

[News and Hot Topics](#) » What Volunteer Recruiters Can Learn from

#GivingTuesday

What Volunteer Recruiters Can Learn from #GivingTuesday

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

November

2016

Did you know that Tuesday, November 29, 2016 is [GivingTuesday](#) (often written out with the hashtag as “#GivingTuesday”)? Here’s how it’s presented on their Web site:

#GIVINGTUESDAY *#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving fueled by the power of social media and collaboration.*

Celebrated on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving (in the U.S.) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday kicks off the charitable season, when many focus on their holiday and end-of-year giving.

What’s especially interesting is that GivingTuesday uses this tag line: **Help others through the gift of your time, donations, goods or your voice.**

Despite this wide definition of “giving,” in practice, most participating organizations really mean **fundraising**. In its useful Web resource, #GivingTuesday 2016: How To Plan A Successful Fundraising Campaign, CauseVox explains:

Five years ago, the 92 Street Y in NYC and the United Nations Foundation wondered how they could bring back the spirit of giving to the holiday season and cut through all the extra noise. So they created GivingTuesday, a one-day annual movement focused just on charitable giving. In its fourth year, GivingTuesday saw the biggest increase in donations yet, growing from \$45.6 million in online donations in 2014 to a whopping \$116.4 million in 2015....

No one reading this Hot Topic will be surprised in the least that yet another campaign about philanthropic giving emphasizes donated money over donated time. And, since both Black Friday and Cyber Monday are commercial shopping events, it’s logical to piggyback a different way to spend money as the “hook” of GivingTuesday. Quite clever, really.

Capitalize on GivingTuesday

Since this is a campaign focused on growing support for good causes and since it encourages the “gift of time” as one form of support, leaders of volunteers need no one’s permission to get involved. For example:

- Check whether your organization’s development office is already planning fundraising outreach on November 29. If so, propose that they add messages about volunteer opportunities to their messages, too. Maybe together you can review the CauseVox information on how to run a #GivingTuesday campaign. There’s a free guide you can download, too (go to the CauseVox website and search for Giving Tuesday-- they change the ebook signup each year).
- Even if your organization is not going to do anything for GivingTuesday, you can still learn from the above resources since volunteer recruitment is closely aligned with fundraising techniques. And you can, at a minimum, create social media messages, bulletin board displays, and other communication tools along the lines of:

November 29th is #GivingTuesday. After you’ve eaten turkey and shopped for holiday gifts, express your philanthropic side! Give the gift of your time to make a difference in.....

- Join forces with other volunteer resources managers and staff a booth in the local shopping center/mall advertising volunteer opportunities. The sentiment above should resonate well there. Just be sure that your signage uses the #GivingTuesday branding so that you connect this booth to an international event. That way you can catch the attention of anyone who has seen mention of the campaign in other places.

All of this is an example of one of the most important tools available to recruiters of volunteers: *piggybacking*.

The Art of Piggybacking

To be sure I’m communicating to everyone, *piggybacking* is defined as jumping on someone’s back and letting that person carry you to a destination. In this context, it means identifying an event, activity, or campaign being run by some other organization, business, or sponsor on which you can capitalize. You make use of the existing newsworthiness of the event to focus attention on your cause or campaign, too. The idea is to attract people to you with less effort because others have put the energy and resources into gathering like-minded individuals. Note this is not competition nor in any way unfair practice. In fact, your piggybacking activities back the pre-existing event. That’s what the ideas in the previous section were all about. It’s win-win.



But there are so many opportunities all the time to piggyback. Mainly it requires keeping your eyes open and using your imagination. You are trying to find a “hook” with which you can turn someone’s attention to an event towards your volunteer needs. Here are a few ideas to spark your thinking, whether or not you would want to pursue the possible activity.

Bad News into Something Good

If there is a natural disaster or terrible world event which is dominating the news, position your cause as an antidote to bad feelings. Given how Americans are feeling about the looming presidential elections, I could see a number of organizations making pitches such as:

- Can’t stand the news right now? (Or, “refuse to answer your phone to avoid another political robo-call?”) We can promise you a few blessedly television- and telephone-free hours whenever you spend some time [*visiting with our residents...helping our students with their homework,,,quietly shelving books...*].
- The pictures on the news are frightening our [*residents/students/ families....*]. How about you? Let’s laugh instead! We need volunteers to participate in “fun hours” – read a funny book to a child [*show old funny movies and give out popcorn to our residents....*]....

Mass Media Frenzy

As I write this, the United States is in the midst of an historic Baseball World Series including the Chicago Cubs team. For any organization that can link itself to the word “cubs,” this could have proven a great chance to get publicity. Cub Scouts or any animal-focused settings are an easy connection. But synonyms for *cubs* include *novices, beginners, learners*. Could you have worked something into your recruitment such as:

- Supporting the Cubs? Our young students are cubs, too! Support them as a mentor....

Community Events

Check local newspapers and community Web sites for public events such as health fairs, flea markets, neighborhood block parties, free outdoor concerts, and the like. Check with the organizers to see if you can have a table or booth at the event. But only do this if you can piggyback effectively and reach people who are truly prospective volunteers for you. Then make your signage reflect the connection:

- Do you know what you can be a part of just across the street?
- Keeping yourself healthy? We can help you exercise without paying gym fees! Become a coach...
- Love food? So do our seniors. Join our lunch-with-a-friend program.

You can’t invite someone to volunteer if you don’t get their attention first. Refine your skills in the art of piggybacking and you’ll get your message across much more effectively. With less work on your

part and a fighting chance to communicate with people who are predisposed to want to learn what you do.

I'd love to hear how **you** have practiced piggybacking as a recruitment tool. Please share your stories below! Meanwhile, happy GivingTuesday!

Related Topics: [Fundraising](#) | [Recruitment](#) | [Social Media and Internet Technology](#) | [Image of Volunteering](#)

Comments from Readers

Submitted on November 3rd, 2016

Jennifer Simmons, Volunteer Coordinator, Crittenton Centers, Washburn, IL, United States

Great info. Would like to receive more.

Thanks for all you do.

Best,
Jennifer

Submitted on November 7th, 2016

Anonymous, Newport, KY, USA

Thanks for the very relevant information always!

Submitted on November 14th, 2016

Susan J Ellis, Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, USA

Hildy Gottlieb of Creating the Future has a great commentary on Giving Tuesday that offers yet another perspective on how to make the most of the day: "[The Real Potential of Giving Tuesday](#)." See what you think.

Submitted on January 20th, 2017

Stephen Holland, Volunteer Coordinator, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Atlanta, United States

Love your articles, Susan! Thank you!

Submitted on January 21st, 2017

Susan J Ellis, Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, USA

And thank you for posting, Stephen!

PRIVACY STATEMENT

Energize, a program of Adisa <https://adisagroup.com/>

Follow us   

Copyright © 1997-2025