

PAC Chat #6

Wrangling volunteers

Being a volunteer is such an amazing way to give of your time! It is quite clear that the world is a much better place because of the people in it that choose to do something for others, rather than focusing solely on themselves. When you volunteer you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in. You make it better by filling a role, easing the load of someone else, supplying a service, teaching a skill, sharing some expertise or providing staffing for an event that otherwise wouldn't have happened. You are valuable!

So, how do you go about getting more volunteers to join your team? Who should you approach? How should you approach them? Where are they hiding?

Here's some tips for wrangling volunteers effectively...

- **Make the job or task appealing** – Be a salesperson! If you sound positive about it, it will land better.
- **Break the responsibility into manageable chunks** – If your first interaction with someone is to ask them to run an enormous job or program, it sounds daunting. They will likely be scared off and not want to show up to the monthly meetings. Start small and move up from there!
- **Know your audience** – Find out about the different skill sets/interests that your memberships have and capitalize on that. Plug them into spots that make sense.
- **Have fun!** – If your events are fun to attend, and everyone is laughing, getting along and enjoying themselves, then it's easy for people to see themselves joining in to volunteer.
- **Be welcoming to everyone**– Always have someone assigned to connect with new faces, make a space at the table, and get them up to speed on what's shakin'. At PAC meetings be intentional with where the executives/regulars sit. Have them spread out around the table/room, and charge them with the task of getting to know who is sitting beside them. Ask everyone to participate (as long as they can agree to your code of conduct). Martin Luther King Jr. said that, "to serve...you only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love." If they fit that bill, they're in!
- **ASK for help** – Don't get caught in the trap of assuming people will offer or show up because they know things need to be done. You need to light the fire, or people will take the easy way out.
- **Ask face to face** – It takes some time, but is so worth the effort! It's hard to say no to someone standing in front of you, and it shows your commitment to the cause, by being out on the front lines. You can also put more feeling into a conversation than you can into an email or media post. Do you REALLY NEED help with the book fair? They will be able to see your desperation, LOL!
 - For elementary and middle school, being around after school during pick up times is a proven way to connect with those that you otherwise wouldn't meet. Also asking each teacher for a few suggestions of parents you could connect with is an easy way to create a starting list!
 - Set up a table or station at school functions (like Ready/Set/Learn, Meet the Teacher Day, during Parent/Teacher interviews, or at the Christmas concert). Have sign-up sheets for specific events (with dates & times too if possible) & ask if they will commit to just one thing.
 - Mingle during the school-wide events – If the community sees the PAC team engaging with everyone (rather than sticking together like 5 year olds on a soccer ball!), it will show you are friendly and modelling how you want your community to operate.
- **Be enticing!** - Have a PAC sign up contest, where everyone that signs up for an event will get a ballot to win a prize (like a free hot lunch for their little, \$10 off their next fundraiser order, or a Starbucks card!) and make sure you celebrate the winner in your newsletter or on your social media sites (if they agree)!

You will be the "commercial" for why people should join in and assist. If you are someone that people like being around, are inclusive of everyone, can graciously train new helpers, don't freak out when someone cancels, and recognize that family and health come before volunteering, then you should be able to recruit easily!

Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. – Elizabeth Andrew