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NC Conservation Network Tip Sheet #3: Building Leaders

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August 3, 2009

Building Leaders

In this Tip Sheet you will learn tips for developing your organization's members into volunteers and leaders for your work.

This Tip Sheet is guest written by Peter Lane, Institute for Conservation Leadership (<http://www.icl.org/>).

Tips for building leaders

Tip #1: Make volunteering an organization-wide priority. Organizations develop volunteer leadership when their board affirms the important role of volunteers and staff includes them in their goals and annual work plans.

Tip #2: Volunteers are not free. Allocate financial and staff resources so that volunteering for your organization will be a positive experience and will gain credibility in your community.

Tip #3: Attract large numbers of people through regularly scheduled events or activities. Offer activities that you can replicate without a lot of expense, and that do not require a significant commitment. Always collect names and contact information. This is the bottom of your "leadership mountain."
(<http://www.ncconservationnetwork.org/documents/Leadership Mtn - Activities.pdf>)

Tip #4: Offer specific and meaningful volunteer opportunities related to your mission. Demonstrate the importance of volunteers by showing a clear need...and put it in writing like you would for a job description. Offer a variety of opportunities to attract people with different interests, levels of commitment, and time availability.

Tip #5: Create volunteer opportunities that require increased levels of responsibility and leadership. Have one-time volunteer activities that are easy for people to get involved with (see tip #3). Offer regularly-scheduled volunteer opportunities to increase involvement. Move your long-time volunteers up the leadership mountain by offering them a leadership position, such as overseeing groups of regularly-scheduled volunteers, training other volunteers, or leading some other project. Next stop is a board member!

Tip #6: Ask, ask, ask. Make your pitch for volunteers whenever two or more gather. Let them know what they can do. Do the same for members. You will be more successful when you can ask an individual member about a specific volunteer activity (as opposed to a general plea for volunteers).

Tip #7: Set a realistic goal. If you have 100 online activists that you want to turn into potential offline activists (making phone calls, visiting an elected official, speaking at a meeting or hearing, etc.) think about

what it will take. Be specific about what you want them to do (see tip #4) and how much time it will take. Do you have the systems in place to track and follow-up with everyone who clicks to "volunteer?" What training or orientation is necessary? Praise each one of your online activists for the great work they've done and ask them if they will take the next step to show up at a hearing. You may decide that 20 offline activists from your pool of 100 is a realistic goal and one you can also manage.

Tip #8: **Be prepared for greater levels of support.** Each increasing level of volunteer responsibility and involvement may require additional levels of training, supervision, or support. Putting them in place beforehand will demonstrate your organization's professionalism and clarify expectations.

Tip #9: **Recognize that people have different motivations for volunteering.** For some it's their passion for an issue, and for others it's the chance to meet new people and socialize or to gain some career experience. Spend time getting to know volunteers. Tailor your volunteer positions, how you ask people to "climb the leadership mountain," and how you recognize their accomplishment to what's important to people.

Tip #10: **Sometimes finding leadership means looking outside the organization.** The leadership mountain framework is one way to help you design and implement a successful volunteer program. In some cases, you will have to recruit leaders with special skills or expertise from outside the organization...even if they haven't climbed your leadership mountain!

Resources:

ICL's Leadership Mountain:

http://www.ncconservationnetwork.org/documents/Leadership_Mtn_-_Activities.pdf

If you have any ideas for future Tip Sheets, please [email](#) Nicole Stewart, NC Conservation Network.