

Maximizing Volunteers for Trailwork





www.usaconservation.org

Welcome! Who are we?

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American Conservation Experience (ACE) is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing rewarding environmental service opportunities that harness the idealism and energy of a volunteer labor force to help restore America's public lands.

In 2014 ACE-CA recruited and trained over 200 corps-members 94,000 hours of service.



Session Objectives

- **Understand** barriers to communication with volunteers and how to overcome.
- **Explain** how to improve recruitment by understating motivations of volunteers and how to mesh those motivations with your mission
- **Discuss** how to safely and effectively train and lead volunteers to accomplish meaningful trail work.
- **Explain** how we can retain volunteers.



Barriers to Communication

- Different Experience Levels
- Different Socio-Economic backgrounds
- Different Languages
- Trail Lingo
- What else?





Communication Exercise

- Groups of 5-6 people
- Choose a designated leader
- Part 1 - Leader will describe to you how to sketch a simple drawing of common shapes. You may not speak. You have 3 minutes.
- Part 2 – Leader will describe to you how to sketch a similar simple drawing of common shapes. This time you may ask questions. You have 3 minutes again.
- Debrief



Communication Exercise Debrief

Diagram 1

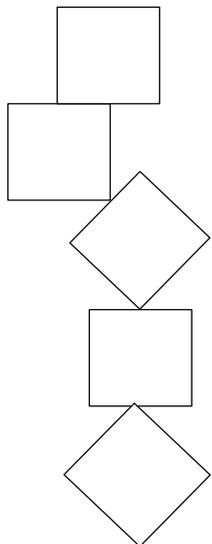
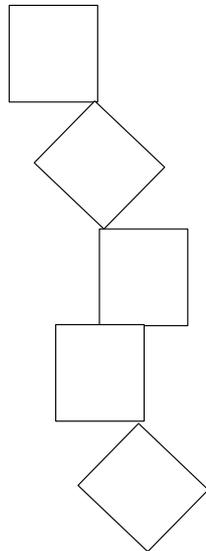


Diagram 2



- What drawing was easier? Why?
- Simple and intuitive tasks can be the most difficult to teach.



Recruit: What is your mission(s)?

- **Land Management** (USFS, NPS, State Parks, County Parks)
- **Land Stewardship** (Friends Of groups, PCTA, TRTA, VWA)
- **Volunteer Organization** (AmeriCorps, fraternities, sororities)
- **Activity Advocacy** (Equestrian clubs, mountain bike clubs, rock climbing access, TAMBA, CCCMB)
- **Who uses your trails?** Target users with invested interest!
- Volunteer trail days can be a way to bridge gaps across different organizations with different missions. Find partners, combine resources and get sponsors.



Recruit: What motivates returning trail volunteers?

- Meeting people – sense of community
- Fun
- Desire to work hard
- Ownership
- Sense of stewardship
- Promote their organization
- **Buzz!**
- Being outside
- Food
- Awards
- Recognition





Recruit: What motivates volunteer crew leaders?

- Teaching
- Desire to learn
- Desire to work hard
- Giving back to community
- Sense of stewardship
- Spare time
- Fun
- Being outside



TRTA as a case study



Recruitment Strategies

- **Don't be narrow minded.** Think outside the box when it comes to volunteer recruitment. Individual recruitment vs. organized groups. Boy scouts, student groups, church groups, retired people, athletics clubs, advocate groups, Friends Of groups. Other suggestions?
- **Utilize all your resources.** Recruit in person, social media, email, phone, conferences, mail.
- **Be persistent** – Especially for crew leaders.
- **Targeted dates** – Earthday, National Trails Day, piggyback on larger marketing efforts



Recruitment Strategies

- **Have a larger vision** – Present a larger vision beyond a single volunteer trail day.
- **Make it easy for volunteers** – provide easy sign up, clear expectations. Day-of sign ups.

Work with land management agencies to sponsor trail days. They can provide leadership, training, tools, oversight.





Recruitment Strategies

- **Create Buzz!** “Why? The people, the place, the unique experience, the food!. The foundation of the VWA trail crew is good people good, good times and GREAT food! Come see what all the fuss is about.” - From VWA Website

TRAIL BUILD DAY

Think you can shovel more dirt than Matt Hunter? Want to join forces with Annika Beerten to tamp down some berms? Do you have a hard-hat collection you've been itching to get dirty? Come join Specialized, Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz, and 10 of the best Specialized Pro Mountain Bikers in the world for a very special Trail Build Day at Sequoia Demonstration State Forest.

**APRIL 14th
HIGHLAND LOT**

8:45am COME READY TO WORK, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF THE REST.

REGISTER AT
WWW.MBOSC.ORG

Photo by Brian Danner

DIG THE

Flow TRAIL

**Pitch in with Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz
HELP BUILD THE FLOW TRAIL AT
SEQUOIA DEMONSTRATION STATE FOREST**

VOLUNTEER Sign up for a Volunteer Trail Work Day.
Digging not your thing? You can still help!

DONATE Sponsor a Volunteer Trail Work Day,
or donate equipment/raffle items/cash.

TAKE OUR SURVEY Chime in to help us evaluate
our work so far and plan the remaining segments.

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE!

PARTY WITH TAMBA

Wednesday April 29 6pm to 9pm

FREE!

RAFFLE ALL AGES **MEMBERSHIP DRIVE** **DJ BerkMon PHOTO BOOTH**

American Legion

**2748 Lake Tahoe Blvd (Hwy 50)
South Lake Tahoe
TAMBA.ORG**



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books

PACIFIC CREST TRAIL
South Cascades
Old Station to Sand Valley

We're on a mission to protect it forever. Join us.

TAHOE RIM TRAIL
HIKING, MOUNTAIN BIKING, HORSEBACK RIDING

"a trail like no other"

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Volunteer Trail Building

Sign Up!

National Trails Day®!

Backcountry Camps

Vol•un•teer [vol-uhn-teer] –n. one of life's most

The Tahoe Rim Trail Association is grateful for over 30 years of service from the organization with thousands of volunteer hours annually. It's a great way to spend time with your friends and family.

Since the Tahoe Rim Trail Association began building the Tahoe Rim Trail, the Tahoe Rim Trail was built by over 10,000 volunteers donating their time. The Tahoe Rim Trail was built by over 10,000 volunteers donating their time. The Tahoe Rim Trail was built by over 10,000 volunteers donating their time.

Join Us!

Successful organizations communicate well with volunteers from project planning through execution and beyond.



Leading volunteer trail projects

- **Planning for success:** 1-6 months before project
 - What's a good project –difficulty, location, parking area, vehicle needs. What's a bad project?
 - Who's land is it on. Do you have permission to do the work?
 - What materials, tools, equipment will be needed
 - Create Project Outline/Itinerary
 - Contingency plans for weather, too few people, too many people
 - Liability waivers for volunteers.
 - Appropriate leadership, good ratio of leaders to volunteers



Leading volunteer trail projects

- **Planning for success: 1-4 weeks before project**
 - Finalize # of volunteers and leaders. Ensure leaders have appropriate training for task
 - Find out pertinent information about volunteers: prior experience, medical concerns, etc.
 - Gather tools and materials for project. Know how to use!
 - Check in with volunteers. Email with project overview, expectations, directions, weather and what to bring.
 - Purchase food/snacks
 - Final coordination with land manager



Leading volunteer trail projects

- **Day of project**
- Arrive early
- Lay out tools, PPE, other equipment
- Set up directional signs
- Have coffee/snacks prepared
- Meet and greet people. Find out more about them. What do they hope to get out of the day?





Leading volunteer trail projects

- **Day of project continued**
- Project overview and expectations and explain the crucial role of volunteers
- Assign responsibilities
- Be timely
- Tailgate safety session and JHA
- Teach proper tool use and handling
- Get to work!? What are some more considerations throughout day?



Leading volunteer trail projects

- **Post project**
- Thank everyone and discuss accomplishments
- Announce next event
- Ensure everyone has signed up
- Post on social media, photos of event, accomplishments
- Email group to thank one more time.





Methods for retaining volunteers

- **Good leadership** – Volunteer Crew Leaders, provide professional training
- **Professional Planning** – Takes time - connect with land managers, create project outline
- **Engaging Projects** - not brushing every time. Volunteers like to build something
- **Consistency of projects** (1 per month/week....etc.) Good relationship with land manager
- **Providing recognition** – after projects and on website



Methods for retaining volunteers

- **Awards** – for # of hours, significant achievements
- **Membership**– Good for clubs and advocacy groups. Members are more likely to return
- **Parties/Fundraisers** – builds community
- **Training** – enhances skills, shows investment
- **Education** – bring in outside experts
- **Food/Raffles** – Get stuff donated. Build community connections
- **What else?**



Summary

- **Understanding the needs of volunteers is just as important as the project outcomes.**
- **Utilizing volunteers can be very rewarding and can help you achieve programmatic goals**
- **Build the Buzz and create a community!**
- **Building a strong volunteer program is hard!**
 - Requires time, money, partnerships and dedication



Questions and Discussion

Thanks to the following organizations:

- Pacific Crest Trail Association
- Tahoe Rim Trail Association
- Ventana Wilderness Alliance
- Tahoe Area Mountain Biking Association
- Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz



Ventana Wilderness Alliance





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Thanks!

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