



REPAIR  
THE WORLD

The Engaged Congregation:  
A Guide to Volunteer  
Cultivation

This guide was originally published as a STAR Map. STAR (Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal) was a philanthropic partnership of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, and The Samuel Bronfman Foundation. It was designed to promote Jewish renewal through congregational innovation and leadership development. These guides were originally published under the auspices of STAR and, through the generosity of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Foundation, have been updated and are now distributed under license by Repair the World.

### **The Engaged Congregation Series**

This guide is one in a four-part series designed to provide synagogues with a step-by-step process of creating and maintaining a culture of volunteer engagement. Volunteer engagement is a strategy that can build a congregation's capacity beyond what staff alone can accomplish. It transforms a congregation into an engaged community in which congregants are partners in co-creating their community's future, as they serve as members, learners, volunteers, contributors, donors, participants, and passionate advocates. The four main steps to implementing a volunteer engagement initiative are addressed in these four guides:

The Engaged Congregation:  
A Guide to Creating a Volunteer Culture

The Engaged Congregation:  
A Guide to Volunteer Cultivation

The Engaged Congregation:  
A Guide to Supporting Volunteers

The Engaged Congregation:  
A Guide to Acknowledging Volunteers

The guides can be downloaded at <http://weRepair.org>

### **About the Authors**

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Ms. Friedman Fixler's client list includes STAR (Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal), Repair the World, Hostelling International, Corporation for National & Community Service, Canadian Cancer Society, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, among others in health care, animal welfare, government and culture. Jill's many articles on volunteer engagement and board development have appeared in *The Volunteer Management Review*, *Contact Magazine*, *You and Your Nonprofit: Practical Advice from the Charity Channel Professional Community*, *Nonprofit Board and Governance Review*, and *E-Volunteerism Journal*. She is the author of *Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow* and *Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Facilitator's Tool Kit*.

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Learn more at [www.jffixler.com](http://www.jffixler.com).

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# How to Use The Engaged Congregation: A Guide to Volunteer Cultivation

1

Set aside an hour to read through the material and make notes.

2

Come back a few days later with 90 minutes to 2 hours to devote to this Guide's activities.

3

Work through the contents of each section.

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4

Share results with at least one other individual at your synagogue. Brainstorm together on next steps.

5

Make it practical: Immediately try at least one new idea.

## Use this Guide to...

- Identify the right time in program planning to recruit volunteers
- Write volunteer position descriptions
- Craft recruiting messages, based on your knowledge of potential volunteers, their concerns, skills, and goals

What common thread connects the experiences of our Biblical ancestors, like Abraham and Moses? Their leadership began with a call from God and their personal relationship to God grew from that initial call. In working with volunteers, we can remember that it often only takes a call—from the rabbi, another staff member or a veteran volunteer—to initiate a relationship. Then, the challenge is to sustain that personal touch so that volunteers continue to feel that they have a unique contribution to make to their community.

Think about what motivates you to volunteer. It might be the cause, friends who are volunteering, or your desire to share your talents. Maybe you want to learn a new skill. Now think about how you became a volunteer. Your answer is most likely that someone you knew asked you.

**Most nonvolunteers report that they haven't volunteered because they've never been asked.** According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010 report, Volunteering in the United States, nearly half of all volunteers became engaged simply because they were asked, and, according to a 2001 study by the Inde-

According to the Independent Sector in the 2001 Giving and Volunteering Report, volunteers who are personally asked to participate are 38 percent more likely to volunteer. .

pendent Sector, individuals who are personally asked to participate are 38 percent more likely to volunteer (while the Independent Sector study is over a decade old, experience shows this to remain true). Despite the data from these reports, many synagogues rely exclusively on newsletters and Web site announcements to request assistance. The newsletter and the Web site are great vehicles for telling your story. However, the most effective way to recruit new volunteers is to have your existing volunteers ask them directly to donate their time and expertise. Their passion and enthusiasm will do more to convince a congregant to join them than the most well-written newsletter article or Web site announcement.

### When Is It Time to Recruit?

Ecclesiastes (3:2) tells us that "there is a time for everything under the sun: A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot." In the organizational world, there is a time to plan and a time to recruit, and careful planning contributes to successful volunteer recruitment.

In many organizations, volunteer recruitment is considered the first step in volunteer engagement. Someone in leadership or on the staff decides that an activity or program could benefit from volunteer help and immediately sets about recruiting volunteers. When the volunteers show up on the given day and time, they may experience a scramble as staff try to decide how to utilize them. Nothing is more disappointing to volunteers than to arrive at the synagogue only to be told that the organization is unprepared for them.

# Laying the Groundwork

## Write It Down

By developing high-impact volunteer assignments before you recruit, much of this disappointment can be avoided, and both the volunteer and the synagogue can get the most out of the volunteer experience.

So when is it time to recruit? Not until you have completed a needs assessment and written volunteer position descriptions for each assignment. You can learn more about needs assessments by reviewing the **Guide to Creating a Volunteer Culture**; the rest of this guide will direct you through the process of creating position descriptions, as well as the recruiting messages that will help you fill them.

A well-thought-out, well-written volunteer position description results in a high-impact volunteer assignment.

### **The volunteer position description:**

- States the desired qualifications of a potential volunteer
- Lists the responsibilities of the position
- Describes the impact and outcomes of the assignment
- Highlights the benefits to the volunteer

The volunteer position description is also your guideline for supervision, accountability, and evaluation. It ensures that when a volunteer shows up at your door, you will be ready to direct and engage her in an effective way.

Figure 1 shows a sample volunteer position description, based on the template presented in Activity 1.

Notice how the process of creating the position description immediately focuses and creates clarity around who you are looking for and what the volunteer will do.

“Go for the moon. If you don't get it, you'll still be heading for a star.”

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

# 2do:

Review Figure 1, page 4

Complete Activity 1, page 7

# Figure 1

## Sample Volunteer Position Description

# Laying the Groundwork

Use this easy-to-follow template to write good volunteer position descriptions. You'll be ready then to move to the next step: creating targeted volunteer recruitment strategies.

### Volunteer Position Description

#### Concepts to Consider

- "Volunteer" denotes who is doing the work; the position title denotes what they will be doing
- A title, in and of itself, can be a motivator or an anti-motivator for volunteer recruitment. For example: "Paper Collator" is not as captivating as "Mailing Coordinator;" "Telephone Follow-Up" is not as effective as "Volunteer Placement Counselor."

- Distill the responsibilities into three or four key areas that accurately describe what is needed (refer to your strategic plan, if necessary).
- Give prospective volunteers enough information to enable them to envision themselves in the position without feeling overwhelmed.
- Resist the temptation to put policy and procedures into the position description document.

- Impact is the difference that this activity/ volunteer assignment will make. It is important that volunteer assignments advance the mission, vision, and goals of the synagogue. For example, for the initial impact, 20 children will enjoy a monthly birthday party at the homeless shelter.
- Sustained outcome is the lasting impact on group behavior. Using the example above: The synagogue will build camaraderie and community within the membership and help homeless children envision a preferred future.
- Understanding the impact of the volunteer assignment is a huge motivator for volunteers. They want to know that what they do is both meaningful to them and will make a difference. For example, the sustained outcome of this project is to provide hope, joy, and a fun experience to homeless children who would not otherwise have a way to celebrate their birthday.

#### Title

Havdalah Chair

#### Key Responsibilities

- Recruit a minimum of four congregants for the committee.
- Develop a logic model for monthly Havdalah programming.
- Create a marketing plan to promote Havdalah programming.
- Develop and train a cadre of volunteers to conduct the service and programming.

#### Initial Impact

As a result of the monthly Havdalah programming sponsored by the synagogue, a minimum of 50 congregants will learn about the ritual while enjoying a social opportunity with other congregants..

#### Sustained Outcomes

More congregants will incorporate Havdalah into their Shabbat experience at the synagogue.

# Figure 1

## Sample Volunteer Position Description (continued)

- Volunteers want to do a good job and often worry if they will have the skills to perform the job adequately.
- Defining the level of training will help to allay any fears that volunteers might have about doing the work.
- Training is often a great motivator for volunteers who wish to gain new skills. For example: "All volunteers will receive training on current issues of homelessness," or "All volunteers will participate in a 15 hour training on providing pastoral care to congregants."
- Support defines the supervision that the volunteer will receive. For example: "Each pastoral counseling team member will meet every other month for two hours for supervision with the rabbi."

- Be as specific as you can in defining the length of time for the assignment: one time, weekly, monthly, total time commitment for the project (months, years), and the amount of time needed for the project (weekly, monthly, annually).
- Identify where the work will be done: at home, at the synagogue, off-site.
- State when the project can be done: evenings, weekends, and weekdays.
- Avoid the temptation to undersell the commitment. It is better to be realistic about the time commitment instead of volunteers becoming overwhelmed with the work and leaving their assignment before it is completed.
- The more flexible you can make the assignment, the easier it is to recruit for the position.
- Creating opportunities for family units to volunteer together is very attractive for volunteers with busy lives. This approach allows parents to spend true quality time with their children while they are serving the needs of others.

### Training and Support

#### Training

- The committee will receive training on the significance of Havdalah and creative practices of the ritual.
- Committee members will receive training on how to conduct creative Havdalah services.

#### Support

- The committee will be staffed by the Program Director and regular meetings will be scheduled by phone and/or in person monthly.

### Commitment

#### Length of Time

- The commitment is for six months minimum.

#### Amount of Time

- Meetings will be two hours in length for the first three months and an hour and a half after that

#### Evenings, weekdays, weekends

- The meetings will be the third Wednesday of the month

# Figure 1

## Sample Volunteer Position Description (continued)

- Define what you are looking for in terms of skills, behaviors and willingness to learn.
- Try not to make the qualifications so high that you will not be able to find a qualified volunteer.
- State if you have the capacity to train volunteers to do this work.

### **Qualifications**

- An interest in creating and leading Havdalah services.
- Willingness to learn about Havdalah as training is provided.
- Ability to be flexible and creative.
- Willingness to conduct services.
- Hebrew is not required.

- Define what is in it for the volunteer in terms of meeting new people, learning new skills, training, etc.
- Helping the synagogue is not a benefit; learning a new skill is a benefit.
- Think about what benefits you can offer to your volunteers that are tangible. For example, you might be able to offer discounts for programs or for gift shop purchases.
- Training is a tangible benefit for volunteers. For example: "Training is provided on database software for all administrative volunteers."

### **Benefits**

- Volunteers will receive comprehensive training on Havdalah and its historical context.
- Volunteers will learn creative ways to conduct Havdalah services.
- Each volunteer will receive a book on Havdalah.
- Volunteers will receive training on how to successfully engage volunteers.
- All volunteers in this project will be invited to participate in the annual board of directors planning retreat.

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# Activity 1

## Volunteer Position Description

# Laying the Groundwork

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### Volunteer Position Description

#### Concepts to Consider

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- Distill the responsibilities into three or four key areas that accurately describe what is needed (refer to your strategic plan, if necessary).
- Give prospective volunteers enough information to enable them to envision themselves in the position without feeling overwhelmed.
- Resist the temptation to put policy and procedures into the position description document.

#### Key Responsibilities

- Impact is the difference that this activity/ volunteer assignment will make. It is important that volunteer assignments advance the mission, vision, and goals of the synagogue. For example, for the initial impact, 20 children will enjoy a monthly birthday party at the homeless shelter.
- Sustained outcome is the lasting impact on group behavior. Using the example above: The synagogue will build camaraderie and community within the membership and help homeless children envision a preferred future.
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#### Initial Impact

# Activity 1

## Volunteer Position Description (continued)

- Volunteers want to do a good job and often worry if they will have the skills to perform the job adequately.
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- Support defines the supervision that the volunteer will receive. For example: "Each pastoral counseling team member will meet every other month for two hours for supervision with the rabbi."

### Training and Support

#### Training

#### Support

- Be as specific as you can in defining the length of time for the assignment: one time, weekly, monthly, total time commitment for the project (months, years), and the amount of time needed for the project (weekly, monthly, annually).
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- Creating opportunities for family units to volunteer together is very attractive for volunteers with busy lives. This approach allows parents to spend true quality time with their children while they are serving the needs of others.

### Commitment

#### Length of Time

#### Amount of Time

Evenings, weekdays, weekends

# Activity 1

## Volunteer Position Description (continued)

- Define what you are looking for in terms of skills, behaviors and willingness to learn.
- Try not to make the qualifications so high that you will not be able to find a qualified volunteer.
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### Qualifications

- Define what is in it for the volunteer in terms of meeting new people, learning new skills, training, etc.
- Helping the synagogue is not a benefit; learning a new skill is a benefit.
- Think about what benefits you can offer to your volunteers that are tangible. For example, you might be able to offer discounts for programs or for gift shop purchases.
- Training is a tangible benefit for volunteers. For example: "Training is provided on database software for all administrative volunteers."

### Benefits

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# Skills You Can Bank On

The difference between the forced work our ancestors performed as slaves in Egypt and the work they did as free people in the wilderness is profound. In Egypt, their work was “warm-body” labor, the kind of work that merely required many people, regardless of ability or unique contribution. On the other hand, the construction of the Mishkan required specific talents, or what the Torah calls ruah hokhmah. Moses had to match the skills needed for the task with the unique abilities of the available artisans.

These same ideas apply to congregational volunteering. While warm-body recruitment can be effective when you need a large number of volunteers and anyone will do, most of your recruiting should be focused on finding volunteers with the specific skills that each position requires. In order to focus your recruitment efforts in this way, you need to know what skills your congregants possess. During a membership interview or a skills assessment meeting, ask them which of their skills they might be willing to share and then enter that information in your database. (Check your membership database to see if it has a skills component; if not, ask a software-savvy member to design a user-friendly skills bank.) Then, when you require assistance in a certain area, you will know exactly which members to contact.

Many students have wondered why the Torah goes into such painstaking detail when describing the construction of the Mishkan, our ancestors' portable wilderness sanctuary.

Perhaps Moses gave so many details because he instinctively understood that good volunteers are entitled to supervision and preparation. Moses could have said, "Go build a good Mishkan and find me when you are finished." But such a vague instruction would have caused our ancestors to shrug their shoulders in confusion, with each one having a different vision of what constituted a "good" Mishkan. These detailed instructions, along with the personal involvement of Moses, were intended to give our ancestors all the information and support they needed to complete the task.

Think about how you like to be asked to do something for a non-profit or the synagogue. Most likely you want to be told exactly how much time will be required to fulfill the assignment. You may care about the ability to make decisions or, you may not want any decision-making responsibility. You certainly want to know where and when to show up, and how to complete tasks. And you would like to know how you will be supported in the assignment. Even deeper than these concerns, you want to know that what you do will make a difference and that you will be appreciated for your efforts. Being appreciated for your work fundamentally impacts the nature of the relationship between a volunteer and the representatives of the organization. In fact, "relationship" is a very important concept, as it reflects a major shift in the way we work with volunteers.

Traditionally, leaders of congregations and other nonprofits have talked about "recruitment" of volunteers. Recruitment is an effort directed externally and aims to find and attract individuals to fit into pre-existing jobs, designed by staff to serve organizational needs. The result of recruitment is often limited to the boundaries of that particular volunteer job. In a true culture of volunteer engagement, however, synagogue leaders and staff can be in a dynamic relationship with volunteers, one that is ever changing and has endless possibilities. Building this type of relationship is not a result of "recruitment," but rather a result of "cultivation." Cultivation is a broad process, directed as much internally (to synagogue members) as externally

(to the larger community), and aims to work with individuals already connected to the synagogue to find a good "fit" now, with significant potential for growth and change as the needs of the synagogue and of the volunteer evolve and change. Successful volunteer cultivation creates sustainable volunteer collaborations.

Successful volunteer cultivation creates sustainable volunteer collaborations.  
*Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow*

### **Invitation...or Begging?**

In the laws of giving charity or tzedakah, great emphasis is given to the dignity of recipients. The law requires that we do our utmost to avoid putting the poor in a position where they have to beg for alms. By extension, this principle has implications for working with volunteers. Just as we should not put a needy individual in the position of begging for help, we should not put ourselves in a position of begging for volunteers to help us. Pleading negatively affects a poor person's dignity and begging for volunteers lowers the dignity of the work that we do in our congregations.

# Right Message, Right Time (continued)

Typically, synagogues have engaged in begging and guilt to recruit or cultivate volunteers. When utilizing this approach, you go to the congregants who always yes, whether or not they are qualified or have an interest in the assignment. The begging/guilt method may include underestimating the time commitment required, or the amount of work involved to complete the assignment, or it may involve browbeating close friends and family members to assist you. While begging and guilt may get you volunteers, they may feel resentment or frustration afterwards. Or they may feel overwhelmed and angry once the true nature of the assignment is revealed to them. A begging/guilt conversation may go something like this:

"Rachel, I am so glad I caught you on the phone. I am just desperate for some help with baking for the Purim Carnival. It won't take a lot of time and I don't know whom else to ask. I am just swamped trying to get volunteers to help this year. It is so much more difficult than I thought it would be. I know that I can count on you. It is no big deal. Really, we just need six dozen hamentashen by the day after tomorrow. All you have to do is drop the hamentashen off at the shul!"

There is an alternative to begging that is not only effective in volunteer recruitment, but builds trust between staff and volunteers and encourages people to give of themselves again and again.

## Strategic Messaging— An Effective Alternative to Begging

A strategic approach to asking for help enables you to identify and invite **exactly the right volunteer for exactly the right assignment**. It enables you to make a timely and respectful invitation that acknowledges and even honors the unique contribution of the individual.

The Torah refers to God's teachings as both "storms" and "showers." According to several commentaries, these dual references suggest that because students learn differently from one another, they require multiple educational methods. Similarly, strategic messaging requires us to target our messages to specific recipients. The more targeted our recruitment is to the congregants who will find the assignment interesting and appealing, the greater our opportunity for success. As it says in Proverbs (15:23), "How good is a rightly-time word!"

To lay a strong foundation for strategic messaging, take time to establish what your synagogue is working towards in terms of its culture of volunteer engagement (review the Guide to Creating a Volunteer Culture).

Review the information in Figure 2, which illustrates by example what a volunteer recruiting messaging process can help you create. Then complete the worksheet that will help you craft your own strategic messages. Consider again the above example, and contrast it to what a strategic recruitment request might sound like for the same situation:

"Rachel, I enjoyed Shabbat dinner with you last Friday. You are such a wonderful cook. I am baking for the Purim Carnival this year and I am asking the best bakers in the congregation to see if they would help with baking for the Purim Carnival in six weeks. The sisterhood would appreciate a commitment from each baker of six dozen hamentashen. You can bake them any time before the carnival and we will freeze them until we need them. If you can't drop them off at the shul, I will be happy to get them from you the next time our kids carpool to Hebrew School. We are asking each baker to write their favorite Purim recipe on a 3x 5 card so that we can create a Purim recipe file for all of the bakers as our thank you for helping. We would love to have you participate. Do you think you could help us make the Purim carnival very hamish this year instead of using store-bought goods?"

# Right Message, Right Time (continued)

In this request, we have outlined a flexible way for the volunteer to participate in a time frame that is respectful of her existing time commitments. We identified a benefit of volunteering. And we made it clear we were making the request based on the potential volunteer's expertise and skills. Most important, we have identified why this activity is important and the impact it will have.

Be sure to train cultivation volunteers in developing messages for successful cultivation. Help them understand the reasons that a particular assignment needs to be done, and how the volunteer assignment will help the synagogue. Message design can be done in a quick meeting or over the telephone. Rick Lynch and Steve McCurly, authors of *Volunteer Management*,

recommend the following steps in developing effective messaging:

- Focus on the reason the assignment needs to be done. What needs can be met or what problem needs solving?
- Identify how the volunteer assignment will help.
- Address the fears and concerns of the potential volunteers and explain the next steps.
- Build in a feedback loop for the recruiters so that there is follow-up on every contact made.
- Send an email confirming what the volunteer has agreed to do.

*(Adapted from Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community, by Steve McCurly and Rick Lynch, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996).*

2do:

Review Figure 2, page 14

Complete Activity 2, page 17

# Figure 2

## Sample Developing Effective Cultivation Messages

Examine each position description. Identify who might be able to accomplish this task. Design the recruitment message based on need, solution, fears/questions, benefits, and next steps.

<p>Identify in one or two short sentences the problem or need that will be addressed by volunteers. For example, "Design a risk management assessment for the synagogue."</p>	<p>What is the job that needs to be done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop creative and innovative monthly Havdalah services to complement other synagogue programming.</li> </ul>
<p>State how volunteers will have an impact on this problem, issue or program. For example: "By conducting a thorough risk management assessment the board of directors and staff will know the necessary next steps in protecting the congregation from liability."</p>	<p>How will volunteers help to address this problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers will create and initiate creative Havdalah services.</li> </ul>
<p>Knowing your perfect match or potential target will help you design appealing messages. By reviewing the responsibilities, qualifications, and benefits of the position, you should be able to determine your target candidate. For example, for the risk management assessment, logical candidates are congregants who are business executives who routinely conduct risk assessments or insurance brokers who recommend insurance coverage to their clients based on risk.</p> <p>Examine who is currently volunteering and look at previous volunteers to identify their professions, experience, training and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you identify any congregants who might like to do this to learn new skills?</li> <li>• Are there congregants who would like to do this assignment as a change of pace from where they regularly work or volunteer?</li> </ul>	<p>Who would want to do the job that needs to be done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Congregants who have already made Havdalah a significant part of their Shabbat experience</li> <li>• Youth who are wanting to explore different kinds of Shabbat experiences</li> <li>• Congregants who wish to learn more about Havdalah</li> </ul>

(Adapted from *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996).

# Figure 2

## Sample Developing Effective Cultivation Messages (continued)

<p>Your current volunteers are your best resource. Ask every volunteer, committee chairman, and board member for recommendations for potential volunteers. And ask them if they would be willing to do the recruiting for you. Be sure that they are clear about messaging and follow up.</p>	<p>Where will you find them?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The religious school</li> <li>• Shabbat services</li> <li>• Youth group</li> <li>• New members</li> <li>• Chaverot and/or study groups</li> </ul>
<p>Always anticipate the concerns of potential volunteers. They might be concerned about not knowing what to do or they may be afraid that they will make a mistake. What will the potential volunteer need to know to say yes to the request?</p>	<p>Fears and Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education is provided about Havdalah and how to conduct Havdalah services</li> <li>• The synagogue has resources on existing creative Havdalah services</li> <li>• Volunteers do not need previous experience with creating or conducting Havdalah services</li> </ul>
<p>With targeted recruitment, it is important to create a message that will work for the volunteer. You will definitely have a different message for a CPA you are asking to review your audit recommendations than you would for the Purim Carnival baker. The baker might be interested in making the Purim Carnival special for his grandchildren, while the CPA might have a commitment to pro bono work. Again, the most effective way to recruit is face-to-face in a dialogue or conversation.</p>	<p>How should you communicate with prospective volunteers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations with congregants who are already participating in programming</li> <li>• Through the leadership of the youth group</li> <li>• Discussion with Chaverah and study group leadership</li> </ul>
<p>What would volunteers doing this assignment want to get out of it? Are they interested in learning new skills, meeting new congregants, keeping up their skills, seeing a project through to completion, or having an impact on decision-making?</p> <p>Once you have identified what is in it for the volunteers, it is easier to craft a message that they can hear and respond to. Potential volunteers will immediately recognize that they have the skills and interest in the offer and are more likely to make a commitment to this personal request than an impersonal advertisement in the newsletter.</p>	<p>What are the motivational needs of your potential volunteers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To share their knowledge and enjoyment of the Havdalah ritual</li> <li>• To learn about Havdalah</li> <li>• To learn how to develop creative and innovative services</li> </ul>

# Figure 2

## Sample Developing Effective Cultivation Messages (continued)

An effective recruitment message begins by identifying the reasons why a volunteer is needed and the impact that the volunteer will have. Describe the assignment in one or two short sentences. Include information on the time commitment and location of the assignment and identify what the benefits are for the volunteer. Finally, tell them how to follow up and get involved.

Some examples are:

- Share the experience of a lifetime as the middle school youth group advisor. Help our youth have a positive Jewish identity, share great social and Jewish experiences, and learn leadership skills. In just three hours a week you can make a difference by sharing your leadership and organizational skills with our teens. Enjoy a variety of great events from camping to broom ball. Training on strategies and techniques of working effectively with adolescents is a benefit. Supervision from our youth Rabbi is provided. Call Mark Berman, Temple Program Director at 555-3366 or email [mb@ourschul.org](mailto:mb@ourschul.org) today for more details.
- The hero we are looking for is you! For just three hours a month you can make a difference by serving meals at the Ronald McDonald House social action project. Bring your whole family and have fun with great volunteers while making a difference for the families of sick children. All volunteers receive a monthly gift certificate at Goldberg's Kosher Deli. Carpooling to the downtown location is available. Call Julie Schwartz, Social Action Chairman at 555-6622 or email her at [js@oursynagogue.org](mailto:js@oursynagogue.org).
- You are the key to our success! Without volunteers we cannot produce our monthly newsletter. Whether you are a writer, photographer, editor or cartoonist, the Schmooze can use your expertise. If you always wanted to learn how to produce a newsletter, training is available from our expert editorial staff. For as little as two hours a month and from the comfort of your own home, you can make a difference by keeping our congregants informed. Don't wait, call Ted Grossman, Schmooze editor at 555-3322 or email him at [tgross@personalemail.com](mailto:tgross@personalemail.com).

Your message:

- Make time. Make a difference. And make friends while creating and implementing innovative Havdalah services at the synagogue. Volunteers will learn about the history and significance of Havdalah as well as how to conduct a Havdalah service. No Hebrew experience necessary. Don't wait; contact the Programming Director today to be involved in this exciting new project!

Don't forget to include the program director's name, phone number, and email address.

# Activity 2

## Developing Effective Cultivation Messages

# Right Message, Right Time

Examine each position description. Identify who might be able to accomplish this task. Design the cultivation message based on need, solution, fears/questions, benefits and next steps.

<p>Identify in one or two short sentences the problem or need that will be addressed by volunteers. For example, "Design a risk management assessment for the synagogue."</p>	<p>What is the job that needs to be done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>State how volunteers will have an impact on this problem, issue or program. For example: "By conducting a thorough risk management assessment the board of directors and staff will know the necessary next steps in protecting the congregation from liability."</p>	<p>How will volunteers help to address this problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p>Knowing your perfect match or potential target will help you design appealing messages. By reviewing the responsibilities, qualifications, and benefits of the position, you should be able to determine your target candidate. For example, for the risk management assessment, logical candidates are congregants who are business executives who routinely conduct risk assessments or insurance brokers who recommend insurance coverage to their clients based on risk.</p> <p>Examine who is currently volunteering and look at previous volunteers to identify their professions, experience, training and education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you identify any congregants who might like to do this to learn new skills?</li> <li>• Are there congregants who would like to do this assignment as a change of pace from where they regularly work or volunteer?</li> </ul>	<p>Who would want to do the job that needs to be done?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

*(Adapted from Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community, by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1996).*

# Activity 2

## Developing Effective Cultivation Messages (continued)

<p>Your current volunteers are your best resource. Ask every volunteer, committee chairman, and board member for recommendations for potential volunteers. And ask them if they would be willing to do the recruiting for you. Be sure that they are clear about messaging and follow up.</p>	<p>Where will you find them?</p>
<p>Always anticipate the concerns of potential volunteers. They might be concerned about not knowing what to do or they may be afraid that they will make a mistake. What will the potential volunteer need to know to say yes to the request?</p>	<p>Fears and Questions:</p>
<p>With targeted recruitment, it is important to create a message that will work for the volunteer. You will definitely have a different message for a CPA you are asking to review your audit recommendations than you would for the Purim Carnival baker. The baker might be interested in making the Purim Carnival special for his grandchildren, while the CPA might have a commitment to pro bono work. Again, the most effective way to recruit is face-to-face in a dialogue or conversation.</p>	<p>How should you communicate with prospective volunteers?</p>
<p>What would volunteers doing this assignment want to get out of it? Are they interested in learning new skills, meeting new congregants, keeping up their skills, seeing a project through to completion, or having an impact on decision-making? Once you have identified what is in it for the volunteers, it is easier to craft a message that they can hear and respond to. Potential volunteers will immediately recognize that they have the skills and interest in the offer and are more likely to make a commitment to this personal request than an impersonal advertisement in the newsletter.</p>	<p>What are the motivational needs of your potential volunteers?</p>

# Activity 2

## Developing Effective Cultivation Messages (continued)

An effective recruitment message begins by identifying the reasons why a volunteer is needed and the impact that the volunteer will have. Describe the assignment in one or two short sentences. Include information on the time commitment and location of the assignment and identify what the benefits are for the volunteer. Finally, tell them how to follow up and get involved. Some examples are:

- Share the experience of a lifetime as the middle school youth group advisor. Help our youth have a positive Jewish identity, share great social and Jewish experiences, and learn leadership skills. In just three hours a week you can make a difference by sharing your leadership and organizational skills with our teens. Enjoy a variety of great events from camping to broom ball. Training on strategies and techniques of working effectively with adolescents is a benefit. Supervision from our youth Rabbi is provided. Call Mark Berman, Temple Program Director at 555-3366 or email [mb@ourschul.org](mailto:mb@ourschul.org) today for more details.
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- You are the key to our success! Without volunteers we cannot produce our monthly newsletter. Whether you are a writer, photographer, editor or cartoonist, the Schmooze can use your expertise. If you always wanted to learn how to produce a newsletter, training is available from our expert editorial staff. For as little as two hours a month and from the comfort of your own home, you can make a difference by keeping our congregants informed. Don't wait, call Ted Grossman, Schmooze editor at 555-3322 or email him at [tgross@personalemail.com](mailto:tgross@personalemail.com).

Your message:

# Putting All the Pieces Together

# Plan the Outcome You Want

The Mishna, an early collection of Jewish law, teaches us that prayer requires spiritual intent and that one who merely recites the words without taking them to heart has not truly prayed. Genuine prayer takes special effort and intent, and the same goes for volunteer recruitment. Investing time, thought, and a part of yourself in reaching a new volunteer is rewarding both for the one asking for help and the one being asked.

Cultivating volunteers takes so much more than picking up the phone and calling the people who never learned to say "no." Volunteer cultivation calls on many areas of the synagogue to come together in a focused, thoughtful way.

With a detailed plan in place for specific assignments as well as the synagogue's volunteer needs overall, you can make decisions about priorities and approaches, as well as evaluate how well you are doing. Use Activity 3 to lay out what your own plan might look like, taking into consideration:

- **Priorities.** Most synagogues do not have unlimited resources for recruiting and supporting volunteers. Determine which assignments must be filled this year, and which might be able to wait.
- **Synchronization of Effort.** Make sure departments, programs, and individuals are communicating clearly about volunteer needs, resources, and recruiting so that you are not duplicating efforts... or inadvertently targeting the same prospects for multiple assignments.
- **Technology.** If you do not yet have a skills data bank, now is the time to develop one; it makes the process of identifying prospects and tracking participation much easier and more effective.
- **Messaging.** Craft clear, volunteer-specific and focused recruiting messages.
- **Volunteer Leadership.** Identify one or more volunteer leaders who can take ownership of the recruiting process.
- **Documentation and Acknowledgement.** Strategize on how you will tell the volunteer story in all synagogue communications as well as honor volunteer contributions.
- **Evaluation.** At least annually, review your recruiting efforts to determine what is working, what could be tweaked, and where the upcoming needs may be.

## 2do:

Complete Activity 3, page 21

# Activity 3

## Creating a Cultivation Plan That Works

Once you have written position descriptions and crafted your messages, you are ready to design and implement a strategic cultivation plan. Cultivation may take place on an ongoing and as-needed basis. To create your plan, consider the following:

<p><b>Priorities</b> Which assignments are the highest priorities based on the synagogue's strategic plan, as well as the goals and objectives set by the Board of Directors?</p>	<p>List your highest priorities here:</p>	
<p><b>Synchronization of Effort</b> Periodic meetings and communication between all programs and auxiliaries regarding volunteer requirements and resources prevent duplication of effort. Ask all those involved with recruiting and supervising volunteers to complete and share position descriptions so that everyone is on the lookout for the right individuals to fill those positions.</p>	<p>List the individuals who need to be involved with the discussion</p>	
	<p>Individuals who interact with volunteers:</p>	<p>Volunteer resources they have used:</p>
<p><b>Technology</b> Technology that supports your volunteer recruiting efforts makes everyone's job easier. Does your membership database support a field or fields for skills and volunteer interests? If not, ask a member with the appropriate skills to design a simple system for logging and tracking volunteer skills. Compare any current needs with entries in the database.</p>	<p>List your current technology capabilities here:</p>	
<p><b>Messaging</b> Design a compelling message for each volunteer assignment.</p>	<p>List messages that may work:</p>	

# Activity 3

## Creating a Cultivation Plan That Works (continued)

### Volunteer Captains

A vital volunteer role involves cultivation volunteers! Support these key individuals by:

- Selecting them on the basis of skill and interest (as you would for any volunteer assignment).
- Supporting them with training in how to identify, approach, and work with volunteers.
- Enhancing their effectiveness by training them on volunteer messages—and improve your overall recruiting by listening to their feedback on what prospective volunteers want and need to hear.

List your potential volunteer captains here:

### Documentation and Acknowledgement

Rely on your volunteer captains, program chairs, staff and lay leaders to find and document success stories, the impact of volunteer efforts on both synagogue and volunteer, and the many creative ways congregants find to bring their skills to the synagogue. Don't forget to look for photo opportunities...

Places and ways to share volunteer stories:

- Web site, blogs, and other social media sites
- Newsletter (perhaps a regular volunteer profile)
- All collateral materials
- Annual meeting
- Volunteer recognition event(s)
- Member-to-member events
- Sermons
- Aliyah opportunities
- Bimah announcements
- Other ideas:

# Activity 3

## Creating a Cultivation Plan That Works (continued)

### Evaluation

At least once a year, evaluate the efficacy of your recruiting efforts. Ask the following questions:

- Were there any volunteer assignments we were not able to fill? Why?
- Were there any placed volunteers who did not work out? Why?
- Which programs and/or events have the greatest need for volunteers? Do we cultivate with enough lead-time to enable a respectful ask?
- Which programs and/or events might benefit from a greater volunteer presence? Who needs to be involved in the discussion for making that happen?
- Which volunteer cultivation methods were most effective? Least effective?
- Are volunteers satisfied with their assignments, and do they feel effective in their roles? Why or why not?
- Do staff and lay leaders feel they have the support and training they need to supervise and maximize volunteers?
- Are we cultivating potential board members, project managers, volunteer team captains, and other leaders within our growing pool of volunteers?

# Planning— and Cultivating— for Success

# Joyful Volunteers

If you've completed the activities in this Guide, you may now have a better appreciation for why volunteer cultivation needs to take place after you have identified needs, designed high-impact volunteer assignments, and planned for how you will manage the volunteer resource. This strategic approach to recruiting requires more planning on the part of the synagogue, but it is an investment that brings great returns. When volunteers are respected and well-matched to their tasks, not only is the synagogue more productive, but the stage is set for more empowering and joyful relationships within the synagogue community.

Ivdu et Ado-nai b'simhah,  
bo'u l'fanav birnana—  
Serve God with joy, appear "before  
the Holy One with delight.  
—Psalms (100:2).  
Volunteering in the synagogue  
can be a great source  
of joy and personal meaning.

## Additional Resources

### Further reading and resources in volunteer engagement:

- *Volunteer Management Audit*, by Susan J. Ellis. Energize, Inc.
- *Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow*, by Jill Friedman Fixler and Sandie Eichberg, with Gail Lorenz. VolunteerMatch. Book and webinars.
- *Boomer Volunteer Engagement: Facilitators Tool Kit*, by Jill Friedman Fixler and Beth Steinhorn. VolunteerMatch. Book and webinars.
- *Building Sacred Community: Volunteers in Your Congregation*, by the Union for Reform Judaism. Book and webinars.
- Independent Sector [www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)
- *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing all the Resources of the Community*, by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch
- *The Volunteer Recruitment (and Membership Development) Book*, by Susan J. Ellis. Energize, Inc.
- *You Don't Have To Do It Alone: How to Involve Others to Get Things Done*, by Richard H. Axelrod, Emily M. Axelrod, Julie Beedon, and Robert W. Jacobs