



# VOLUNTEERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO GIVING BACK IN THE DIGITAL AGE



## RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

If your organization is like most not-for-profits, you don't have a huge budget to spend on printing brochures and mailing them to hundreds of strangers who may or may not be interested in your cause. That's old school marketing and the social media generation doesn't respond to it anyway. It's time to turn your efforts to the digital realm.

Social media is the new word of mouth. Social media is all about connecting and it's the perfect tool to recruit new volunteers to your cause. In order to do that though, you need to be savvy about where your audience is online and what type of content they like.

### Here are five steps to kick your online recruiting into high gear:

- 1. Find out where your current volunteer base is online.** Chat to your current volunteers and ask them where they hang out online - is it Facebook? Twitter? LinkedIn? Snapchat? Then build a strategy based around the top three channels. Why three? It's an odd number and we like odd numbers. And three is a good number to start with, to experiment with and to keep you from becoming overwhelmed. You can build on to those three over time. And keep in mind that the social media landscape is always changing - what's hot today may be gone tomorrow.
- 2. Create great content.** The digital age opens up tons of new channels that can lead us to potential new volunteers but it also means that those potential new volunteers are oversaturated with content from friends, family, advertisers and other causes requesting their attention. Check out our Inspiring Volunteers in the Digital Age section on page 5 for tips on what makes share-worthy content.
- 3. Tell the story of your cause.** Blog about it, vlog (video blog) about it, create an infographic. Basically, any type of content that helps you highlight what makes your organization unique.
- 4. Spotlight your volunteers.** Your current volunteers are your most valuable volunteers - they are already actively engaged in helping your cause. Interview them for your blog. Feature them in an email. Create a LinkedIn page or group for volunteers. Bonus: This will help them build their resume, too.
- 5. Use clear calls-to-action and make it easy for people to sign up.** The goal is to build your database of volunteers so make it as easy as possible for them to interact with your organization and to sign up for updates.

# POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



## Twitter

### IDEAL USE

Great for connecting with your community.

### BEST PRACTICE

Find relevant hashtags and join in the conversation.



## Facebook

### BEST PRACTICE

Post a mixture of photos, videos, quotes and interesting links.

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Be aware that millennials don't use Facebook nearly as much as adults over 30.



## LinkedIn

### TARGET AUDIENCE

LinkedIn users are serious about building their resume and making professional connections.

### TIP

Make it easy for volunteers to showcase their involvement with your organization on LinkedIn. You could provide ready-made copy about what volunteer responsibilities that they can add to their own LinkedIn page, or try creating a Group for volunteers to interact with one another.



## Instagram

### BEST PRACTICE

People expect beautiful photos on Instagram. Digital Photography School's blog has [10 Tips for Mastering Instagram](#) that will help you take the best possible photos.

### TIP

Share Instagram photos on your Facebook and Twitter accounts, too, for maximum social reach.



## Snapchat

### TARGET AUDIENCE

A [recent study](#) showed 77% of college students use Snapchat daily.

### COOL IDEA

Tenovus, a Welsh cancer charity, encouraged their fans to [take a selflessie](#) – a selfie of them doing something selfless.



## Ello

### WHAT TO KNOW

It's like Facebook, but there's no advertising and there never will be.

### BEST PRACTICE

Ello is the new kid on the block. Make sure your audience is on Ello before investing lots of time in it.



## YouTube

### FACT

YouTube is the second most visited search engine after Google.

### COOL IDEA

Use it to host a live chat and take questions via social media from potential volunteers.



## Google+

### TARGET AUDIENCE

We're not gonna lie, we like Google+ because it helps your overall SEO.

### TIP

Claim your Google+ Local Page to increase your chances of appearing in local search results.



## Tumblr

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Half of Tumblr's user base is under 25.

### EASE OF USE

Tumblr's mobile app is easy to use, making it great for posting info on the go.

## INSPIRING VOLUNTEERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Take a couple of minutes and jot down all of the charities and non-profit causes you remember seeing on social media in the last year. Now think about those instances and see if you can pinpoint what made them memorable and inspiring.

### **A picture is worth a thousand words**

Photos are the most shared content on social media - more than status updates, more than links to articles, and even more than videos. Oceana, a non-profit dedicated to protecting the world's oceans, does a great job of showcasing beautiful photographs on their [Instagram feed](#). You can do more than post photos of cute animals though. Take a cue from To Write Love On Her Arms, a non-profit that helps people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury. Their Instagram feed is filled with photos of inspiring quotes, their volunteers, and even letters from their founder.

### **Humor tickles more than our funny bone**

In protest to Russia's anti-gay sentiments in the lead up to the 2014 Sochi Olympics, the [Canadian Institute of Diversity and Inclusion](#) release a tongue-in-cheek [video](#) with the tagline: "The games have always been a little gay." The controversial video went viral and as of December 2014, the Institute's volunteer positions are all filled. Coincidence? We think not.

### **Celebrate fan-made content**

In 2014, our Facebook feeds were full of friends taking the [ALS Ice Bucket Challenge](#). Now, most of those videos were homemade, full of shaky cameras and unedited scripts, but what made it inspiring content was the fact that it encouraged us to tag our friends and to share our collective stories.

### **Make it a group event**

Every year hundreds of volunteers create videos highlighting the causes they are passionate about for [Project for Awesome](#). For two days in December, YouTube is flooded with these videos. Another great initiative that encourages massive groups of people to volunteer on the same day is the [Martin Luther King Day of Service](#). These type of group events make volunteering a community effort and can help bring in large numbers of volunteers.

## COMMUNICATING TO LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Whether you're connecting with current volunteers or wanting to get a message out to potential volunteers, it's important to communicate in a way that they will respond. Voice mail is out, especially for millennials. However, there's loads of other options.

### Email

From last minute updates to a weekly e-blast, use email to keep your volunteers up to date and to recruit new volunteers. Tip: Segment your email lists by subscriber status - are they a current volunteer, a potential volunteer, maybe a donor? Segmenting will help you send the right message to the right people at the right time.

### Group Texts

Voicemail might be dead but texting has taken its place. Group messaging apps like GroupMe can serve as a way to instantly communicate with a group of people. Just be wary about overloading people with texts and be selective about what you send.

### Facebook Groups

Like emails, you can post an update in a Facebook group to get information out to your volunteer base. You can also join other groups and post opportunities in your organization to recruit new volunteers.

### Blog it up!

Never underestimate the power of a good blog to keep people up to date with your organization. As well as featured stories about what you're doing, include call-outs for upcoming volunteer opportunities.

## COORDINATING VOLUNTEERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Okay, so now you've created inspiring content, recruited new volunteers and are ready to put those volunteers into action. Luckily, coordinating those volunteers has gotten a lot easier, too. There are several great tools available to fit all budget sizes.

### Google's Toolbox

Google provides several free tools that will help you simplify your volunteer process. You can use Google's Spreadsheets to keep track of schedules and contact information. These spreadsheets can be customized to be accessible and editable by anyone you choose, making them great for sharing. Google's Calendar feature can be used to create and share event details. Google Forms can also be used to collect information about when your volunteers are available.

### VolunteerSpot

If you need a more robust program to manage your volunteers and scheduling, VolunteerSpot is a great tool for automating your processes. They offer a basic level of services for free or a more featured level for a monthly subscription fee.

### Shiftboard

Another online tool that manages volunteers scheduling. Although a bit pricier than VolunteerSpot, Shiftboard will allow you to coordinate up to 50,000 volunteers.

---

There are several other tools out there that can help you organize and coordinate your volunteer staff. Do research, ask for free demos and find a solution that works best for your organization's needs, size and budget.

## ONLINE RESOURCES FOR FINDING VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

When your charity is online, you have endless resources to be found by and find volunteers. Here are a few to get you started.

### **If you are seeking a volunteer opportunity**

Go to your search engine of choice and look for volunteer opportunities in your city. Check with local organizations, such as libraries and churches. These organizations are very plugged into community needs and can help you find a place where you can give back to the community. Join social networks like [GiveGab](#), [VolunteerMatch](#), [Create The Good](#) or [Meetup](#) to find specific groups and causes looking for volunteers. If you live near Phoenix or Calgary, sign up for the beta version of GetAssist.

### **If you are seeking volunteers**

Have a rockstar social media presence where you share great content and inspiring stories. Make sure your website is search engine optimized with keywords volunteers search for. Tip: Use Google's Keyword Planner to see how a list of keywords might perform. Stay connected to your community. Partnering with local groups and businesses will help you reach a larger audience and mobilize more volunteers. If you live near Phoenix or Calgary, sign up for the beta version of GetAssist.

---

GetAssist is set to launch in July in Phoenix and Calgary and will help connect volunteers and organizations and empower them to create change in their communities and beyond. Sign up for early access & the latest updates at [GetAssist.com](https://www.getassist.com)