

Utilizing My Board Members & Volunteers to the Max!



Having more than 30 years of experience being on and working with nonprofit boards, volunteers and conferences, I have these observations:

- ✓ It's difficult to get people to help with a conference. They sign up – but they don't always show up.
- ✓ The tasks they are assigned are not the best fit for their skills and interests – or for your organization.
- ✓ They will and can only give you so many hours (usually about 20) from the time they begin until the conference. That's it – no more time than that. And, that's based on their availability and not your need.
- ✓ We expected more. They only give 20 but the guilt makes it feel like 120. Tension arises. They say "never again". You have to recruit every year.

Let's examine some examples:

Work To Be Done	Who Signs Up	What Should Happen
Get sponsorships	No one – <i>or</i> a Board Member who only makes two calls all year	Target a board member who really has clout -- and provide tons of back up (paper work) support when s/he makes the call to get the commitment. Give this person all the credit for the big sell – give him/her ownership and made to feel vested in the process. This will encourage other Board Members for next year.
Sell exhibitor spots	Board Members	Expect ½ of your Board Members to bring in one exhibitor <i>AND</i> Sub out this work on a commission basis. More exhibitors not only brings in more money to the organization, but also more resources for your attendees and more visibility for your organization.
Secure speakers	Board Members	Board Members are great at identifying and contacting speakers but it falls apart after that, so only ask for this much. Let the follow up with the speaker be done by administrative staff – confirming, making arrangements, describing content/audience, discussing presentation format.
Work on the Marketing Materials	Board Member	Certainly you want their input, but this is time-sensitive and not a do-it-when-you-can item.
Stuff Name Badges and Ribbons	Board Members & Volunteers	This sounds easy but it's not a last minute task. It has to be done meticulously before going on site to the conference. The Board and Volunteers should not be working on these until 2AM the night before the conference. They won't be correct! It starts the whole conference off on the wrong foot.
Stuff Tote Bags	Board Members & Volunteers	Perfect for everyone!

SUGGESTIONS

1. List all of the conference tasks to be done with the MOST IMPORTANT /HIGHEST SKILL LEVEL tasks at the top. These go to your Board.
2. Provide administrative support for your Board Members in accomplishing their tasks.
3. Give Board Members tasks that let them accomplish high visibility outcomes that they can take pride in doing.
4. Prepare only 20 hours of work for them MAX. Any more time will be a surprise bonus.
5. Assign Volunteers to meaningful tasks on-site. Don't let them feel like they weren't *really* needed.
6. Don't over work and over stress your staff with the conference. Subcontractors can be used wisely.

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