



BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

A Guide to Effective Recruiting Practices

We're building more than just
great trails!

VOLUNTEERS
IN ACTION
COMMITTEE



ONTARIO FEDERATION
OF SNOWMOBILE CLUBS



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The Volunteers in Action (VIA) Committee reports to the OFSC Board of Governors and is responsible for guiding the Volunteer Development Program. The committee is composed of grassroots volunteers who focus on projects in volunteer training, recruiting, retention and recognition.

For more information contact
volunteer@ofsc.on.ca

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I. Knowledge barriers

Goal of this booklet: More effective recruiting through club volunteer training

The purpose of this booklet is to support clubs in their efforts to recruit and retain the right people, with the right skills, who are available at the right time.

“Strong, sustainable clubs have an adequate number of volunteers.”

Ensuring that your club has a supply of entry level volunteers requires a significant and ongoing effort by all volunteers, and an investment of organizational resources. This short guidebook aims to build practical knowledge about effective recruiting methods and provide helpful tips. Using the ideas and techniques described, most club volunteers will be better able to help potential volunteers recognize that some of their reasons for not helping out may be based on incorrect, incomplete or outdated impressions.



Message from the ‘Volunteers in Action’ (VIA) Committee

by Liz and Bruce Robinson

Since 2001 the VIA Committee has been collecting volunteer recruitment success stories from clubs, and reviewing research on volunteer trends in Ontario.

Sharing these great ideas was the challenge!

With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the committee is pleased to provide this booklet as a training resource to OFSC clubs. As ‘ambassadors’ for organized snowmobiling and their local club, club volunteers across the province can use

the information in this guide to help break down the barriers, real or perceived, about what prevents people from contributing. By working together with your club executive and volunteer coordinator you can have a powerful team tackling volunteer recruiting and development.

Best wishes for continued success in volunteerism.



2. Basic barriers to volunteering

Reasons for not volunteering

The following list summarizes the findings of a survey on why people don't volunteer conducted at several locations during 2005 - 2006 by VIA with non-volunteering snowmobile riders. The respondents could check

off one or more barriers from a list of nine factors. Below are the top 4 selections. It is encouraging to observe that only 7% said that they were "not interested". The percentages in this study are similar to the results of the 2000 Canadian Census which reported on "Reasons For Not Volunteering".

a. Not enough time	39%
b. Not know how to get involved	31%
c. Not been asked	27%
d. Not close to my home	15%
e. "I bought a permit."	n/a

Motivators:

Overcoming perceived barriers

The same survey asked "What might attract you to become a volunteer?" Understanding the reasons why people volunteer helps you tap into their internal motivators which you can use to stimulate interest and encourage participation.

As with the barriers percentage list above, because respondents could select one or more reasons, the percentages will not add to 100%.

Tip: When practical, try to include these positive reasons in your recruiting messages to leverage involvement.

a. Believe in the club	58%
b. Improve trails	54%
c. Use my skills	50%
d. Be with/make friends	42%
e. Be outdoors	33%

2. Responding to the basic barriers:

2a. Not enough time

This commonly cited barrier can stem from several very different factors that may be rooted in outdated assumptions about volunteering. Your challenge is to learn what specifically their perceived time barrier is. When appropriate, offer examples to the potential volunteer to increase their awareness of the variety of volunteer opportunities that require only a few hours each season.

Ask why they don't have enough time, and you may find two time barrier factors.



TIME BARRIER ONE

"I can't commit hours and hours of time or help throughout the whole year."



QUOTABLE QUOTE

"When it comes to volunteering, it seems that a few folks have 'the earth is flat' out-dated ideas. My gift is to open the door for potential volunteers to a wealth of new possibilities for helping out."

Rose Vanstrien, Thamesford S/C.

FACT:

75%
of volunteers
are Episodic



The pressures of modern life are reflected in a new trend in volunteerism. According to the 2002 Canadian Census, 75% of the people who volunteer do so for only a few hours (under 20) each year. Thus, 75% of your new volunteers are likely to be of this "Episodic" type.

Given the busy pace of most people's lives this limitation is to be expected. So how can you encourage and welcome these people?

The first task may be to assess the willingness of the club to work with Episodic volunteers. If the club is not committed to support and value this type of contribution, recruiting will be very restricted. For more information see the section in this booklet called "Silent Barriers".

2. Responding to the basic barriers

2a. Not enough time (continued)

How can the club invite and involve episodic volunteers?



TOP TIPS

1. **Include 'time focused' words** in your recruiting message like: *".....only a few hours would be a big help"* or *"Even just a day, is A-OK"*.
2. **Promote awareness of the wide variety of club tasks** that can be completed in short time periods such as single day events. Offer "job sharing" or break BIG jobs into smaller units.
3. **Start building relationships** by inviting potential volunteers to social events.
4. **Provide a club mentor** to nurture a sense of belonging.
5. **Supply brief training times** to build confidence.
6. **Use recognition to motivate** larger contributions.



Remember, these entry level volunteers can be the source of future club directors if they are encouraged to 'grow' within the organization.

TIME BARRIER TWO

"I'm not available at the right time."

With the increasing use of the internet, more people are able to volunteer their time by completing work at home. Several vital club functions such as administration, newsletter publishing, web maintenance, or personally phoning members can be scheduled to suit the timelines of volunteers.



TOP TIPS

1. Begin your recruiting campaign well before help is needed.
2. When recruiting, suggest that many tasks can be completed at home and over a period of time that provides flexibility.
3. Offer potential volunteers a club calendar (social events, work days, etc.) to help them fit your activities into their schedule.
4. Let them know it's OK not to attend all club meetings.

Keep in touch; regular communication helps ensure they feel connected and aware of club operations and social events.

2. Responding to the basic barriers



TOP TIPS

2b. Not enough information

Two factors can limit involvement: not knowing how to contact the club or not knowing how to help the club. This second leading barrier may seem baffling to long serving volunteers but consider that many people are not familiar with the 'behind the scenes' part of club operations or are uncertain about where they would fit in. Removing this barrier is well within the control of the club and can be easy to fix.



QUOTABLE QUOTE

"Since we started putting the volunteer invitation and contact info for the Club Volunteer Coordinator on the web page, we are getting on average one new volunteer inquiry each month!"

Claudio Sulpizi, Blue Mountain S/C

1. **Tell them how:** Craft a recruiting message that always includes a variety of easy ways for potential volunteers to contact the Volunteer Coordinator (Including - address, email, or phone if appropriate).
2. **Tell them often:** Don't miss any opportunity to extend a warm invitation to help build the best trail system and operate the best club (Include - maps, website, mailings, PSAs, media, community presentations and events).
3. **Tell them what:** List the variety of volunteer tasks available and reassure them that training is available (Recruits may need an orientation).
4. **Make a match:** Your Welcoming Committee must promptly respond to questions, outline opportunities and expectations and gather their contact information. In order to secure a strong commitment from a new volunteer it is vital to match their needs, interests and skills with the correct position.

2c. Not been personally asked to volunteer

Today, people are inundated with commercial print flyers and TV ads telling them to buy this or do that. These constant impersonal appeals for action can create a level of indifference or resistance that's hard to overcome. Often, a more direct personal recruiting approach may be necessary. Over one quarter of surveyed permit holders have the opinion that if they were really needed or wanted, the club would ask them. This may explain the success of phone campaigns.

Buddy System: Viewed from a different perspective, this barrier can be related to one of the most fundamental aspects of volunteering - interpersonal relationships. Some people are reluctant to sign up to help out when they don't know any one; it can be a very significant hurdle. A personal invitation provides the potential recruit with at least one club volunteer that they now know who can serve as their mentor.



QUOTABLE QUOTE

"It seems simple..... every club volunteer is always keeping an eye out for individuals who could be valuable contributors and personally asking them to consider helping the club."

Joe Bras, District 14 Governor



2. Responding to the basic barriers

2d. Not close to my home

The appeal of getting “out of the city” is one of the motivators that spur people to buy a cottage, or go trail riding. Part of that attraction is about re-connecting to their rural roots, being part of a smaller community, or just getting outdoors. These motivators hold true for volunteering with rural and northern clubs. While many of these weekend visitors are unable to attend some functions, they can bring a wealth of skills and knowledge. Increasingly the “long distance” contributor can complete a variety of valuable tasks from home using the internet as “Virtual Volunteers”.



“ ” QUOTABLE QUOTE

“Agri-tourism has city folks come and work on the farm..... We should look at our fall trail building work in the same way? Those people would need some supervision....but it could be a way to bring new out-of-towners into the club.”

Gerry Hughes, Treasurer,
Muskoka Snowmobile Region

2e. Not necessary to volunteer: I bought a permit

Organized snowmobiling is strong and sustainable because of two vital factors: the user pay system and dedicated volunteers. Riders that purchase a trail permit and believe “...therefore I don’t need to volunteer”, fail to recognize that second essential factor, volunteerism. Your recruiting message should address this misguided attitude that appears to excuse their possible service responsibilities.



TOP TIPS

Help riders:

- 1. Understand the Value** - Clubs are “Powered by Permits” and “Driven by Volunteers”. Quality trails operated by nonprofit clubs offer outstanding value because of volunteers; don’t miss any opportunity to remind riders of this economic fact. Increasing awareness is a logical recruiting starting point.
- 2. Understand the Benefits** - Being a volunteer brings a variety of enriching experiences: fellowship and new friends, or a sense of achievement to name a few. Use your photos to show off those intrinsic volunteer motivators. Only pictures of smiling faces can convey the fun or team spirit volunteers feel. Sell the notion that because of their service with the club, volunteers enjoy and are rewarded with a whole lot more than just a great trail experience!
- 3. Understand the Need** - 54% of those surveyed said they would help the club to “Improve the trails”. Tap into that motivation with phrases like: “Make a difference”, or “Your participation as a volunteer helps ensure the best trails ever”. List and briefly describe specific tasks that require more volunteers.

“ ” QUOTABLE QUOTE

“It’s interesting that 25% of Canadians volunteer, yet only 3 to 4 % of snowmobile trail riders choose to volunteer with a club. I can only guess why... but maybe it is because we haven’t tooted our own horn enough?”

Bob Bawtinheimer
District Volunteer Coordinator,
Northern Corridor S/A

Share this “glass is ¾ full” notion with riders who use the ‘bought a permit’ barrier.



Why settle for just a great ride?

3. Silent barriers

A seldom discussed barrier to attracting new club volunteers is associated with the general impression or perception of the club as a whole by potential volunteers in the community. How well the club welcomes new recruits, or ensures a positive and open working atmosphere can be a difficult topic to evaluate or discuss. If a negative club image or perception problem does exist, then left unexamined and unaddressed it can be a significant silent barrier to increased participation.



Is it helpful to ask.....

Who would choose to serve with a club who appears to have a public image that:

- Is controlled by stressed out workaholics who seem unwilling to share responsibility through delegation and mentoring?

- Is closed to “Outsiders” or rejects potential volunteers that can contribute only a few hours each season?

- Is limited in its willingness to invest in gracious demonstrations of appreciation?

- Is mired in negativity, petty politics and domineering personalities?

- Is unable to have a healthy balance between a business-like approach to club operations and a fun filled social dimension?

An International Year of the Volunteer study found that 51% of people said that the ‘atmosphere within the organization’ greatly affected their decision to volunteer with an organization.

Resources

Use Chapter 1 of the Club Volunteer Coordinator’s R&R Guidebook, available from your district, to help generate discussion in this critical organizational development area.

Visit the VOLTS website and see the section on Club Climate.

4. Communication barriers

The message:

Information on the Basic Barriers has provided you with the raw material for developing a 'recruiting message'. That message will vary depending on the audience (Example: speaking to youth vs. a print media release for the general public), the medium (Example: short web item vs. detailed articles in a club newsletter), and the time of year.

Preparing a powerful recruiting message requires good communication and marketing skills. An effective message is focused on prompting action. It should give clear direction about what to do: "Email our Volunteer Coordinator", "Return the enclosed card" or "Click on the 'Apply' button".

The medium:

There are two types of transmission methods, each with their own pro's and con's; **a) Broad Based b) Person to Person**. For maximum effect a combination of both is necessary. Overcoming communication barriers for recruiting lies well within the control and scope of club operations.

Working with your Club Volunteer Coordinator (CVC), have a club discussion about which approaches best suit the needs of your situation and summarize those recruiting activities in a step by step workplan outline.



4a) Broad based recruiting

This common and traditional approach carries your message to a huge number of people, but typically yields very few responses.

Examples: Purchased print ad space, websites, maps, Media Releases - PSA's, participating in community events, member mailings, presentations to community agencies, posters in schools and public places, and information at permit outlets and dealerships.

1%
Response rate

Pros

- Raises overall awareness & support in the community about the club's work
- One person can organize a campaign
- Reaches non-snowmobilers - over 5% of club volunteers are not trail riders

Cons

- Requires time and financial resources
- Takes many repetitions to have effect
- Crafting a message requires good marketing and communication skills
- Very low number of responses

4. Communication barriers

4b) Person to person recruiting (P2P)

What is it?

A club volunteer extends a personal invitation to a potential volunteer.

How does it work?

All club volunteers are on the lookout for individuals who could be great contributors to the club. When a club volunteer gets to know a potential volunteer, they can offer information about

why they have enjoyed serving with the club and how the club would benefit from their assistance in a role that matches their interests and abilities.

Are clubs using this approach?

The 2004 VIA - AGM survey discovered that only 28% of clubs are actively using this highly effective recruiting method.

25⁺%
Response rate

Pros

- Virtually no cost
- Free 'Aid to P2P Recruiting' brochures are available for your volunteers from VIA
- Offers targeted / selective approach
- Can be used by all volunteers
- Can occur throughout the year
- Builds relationship with new recruits

Cons

- May require some coaching and encouragement so more volunteers are aware of the Person to Person method and are comfortable trying it

Key resource:

The 'Aid to P2P Recruiting' brochure (French version available)

- Helps to motivate club volunteers to use the P2P method
- Covers volunteering info on: Reasons & Benefits, Tasks, and Clubs
- Has a pouch to carry your club events calendar and invitation letter
- Offers a tear-off Application Form to collect contact information



TOP TIPS

1. Recruiting is a responsibility that must be shared by all.
2. Trying a demonstration of P2P at a club meeting can help some people to overcome their reluctance to give it a try.
3. Giving each club volunteer a P2P brochure can help prompt action and promote recruiting confidence.
4. A positive and inviting tone for the invite is essential!



4. Communication barriers

4b) Person to person recruiting (P2P)

Speaking points for extending a personal invitation

6 Key Elements	Phrases that may help build your own invite
1. Opener	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Seems to me that you might enjoy volunteering with our snowmobile club.....”• “I’d like to invite you to think about helping out with our club.....”
2. Personal Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I’ve been with the club for ___ years and I have really enjoyed.... (the people, trail work, etc).”• “I have found the ___ work very rewarding and I think the club volunteers are a great group of people.”
3. Specific Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “There are lots of different things to do, but right now we need a _____ (position) or a _____.”• “There are lots of things to do that require only a few hours, or could be completed at home.”• “The next _____ (workday, meeting, event) is _____ (date). I could give you a lift there.”
4. Give it some thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Here’s our brochure that tells about volunteering, and on the inside is a bit of information about the club, dates and so on. Our Volunteer Coordinator’s contact info is also listed there if you have questions about what’s involved in helping out.”• “I’ll put my email and telephone info in this space on the back of the brochure so if you have any questions, please give me a call.”
5. We’ll keep in touch follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “If you are interested in helping out, just fill in the form on the back of the brochure and I will pass it on to the club’s Volunteer Coordinator and they’ll give you a call.”• “Give it some thought, and I will touch base next week.” (Get back in touch personally when you said you would. It shows you care and makes the person feel important.)
6. Wrap up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I know the club will / would appreciate your help.”

5. The Rookie volunteer:

A typical profile

What they give:

- Usually make a small number of short time duration (episodic) commitments
- Often volunteer for several different non-profits or community projects
- Enthusiasm is primarily for a specific project or club event (Ex. Snowarama)

What they want:

- A well defined job description that makes good use of their time and abilities
- An opportunity to use their skills
- Training that enhances their ability to do a great job
- To serve with an appropriate level of assigned responsibility, support and supervision
- An environment where they feel encouraged to ask questions and offer ideas
- Tasks that may provide a chance to volunteer with their family or friends
- Motivated by recognition

Targeted recruiting

This approach increases your chances of success by selecting a particular group with either a high participation rate or a vested interest. Youth and Retired folks are two good examples of recruiting targets. By focusing on a target you can tailor your recruiting message to best appeal to that group.

Example: If you determine that increased involvement of families would strengthen the club, then target your efforts by having a recruiting poster at the community center that includes photos of happy club volunteers who are women, couples and families. Provide several methods to contact the club (Club Volunteer Coordinator) and list specific, defined available tasks which appeal to and suit that target group.



Did you know?

The highest participating age group is 17 to 24 year olds with 37% of that youth population choosing to volunteer!

(2002 Canadian Census Data)

6. Beating the barriers: last words checklist



Recruit the right person:

Recruit someone who can dedicate a solid effort to the Club Volunteer Coordinator position. There is a lot involved in successful recruiting....who will lead that vital club function? Help and encourage your Volunteer Coordinator, and ensure they get training on the R&R Guidebook - Building a Plan

Who will drive your volunteer work?

Map out a plan for the club on recruiting:

Don't leave it to chance! Use the strategies described in this booklet to guide the planning process. Will recruiting be one of your top priorities and receive human and financial resources? An effective plan is built through discussion. It must have the understanding and buy-in from all club volunteers.

Sell the experience - Get some PEP working for you:

- **Use the "Public Education Program" (PEP)** package with a DVD and presentation speaking notes to help you better inform your community about the work of the club. Tell them about why volunteers are needed and the benefits of serving.
- **Use the Media PSA's and write Media Releases** to promote a positive image of the club and organized snowmobiling in your area.

Make it easy to sign up:

Almost 1 in 3 survey respondents said that "not knowing how to get involved" prevented them from volunteering.



Just Ask:

27% of survey respondents said they would volunteer if someone personally asked them!

Be prepared for the Episodic volunteer:

Every winning pro sport franchise has a supply of Rookies being brought up through the ranks. Your Episodic 'farm team' needs to feel that they are making a valued contribution even if it is in short bursts. Get ready for Episodic type volunteers by using the strategies described on page 6 of this booklet.

❑ **Persistence and Patience:**

Reaching people with your positive message takes time, and altering attitudes takes even longer. So don't give up; stick at it..... it takes a while for the notion of being a volunteer to sink in and for results to occur.

❑ **Rate your responsiveness**

Set the hook: Every fisherman knows that if you don't set the hook quickly after a nibble.....the fish will get away. Too often excellent potential volunteers have lamented that they left a message or emailed the club wanting to help out but no one returned their call. Research suggests that if an inquiry goes unanswered for more than a week, the potential volunteer will find somewhere else to serve. How does your club receive and respond to volunteer inquiries?



❑ **Make a match - Get them involved right away:**

They signed on to do something, so make a good first impression by taking the time to get to know them and then matching their skills and interests with the right task. Offer them enough information on the club so they get a basic understanding of how things work and who does what. Even if they can't start their particular task right away, you have made them feel that they are part of the club and involved. A big part of volunteering is based on inter-personal relationships. It takes time to foster a sense of belongingbut it all starts with your first interaction.

❑ **Piggyback on high profile events:**

Take advantage of the hype and interest associated with community or national events such as "National Volunteer Recognition Week" in the third week of April. People are more likely to volunteer with an organization that takes the time to graciously honour their volunteers with public recognition.



❑ **Words are important:**

When writing your recruiting message consider the impression some words can give. For example, "We need volunteers" can sound desperate or demanding. "New volunteers are welcome" sounds more positive and self assured. Certainly it is wise to avoid threatening statements such as "We are closing the trails if we don't get more volunteers".



I'm a believer:

Since our club started using the recruiting tips that the Volunteers in Action Committee has promoted through their training programs, the increase in recruiting success at the club has been dramatic.

Cindy Bendle, Volunteer Coordinator, Hillsburgh Snow Roamers S/C

We were stressed and feeling burnt out. We finally realized that we needed to do a better job of recruiting in order for the club to survive. Luckily one of our most effective recruiting efforts is a social...so not only do we attract new people but we are having fun while we're at it!

Vicky Cooper, Secretary, Bluewater Town and Country S/C

Could this be one of your new volunteers?

I'm a new volunteer this season and glad for it. I filled out an on-line application form on the club's website...and the very next night I got a welcoming email from the Volunteer Coordinator. Even though there was no work for me at that point I was invited to attend a meeting and introduced to the Executive.... they all seemed so glad to meet me. I read through my orientation package and was surprised how much work goes into running a club! I've helped a couple of times this season, at a fundraiser and one day tearing down signageit was a hoot.

Best of all I've made a few new friends and they are great to go riding with. All and all I would recommend it, in fact I'm going to ask my friend to start volunteering too. As a young woman, I admit I had reservations about signing up, but I am so pleased with my club... the way they made me feel part of the group and appreciated.

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The Volunteers in Action Committee on behalf of the OFSC gratefully acknowledges the financial support for this training booklet from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, receives annually \$100 million of government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative.



Contact the ONTARIO FEDERATION OF SNOWMOBILE CLUBS:

Phone: 705-739-7669 Fax: 705-739-5005

Email: volunteer@ofsc.on.ca Online: www.ofsc.on.ca