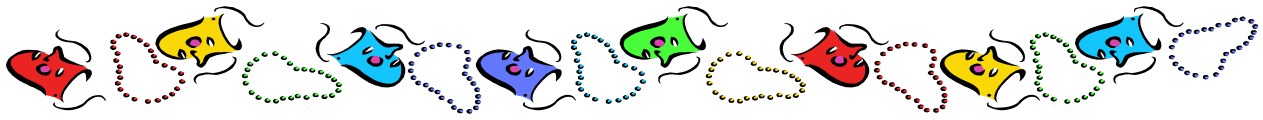


# Hook, Line & Sinker: Effective Volunteer Recruitment at Fairs & Festivals



## Business perspectives on trade and consumer shows

- There is potential in every contact.
- People are interested in what you have to offer, they just don't know it yet.
- Requires active stance

## Non-profit perspectives on festivals, fairs,

- Since we do good things, people *should already* be interested in what we do.
- Justifies passive stance

## How to get the most out of festivals & fairs

### 1. Getting into the proper mindset

You are asking for an *investment of time* – maybe only a few minutes, or maybe several hours a week. People have multiple competitors for their time. How are you going to show yourself worthy of their investment of time?

### Who is at the venue? Why are they here?

Example: At a shopping mall

What are your competitors?

- The stores
- The other booths
- Sales booths (e.g. selling credit cards, cell phones)
- The thoughts in the person's head
- Everything else they have to do today

*Exercise: Think about the last time you were walking in a mall. Put yourself back into that space, the lights, the sounds, the people around you. Remember what you were in the mall for. Now, write down all the thoughts going through your mind as you walked through the mall.*

### ***Sample of the thoughts running through your head in the mall...***

*...almost out of gas so better remember to fill up, hm, the nearest gas station is across the street, but I hate turning in there. Maybe I should go to the Petro Can. Oh, that's a nice dress. On sale!. I don't really have time to try it on, do I? Well, maybe, nah. I'd better get going. Have to make dinner at home. Do I need anything? Maybe we're out of milk. I'll pick some up. I could use a coffee, maybe a Cinnabon. I'd better work out this weekend...*

### **This means...**

- Choosing not to stop is perfectly natural and not a personal rejection.
- Given the busy pace of life, it is amazing how many people do want to stop and share a few minutes of human interaction with you.

### **Who are you? Why are you here?**

- This activity is a key part of showing off your amazing organization.
- People who choose to volunteer for you have rich, satisfying experiences that others walking by would like to have (they just don't know it yet).
- Many people would want to volunteer with your organization if they truly understood the experience they would have.

### **Paying Attention**

The proper mindset is ATTENTIVE.

Your goal is to get people to PAUSE.

### **What to watch for**

Subtle signs of interest or curiosity, like eyes flicking your way, a slight pause or slow down in pace, a body turning your direction.

### **Pulling people in from a stream**

A lion will separate out an zebra that looks a bit different so that they can focus on that ONE creature in a group. Target ONE person at a time until you make contact. Don't worry about the ones that flow on by; there will always be another one down the stream.

### **Targeting couples**

Remember the last time you were with a significant other and were asked if you could come out to dinner, to the movies, etc. What was the first thing you did? Look at one another! In pulling people in to your table, you can take advantage of the "couple pause" to make a connection. It's harder to dismiss or ignore a request if you have to check with another person



first, and in a charitable setting, often neither will want to look uncaring in front of the other. If ONE is interested, both will stay and listen.

---

## 2. Breaking the Ice / Setting the Hook

*The difference between “we are complete strangers” and “I’ve know you for years” can be **30 seconds**.*

Once you get the pause, it’s up to you to turn it into a CONNECTION, by showing this person you are a friendly and pleasant person they would quite enjoy talking to for a few minutes.

**WHEN YOU’RE BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP,  
YOU ARE SELLING YOURSELF FIRST.**

### Inviting the Person

What do you notice about the person that stands out, that you can ask about or mention?

- Things you can compliment (nice scarf, funky hat)
- Things that stand out (carrying a lot of books)
- Things likely true about person (one their way to class, in the nursing department)

### Shared Experiences

- Wow, did you see that hail storm?
- It sure is busy here today.

### Humour

What is funny about the situation?

---

## 3. Hook to line – building a PERSONAL CONNECTION

Once you’ve got someone’s attention, you want to keep it on YOU, not refer them to a piece of paper. Volunteer engagement is about building a relationship, and this is your chance to get a potentially long and mutually satisfying one off to a great start.

### *Investigating their experience*

Does your issue have a personal connection to the person you’re talking to?

Remember to LISTEN – don’t cut off someone and don’t “just finish your sentence”



Have they volunteered before?

What's got them interested in volunteering **now**?

- personal interest (flexible to person's diverse interests)
- required by school (highly determined by school program)
- free time to kill
- wants to meet people
- wants to have new experiences
- was helped by the organization (specific to organization)

### *Sharing your own experience*

What moves you about the organization's work?

What stories do you have about how the organization helps community?

I volunteer here, here, here – why do *I* volunteer?

### **Working with a Partner**

If you are using these techniques, your table WILL be busy, *and a busy table does half your work for you*. But people will only pause for a second or two before moving on, so your partner needs to be ready to catch the ones you can't!

- play to each others strengths
- don't both be talking to the same person
- no clumping!

## **4. Taking the Time to Make Good Matches**

Not everyone you talk to will be a good fit for your organization, but if you get someone into a volunteer role, they may come back to you or refer others to you in the future. It's worth it to pass people along to better-fit organizations, even to walk them over and introduce them to another organization personally. Karma works!

## **5. Using Gimmicks - Audio-Visuals / Gifts / Free Pens / Raffles**

- No replacement for personal connection
- Limited use in initiating contact; people come for the gift and listen out of "politeness" (which means they are not really listening at all).
- Great to seal the deal (a parting goodwill gesture)



---

## 6. FOLLOW-UP while the iron is hot

- Set aside time in the week after the event to make phone calls & set meetings
- Email is okay, but call whenever possible



*The Enemy Of Good Table Work Is Apathy*



Some typical bad table habits:

- Staying behind the table (it's safer here from the scary **people!**)
- Having the chairs behind the table, not in front for passers by to sit on
- Talking to your table partner
- Talking on our cell phone
- Looking bored
- Reading, knitting, "multi-tasking"
- Not making eye contact
- Not initiating contact
- Ignoring people looking at your literature
- Directing people to sign the clip board
- Talking to friends who walk by
- Spending a lot of time visiting other organizations