

General Communication Tips

Strong communication is essential in all organizations. Here are a few simple tricks for getting your message across:

Email Do's:

- Do separate ideas into paragraphs
- Do enumerate points
- Do clearly label what is general information and what are action items to be done
- Do remind volunteers about their commitments several days in advance
- Do include relevant contact information in the email (if yours, a signature works best)
- Do provide timely replies
- *Do discuss delicate issues in person*

Other general tips:

- Use strong active listening skills
 - Remove distractions
 - Focus on what the other person is saying and how they are saying it
 - Ask open ended questions
- Make extra efforts to ensure information is consistent and available to those who need it
- Ensure confidentiality when required
- Use direct lines of communication whenever possible

Communication is a two-way process. Make sure to solicit feedback from all stakeholders.

Your Notes

How will I attract volunteers?

What kind of training do I want to offer my volunteers? What kind of resources do I want to provide?

Do I know in advance what events I want to plan? How will I communicate what needs to be done?

Other notes:

Volunteers

Recruitment

Training

Retention

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As volunteer run organizations, the services and programs we offer are entirely dependent on the quality of the volunteer program we offer. Hence, an essential step to improve the quality of the services offered to your engineering communities is to ensure capable, well trained volunteers for the task at hand. To achieve this goal, efforts can be focused on the following three main categories:

- Volunteer recruitment
- Volunteer training
- Volunteer retention

Recruitment

Volunteer Recruitment is the foundation to any volunteer-run program. Simply put, without volunteers, there cannot be a program. The main idea in this stage is to attract as many people to your first event, meeting, or training session. Get the students interested.

Means of advertising:

- Posters
- Booths
- Brochures
- School's online services (e.g. Blackboard)
- Webpage
- Word of mouth

Means of acquiring interest:

- Food (if financially possible)
- Award(s)
- Volunteer appreciation night(s)
- Means of developing volunteer skills (i.e. through training and experience)
- Prepare to offer records or verification of involvement (e.g. references)

Records keeping is key to communication. Maintaining the volunteer list during recruitment enables quick access to contact information at later dates.

Training

To best fulfill their role, volunteers must be adequately trained. A trained volunteer gets the task done and represents your organization well. Set aside time early to explain roles and tasks.

Key focuses of training:

- Safety
- Clearly define roles (e.g. scope of position)
- Develop necessary skills

Suit the nature of the training session for the nature of the position (e.g. transitional meeting versus mass training for a specific one time event). In addition, keeping volunteers informed and providing them with reference information enables them best to handle a multitude of situations.

Useful reference sources to provide:

- Schedules
- Maps/directions
- Procedures
- Reference information binder
- Websites
- Contact phone numbers

Having a reference collection of procedures on hand and/or routines is not only useful for the volunteer but also the organizer for transition.

Retention

Repeat volunteers are experienced, and save training resources such as time. Volunteers keep helping when they feel valued, useful, and when they feel the work is meaningful. Keep the interest and momentum levels high throughout the year.

Tips for keeping interest levels high:

- Project a vision
- Opportunity for personal projects within organization
- Social nights
- See **Recruitment**

Keep the momentum strong:

- Provide many opportunities for involvement
- Stay organized by keeping a list or chart of responsibilities and tasks - and publish it
- Regular updates from organizer/organization
- Know logistical details in advance to **schedule volunteers early**
- Celebrate successes

Members staying with an organization longer gain experience and fuel its growth. As such, dedicated volunteers are often great candidates for transitions.