



Putting Your Best Face Forward: Designing Opportunities for Online Recruitment

You only get one chance to make a first impression. This is also true when the first impression happens on VolunteerMatch. Prospective volunteers are making assumptions about your organization and your program based on how you present them on online. They can be energized and motivated and excited to help based on what they learn from your listings and your Organization Detail page, or they may pass right over your listing with out a second glance.

Building a Model for a Great Listing

VolunteerMatch used all of the data we have available from our website to identify what goes into a great listing. We evaluated listings from over 56,000 organizations, and looked at the ratio of page views to referrals – how many people looked at a listing in relation to how many of those people referred themselves by clicking I WANT TO HELP!

What we learned was that there were some universal characteristics and tangible qualities that these listings had in common, but also some things that were not easily recreated by every organization. We looked at the 100 listings with the highest referral to page view ratio – all over 10%, which means that for every ten page views these listings received at least one referral – as well as 100 listings with no referrals to determine what each group had in common with each other and what was different about the two groups. The guidelines below are based on what we learned.

Guidelines for Creating a Great Listing

Based on the research outlined above, listings which include the following elements could have a referral rate of up to 10%.

- Use short succinct sentences. 95% of the successful listings had sentences that were short and to the point but still descriptive. Deliver your message in as few words as possible. Get excited about your organization and the opportunity and relay that to the volunteer in the most expedient way.
- Average about 100 words per listing. Individual paragraphs included no more than 3 sentences each. The listings had an average of 5 total sentences. The successful listings were sure to relay all of the necessary information pertaining to the mission of their organization and the particular volunteer opportunity.
- Accurate task description. 97% of the successful listings had a clear description of the volunteer opportunity. Relay your opportunity in a positive way – get the volunteer excited about working with you.
- Correct grammar. 92% of the successful listings used correct grammar.



- Correct spelling. 100% of the successful listings used correct spelling.
- Include only one opportunity per listing.
- Do not include your URL or company contact information in the posting. In order for us to be accurate about your referral rate, the volunteer has to click I WANT TO HELP to get more information.

Finally, have someone else read through your opportunity before you post it. Make sure that you are clear and have said exactly what you need to convey in as few words as possible. It is also a good idea to have someone look over it for grammatical errors or misuse of words such as “they’re” or “their” that spell check would not correct for you. Ask your reader whether they have any suggestions to make the posting more interesting to a volunteer. Have fun with it! If you are excited about the opportunity it will show in your writing.

Putting the Guidelines to Use: Practical Applications

Guidelines are great, but knowing what makes a great listing does not always tell you how to write a great listing. The following sections help you apply the guidelines to current and future VolunteerMatch listings.

Make the Title Work for You – This is your hook. You need your title to stand out from other titles. Make it compelling, fun and informative. For example, “Unlock the World – Teach a Child to Read” has much more impact than “Volunteers Needed to Teach Reading.”

Keep it Brief – To get a volunteer’s attention ask for help in as few words as possible. Let the volunteer know the exact job they perform without too much detail. Only include information that helps them understand how they are making a difference.

Word it Simply and Make it Easy to Understand – What is your volunteer opportunity? Use terms that your volunteers can relate to, and try saying it out loud first, and then writing it. Using industry jargon or non-profit acronyms will create more questions than answers in the minds of your volunteers. They should know what they will be asked to accomplish. Keep your sentences short and succinct.

Make an Impact – Describe how your organization makes an impact and be very clear about how your volunteers play a role. Let people know how your community appreciates what you do.

Provide Direction and Support - Volunteers need to know that they will have direction and support from you. Include key information to get a volunteer interested - training, location, equipment, etc. Encourage them to contact you for additional information.

Make it Visually Appealing – A picture says a thousand words. Include some type of graphic – whether it is a picture, a map, etc. Make your posting warm and welcoming.



Remember to Edit – Listings with spelling and grammatical errors receive significantly fewer referrals. Always check for spelling and grammar. You should always have someone else proofread your posting. Ask for their suggestions about how to make it short, simple and inviting.

View Your Posting As a Volunteer – Look at your posting as it appears on VolunteerMatch.org. Does your title stand out in search results? Does it communicate clearly? Edit your posting if necessary.