

Because I Said So

Ten Tips for Finding Volunteers and Keeping Them Happy

Featuring

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What To Do

- Host a volunteer orientation party (or two or three)
- Email everyone on your list
- Explain volunteer opportunities

Bonus Points

- Educate at the same time
- Schedule around the holidays
- Tie to a new program



Tip #1 Throw a Party

How It Worked for Us

- Beginning of a major collections Inventory Project
- 2 Orientation Sessions
- Record-breaking response
- Highlight collections-focus



Tip #1 Throw a Party

What To Do

- What projects do you want them to work on?
- Develop training materials before they start
- Educate on why you need something done

Bonus Points

- Match volunteer with projects
- Team based?

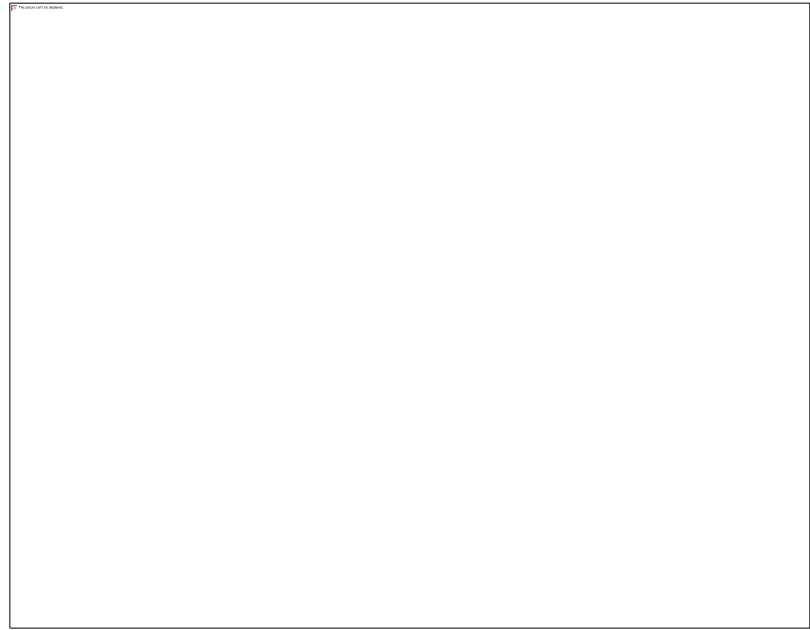


Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #2

Give them a project

How it worked for us

- Projects
 - Collections, oral histories
- Skills
 - What are they handy at
 - Found volunteers or student-workers with those skills
- Personality



Image courtesy of the University Archives at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Students working on typewriters at Mankato State College, 1962-01-22

<https://arch.lib.mnsu.edu/islandora/object/MSUrepository%3A146651>

Tip #2

Give them a project

What To Do

- Reach out to unexpected sources for new volunteers and interns
- Schools and universities in the area? Special interest groups?

Bonus Points

- Be open to new, unique and unusual partnerships
- Be ready to convince the board



Tip #3

Be creative with your recruitment network

How It Worked for Us

- On-going St. Thomas University partnership, which keeps growing and evolving
 - Internship candidates
 - Projects using our collection

How It Didn't Work for Us

- MCAD opportunity
 - May find a photographer?
- Sent cold emails



Tip #3

Be creative with your recruitment network

What To Do

- Local colleges and universities
- Off-campus Community Service opportunities
- Develop training

Bonus Points

- Can't hurt to ask
- Level of interest will depend on the student
- Pay your interns!

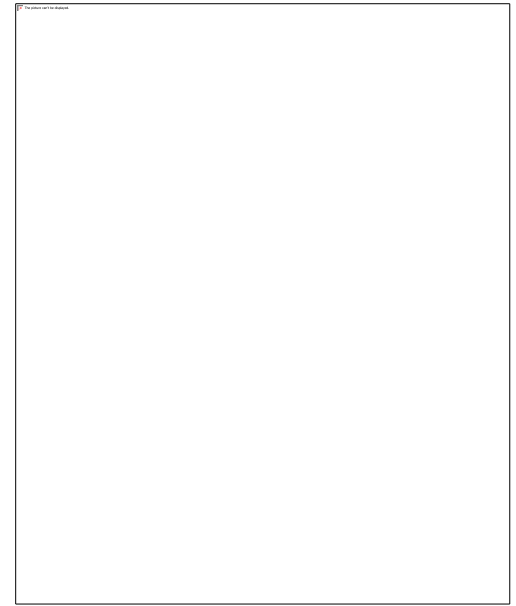


Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #4

Hire student workers
and interns

What To Do

- Internships
 - Provide academic credit (120 hours)
 - Specific training program

Bonus Points

- Teach new skills
- Prepare them for future careers



Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #4

Hire student workers and interns

How it worked for us

- Had a great relationship with local colleges while at museum
- Accomplished projects while developing career skills
 - At least four went onto museum careers
- Data entry, scanning, ingest help University Archives complete our tasks!

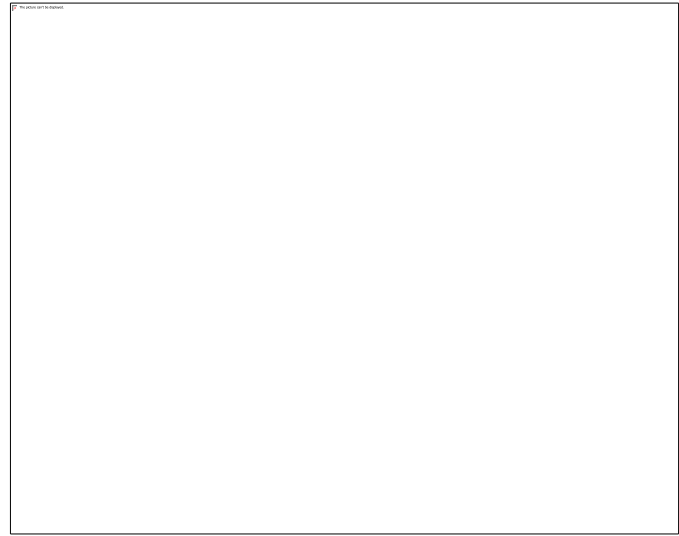


Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #4

Hire student workers and interns

What To Do

- Be up front and firm about roles and boundaries
- Have clear expectations and repeat them often
- Have a clear, unchanging schedule

Bonus Points

- Stick to your guns
- Take time to explain “why the no”



Tip #5 Be crystal clear

How it worked for us

- Helped with our preparation
- Knew what to expect (at least in terms of who was coming)
- They knew what they could and couldn't do



Tip #5

Be crystal clear

What To Do

- Demonstrate how you do techniques or processes
 - Encourage questions
- Engage them regularly

Bonus Points

- Be open and receptive (passionate)
- Read body language



Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #6

Be your (happy, engaged, passionate) self

How it worked for us

- Training went easier and volunteers were more engaged as well
- Easier to correct issues up front
- Improve training guides
- Improved my process!

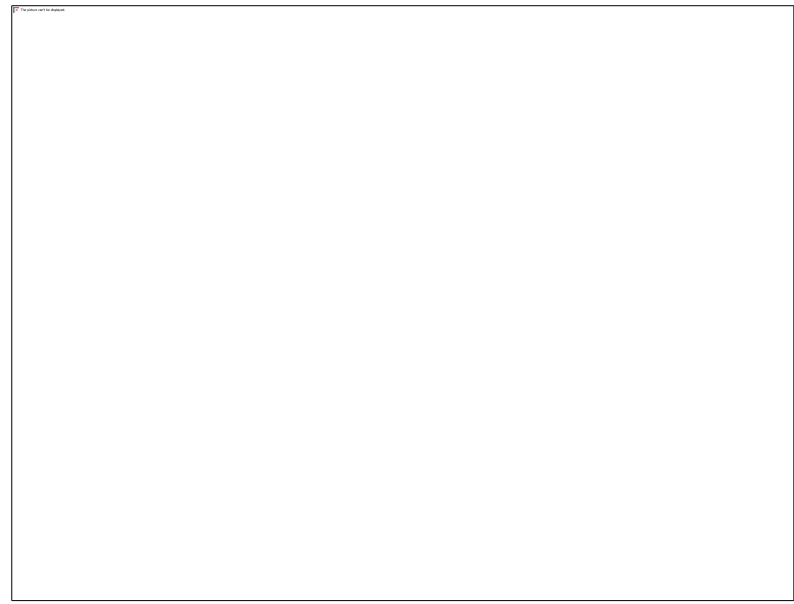


Image courtesy of the Stearns History Museum.

Tip #6

Be your (happy, engaged, passionate) self

What To Do

- Have a project interns can own from start to finish
- Have tasks volunteers can do independently

Bonus Points

- Enjoy watching your volunteers grow in their role and love what they do with you



Tip #7 Encourage agency

How it worked for us

- Interest and buy in
- Independent research led to them teaching me things!



Tip #7

Encourage agency

What To Do

- Learn about who your volunteers/student workers are and what's going on in life
- What they know might surprise you

Bonus Points

- What's going on in life affects their performance
- Encourages them to return



Image courtesy of the Carver County Historical Society.

Tip #8 Get to know 'em

How it works for us

- Higher student-worker retention
- Provide direction for what they might need
 - College campus and away from home
 - Prod them to seek help
- Support for your volunteers



Image courtesy of the University Archives at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Student worker helping a student go through maps, Memorial Library at Mankato State University.

<https://arch.lib.mnsu.edu/islandora/object/MSUrepository%3A7263>

Tip #8 Get to know 'em

What To Do

- Think big picture: Idle chit chat isn't necessarily wasted time
- If your site is their social outlet, volunteers will always come back

Bonus Points

- In the immortal words of Harvey Danger: "If you're bored then you're boring"



Tip #9

Let 'em have fun

How it worked for us

- Distinguish: Community volunteers vs. educational volunteers
- Remember: 5 items cataloged (or 5 photos digitized, or 5 records created) is 5 more than yesterday



Tip #9

Let 'em have fun

What To Do

- Say “thanks”
- Recognition
- Food’s always good (at least for college students)

Bonus Points

- Say “thank you” often
- Come up with an award program



Image courtesy of the University Archives at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Two volunteers pour coffee for gentleman at MSC, 1960-02-24.
<https://arch.lib.mnsu.edu/islandora/object/MSUrepository%3A64356>

Tip #10 Tell them “thank you”

How it worked for us

- Who doesn't like a party?
- Often appreciative of the recognition and know that they are providing a service to you and their community



Image courtesy of the University Archives at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Two volunteers pour coffee for gentleman at MSC, 1960-02-24.
<https://arch.lib.mnsu.edu/islandora/object/MSUrepository%3A64356>

Tip #10 Tell them “thank you”

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*Final
Bonus!*

Tell us thank you!
(food and awards also works for us)