

Developing a Life-Serving Promotion Team

Passionate volunteers who've been bitten by the NVC bug can be easy to find. However, without structure and support, a volunteer's need for balance, teamwork, efficiency, celebration and play may not be met. The result is often volunteer burn-out and a high-turnover rate.

This planning guide was developed from the experiences of the Oregon Network for Compassionate Communication. After experiencing high volunteer turnover and extreme burnout among a handful of long-term volunteers, ORNCC developed structures and support systems that now serve the promotional efforts of five regional communities. The guidelines and suggestions listed here are offered in the spirit of collaboration. Use whatever information here is useful to your team.

STEP #1: ASSESS YOUR SITUATION.

- Take some time to assess the current stage of your organization. For instance, is your NVC community just forming for the first time? What type of team would you like to form — a short-term team to host a Marshall event, or a long-term team that plans to host one workshop per month? SEE OTHER TEAM/ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES TO GET YOUR TEAM STRUCTURE, MISSION AND GOALS ESTABLISHED BY VIEWING THE TEAM DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT
- What kind of promotion budget (if any) will your team be operating with?
- What promotion/public relations/writing/graphic design skills are present among your current volunteers?
- What project management and/or promotion coordination skills are present among your current volunteers?
- Considering your answers to the questions above, what needs would be met by forming a promotion team?

STEP #2: ORGANIZE YOUR TEAM.

Whether you're forming a long-term promotion team, or a team to coordinate promotion for a specific event, careful team organization will meet needs for support, teamwork and collaboration.

- IDENTIFY A PROMOTION COORDINATOR: _____
Identify a team member to serve as the promotion coordinator for a designated period of time (at least 6 months is desirable), and list this individual on your Promotion Planning Worksheet. This person will keep promotion tasks organized, delegate promotion tasks to other volunteers, possibly fulfill promotion tasks on their own, and keep in communication contact with the rest of your team. For best results and ease, it's most helpful if the promotion coordinator has some expertise in public/media relations and/or writing. You may consider a two-person team approach to coordinating promotion as well.
- IDENTIFY PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL DESIGNER: _____
Graphic design and writing are refined skills. Consider finding a volunteer with these skills to design all promotional pieces, including flyers, advertisements, email announcements, event listings, etc. This person can work independently to design materials, or in partnership with the Promotion Coordinator.
- IDENTIFY A WEB MANAGER (if applicable): _____
If you have a website and do not have a web manager already, consider identifying one a few months prior to your event. This volunteer could be responsible for posting your events on your organization's website.

- **IDENTIFY A VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:** _____
The Volunteer Coordinator will recruit and distribute short-term volunteers to fulfill tasks such as delivery of flyers, leafleting at select events, etc. The Volunteer Coordinator will retain a list of volunteer names, phone numbers and email addresses so as needs arise, he/she can find volunteers quickly and efficiently to fulfill a given task. For best results, Volunteer Coordinators will be good at recruiting, mentoring, and coordinating volunteers. The Promotion Coordinator and Volunteer Coordinator will work in partnership most of the time. Some teams will request that the Volunteer Coordinator handles all coordination for guerilla marketing. This may include identifying events, matching volunteers to an event, communicating all logistics to volunteers, training volunteers when needed, and providing volunteers with leaflets or flyers.
- **IDENTIFY AND FULFILL REMAINING EVENT COORDINATION ROLES:**
The Promotion Team will most likely be able to fulfill their promotion strategies when they have support with the remaining aspects of the event coordination. Consider identify a coordinator for all other event roles, including (1) event logistics; (2) event registration; (3) event scholarships; (4) book and material sales; (5) answering organizational email/phone line; (6) website maintenance. FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT ON FORMING AN EVENT COORDINATION TEAM, SEE THE TEAM DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT.

STEP #3: ESTABLISH YOUR PROMOTION PLAN.

Now that your roles/responsibilities have been determined, use the Promotion Planning Worksheet to identify what strategies you'll use for promotion. Below are some tips for ensuring that your plan becomes a guide for a life-serving experience:

- **CONSIDER YOUR SKILLS / EXPERIENCE** — In other words, start with the strategies you know how to do first. For instance, if no one on your team has ever hosted a media event, avoid attaching yourself too much to this strategy.
- **CONSIDER YOUR PROMOTION BUDGET** — Most NVC groups are operating from little-to-no promotion budget. If this is your situation, identify strategies that cost little to no money, such as email-based promotion, posting your event on website calendars, or sending media kits to local reporters electronically.
- **TRY TO BE REALISTIC** — It's so easy for passionate volunteers to get overzealous about the number of things they'll do to promote NVC or an upcoming visit from Marshall Rosenberg. Try to avoid the "we can never do enough" mentality. Instead, start with a promotion plan that is absolutely realistic. Consider your time availability, the skills of your team, your promotion budget, and list only those things you can do with little effort. Once those are completed, then consider adding more strategies if that feels good to you.

STEP #4: CREATE DISTRIBUTION LISTS.

Your promotion success is often determined by who is receiving your promotional messages. Review "Tips for Creating a Targeted Organization Database" and "Tips for Creating a Media List" in the Promotion Toolkit. Create a basic database and begin entering contact information as it's gathered into the database. If possible, begin developing your databases several months prior to your events.

STEP #5: WHEN IMPLEMENTING YOUR PROMOTION PLAN, CONTINUALLY CHECK IN WITH YOUR TEAM – ARE WE OPERATING FROM A LIFE-SERVING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE?

- **OPERATE FROM A PLACE OF JOY, RATHER THAN A SHOULD OR HAVE TO MENTALITY** — Since the public and media relations fields are filled with deadlines, it's really easy to become absorbed in the mindset of "we have to do this now!" Do your best to be forgiving of yourself and your team at all times. Remind yourself and your volunteers that any action done unwillingly does not serve life!

- **CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS WEEKLY** — As the Promotion Coordinator, you're keeping your pulse on the details of your promotion plan and daily accomplishments. During the two or so months prior to your event (the busier promotion weeks), consider sending out a weekly promotion update to your team by email. Highlight/list all strategies that the team has fulfilled to date. This could include a rough list of all locations where event flyers have been posted, a list of all organizations that have been contacted, etc. Communicate your gratitude to volunteers and request that they take 5 minutes out of their day to celebrate your team's accomplishments.
- **SET AND COMMUNICATE BOUNDARIES** — Consider your personal needs. Set and clearly communicate your boundaries to all team members. For instance, if you're balancing your volunteer time with a full-time job and would enjoy communicating with your team primarily during the evening hours — let them know! If you're the Volunteer Coordinator, set a ground rule that to meet you (and your volunteers') need for ease and balance, you request at least a week's advance warning to arrange volunteers to leaflet at an upcoming event.
- **ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED** — Sometimes the hardest thing to do is ask for help. Check in with yourself often to consider if your needs are being met. Try to plan ahead for the expected, such as vacations, a big project at work that will take a lot of your time one week, etc. Ask for help from your team when needed to help you retain balance and enjoyment in your own contribution.