

# THE Funding Edge

Dedicated to your fundraising success



Brought to you by: **auctionpay**

## Volunteers

SUMMER 2009

### Building Relationships with "Professional Volunteers"

Some of the best and brightest volunteers are skilled individuals who regularly volunteer through their workplace, usually with a group of friends or associates. I call these special people "professional volunteers". Do you know what makes them want to sign up year after year for certain events? Have you asked them about best practices they have seen exhibited at other events? Do you treat them with gratitude or as second-class help?

Volunteers are not paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless.

Instead of a "one-night stand", think of these volunteers as potential partners because they are in effect an extension of their employer. Their companies encourage volunteerism as part of their role as good corporate citizens, empowering their employees to contribute to the local community.



How these employees rate their volunteer experience with you—as poor, average or exceptional—and how they communicate that rating to their employer significantly affects their involvement, and their company's involvement, with you next year. Good or bad, benefit events are a reflection on nonprofits and the companies that sponsor them. A good experience is a statement on your relationship-strengthening skills, respect for your donors, and stewardship patterns. Exceptional volunteer experiences can persuade a company to consider event sponsorship, ask for a tour to see your mission in action, or invite you to talk to their employees about your program and ask for donations of time and money.

What do corporate volunteers say is important to them?

(continued on next page)

**Good organization.**

- Have you pre-determined how volunteers can help you to have a successful event and prepared accordingly?
- Is their introduction to your event a calm, positive environment, with things running smoothly? Or is it a chaotic first impression?

**Good communication and training.**

- It is essential to have clear written instructions and a physical sample of any assembly tasks (goodie bags, registration packets, etc.).
- Be sure that volunteers are thoroughly prepared for their event assignments.
- Initiate some role-playing; walk them through the process several times.
- Stay with them until you are confident they understand how you want the task done.

**Good support.**

- Be sure you have all the tools, equipment and supplies that volunteers will need to accomplish their assigned tasks.
- Check back with them periodically to see if there is anything they need.
- Respond promptly to questions and concerns.

**Good use of resources.**

- Schedule an appropriate number of volunteers for each time slot and divide them into teams to work on specific tasks.
- Assign a committee member or staff member to welcome them, orient them and get them started on their assigned tasks. Put a label with the name and cell phone number of this supervisor on the back of their name tag in case they have questions.
- Do not allow other volunteers and staff to give them conflicting assignments.
- Acknowledge and appreciate their special talents and skills; put the right people in the right place.

**Good manners.**

- Treat each volunteer with respect.
- Sincerely thank them for coming to help make this critical fundraiser a success for your clients/constituency.
- Set up a volunteer work area where they can perform their tasks without being in the way of other set-up functions, where they can access beverages and light snacks without having to ask, and where they can store their personal belongings.
- Provide them with a name badge holder that identifies them by name as an event volunteer. Hint: volunteers especially appreciate the holders on lanyards that do not damage clothing and can securely accommodate a key, credit card or cash, and a (validated) parking ticket!

### Good stewardship.

- Along with a hand-written thank-you, preferably from your clients, include an invitation to the post-event celebration party.
- Ask volunteers to fill out a brief evaluation when they check out at the end of their shift with recommendations for what you could have done better and if they would like to serve on the committee next year.
- Send a thank-you with photos and a list of volunteers to the company CEO.

How a person feels is more important than what you know. No matter what, make your volunteers look good, and they'll feel good!

*Kathy P. MacNaughton, CFRE, is President and CEO of KMAC & Associates. She can be reached by calling (210) 497-8998 or emailing [info@kmacandassociates.com](mailto:info@kmacandassociates.com).*

[\[ Go to our Website \]](#)   [\[ back to top menu \]](#)

The logo for auctionpay, featuring the word "auctionpay" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "i" in "auction" has a small orange dot above it. The logo is positioned on the right side of a dark blue footer bar.

13221 SW 68th Parkway  
Suite 460  
Portland, OR 97223

(503) 597-0378  
(800) 276-5992

[info@auctionpay.com](mailto:info@auctionpay.com)  
[auctionpay.com](http://auctionpay.com)