guide presents successful methods to select, research, and approach your prospects. Caution: There are several ways we do not recruit. We do not advertise, we don't threaten or intimidate, and we don't ask for volunteers. These methods are not sufficiently selective, and people generally do not respond positively to them.

Steps in Successful Recruiting

1. Determine what positions are needed.

- Define the responsibilities of the position and write a brief position description.
- Assess the effectiveness of existing volunteers.
- List the qualities that are most likely to get the job done.

2. Determine the best prospects for the position.

- Consider many sources for prospects.
- List possible prospects for the role.
- Consider their qualities for the position.
- What are their organizational skills and their community connections?
- Would you be proud of your association with them?
- Prioritize prospects based on who has the qualities that best fit the position.
- Identify the right person, not the one you think will say yes. An initial willingness to fill the role should never be a qualification for the position.

3. Research the prospects at the top of your list.

- Learn what the prospect's interests, abilities, and motivations are.
- Tailor your approach to the prospect's interests.
- Determine who can make the best approach. This will be an equal or an acquaintance of the prospect; preferably someone who has influence with the prospect. Executive board members and community leaders are often willing to assist. You need someone to open the door who has enough influence with the prospect to gain his or her interest. Who does the asking is the single most important factor of the recruiting process.
- Anticipate questions or objections. Decide in advance how you will answer them.
- Develop specific information on what you want the prospect to do. A few well-written, attractive pieces of paper can explain Scouting and your council, and outline a position description and a plan of action. Develop this sales tool around the tasks you want done, tailoring it to the prospect's interests and skills. Don't dump the whole load. The prospect doesn't need every detail on Scouting and probably will not read more than a few pages.

4. Make an appointment.

- Do not recruit over the phone, and do not let the prospect say “no” over the phone. A person who is respected by the prospect should ask for an appointment to discuss “a community matter”. Try not to give too much information about what it is. Two or three persons making a personal visit flatters the prospect and places far more importance on the position than someone calling the prospect on the phone.
- Determine the best time and the most appropriate place. If possible, avoid office pressures. Try for a lunch or other time away from daily distractions.
- Make sure that someone the prospect respects or who has influence with the prospect goes with you. Never recruit alone. Also be sure that someone on the recruiting team can clearly explain what you want the prospect to do and why they are the best

person to fill the position.

- Determine in advance who will start the conversation, who will describe the position, etc.

5. Make the sale.

- Introduce everyone. Be sure the prospect understands who is a volunteer and who is a professional Scouter and what they do in Scouting. **The biggest single reason a volunteer says yes is that somebody who they like and trust asks them to do it.**
- Make small talk about the prospect's interests, family, and achievements, based on your research.
- Sell the sizzle. Deliver an exciting, enthusiastic, and brief pitch on Scouting. Don't dwell on details. Talk about the purposes in serving youth that will most interest the prospect.
- Describe the position you want the prospect to do, its importance to youth in the community, and its relation to the council volunteer structure. Be specific. Remember, you are talking to a time limited, task-oriented person.
- Tell the prospect that he or she is the best person to fill the position.
- Ask for questions. Be sure the prospect understands what is expected. Be prepared to overcome objections. Note that all of us are busy but we can make the time to do important tasks—and what is more important than the character, citizenship, and fitness of the youth of your community. Answer the prospect's questions briefly and positively.
- Know when to close the sale. Don't keep selling if you think the prospect is not interested or if the prospect is sold. Don't oversell the position. Don't give too much detail. Make the responsibility seem important, fun, and worthwhile. And don't undersell the position. Be sure the prospect knows exactly what is expected and is willing to do it.
- Recognize that people work for people. Stress the participation of executive board members, council committee members, and chartered organizations that are of interest to the prospect. Don't overlook the friendship and fellowship that will evolve.
- Explain that a professional staff member will support volunteer leaders with program details, agenda planning, and guidance. Use terminology the person understands.
- Be prepared to respond to questions about BSA values issues.

6. Ask for a commitment.

You need this person—say so. Be patient . . . wait for an answer. Decide in advance who is going to ask the prospect to fill the position and “close the sale.”

7. Have a fall-back position in mind.

Don't let the prospect off the hook. Leave the prospect something. Get his or her help in recruiting others. In any event, the prospect will be flattered and will know more about Scouting. Keep the door open for a later decision in the event you are turned down.

8. Follow up.

After the prospect says “yes”:

- Formally acknowledge the commitment with a letter.
- Invite and take the person to the next meeting.
- Prepare an appropriate news release or announcement.
- Follow up with specific orientation and an assignment within a week or two.