



PRINCETON
women's network

Attracting and Retaining Volunteers & Growing Leaders

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

- Key Theme

People will do what appeals to them. Help them identify what that is, support them in doing it and let them run with it. Encourage people to pursue ideas that might seem a bit “outside the box” when thinking about potential projects.

- Ways to attract volunteers

Events

- Kickoff events for new PWNs are good opportunities to request volunteers. After people are warmed up and enjoying themselves, make a pitch for volunteers and sign them up. Be concrete. Give examples of things volunteers can do such as plan events, scout out and maintain a file of event spaces, write an e-newsletter, start a subgroup (book group, service group, women in a particular profession, mother's group, etc.). When talking about event planning, give examples of possible events: visit to a local gallery with drinks afterwards, potluck supper to discuss an article, dinner at a local restaurant to discuss movies and theater, do a service project with a local group. Ask what people would like to do as volunteers.
- Think about having an event for the sole purpose of recruiting volunteers. Find an interesting speaker (perhaps about the benefits of volunteering or networking) or focus for the event. A coffee hour or wine and cheese event to attract volunteers probably isn't enough.
- At the end of every local PWN event, mention that the local PWN is always looking for volunteers to plan events and help out in other ways and let people know how they can sign-up to volunteer.
- Have great PWN events. They will generate enthusiasm about the local PWN and encourage people to volunteer.

Personal outreach

- Local PWN leaders will likely know a few people in the area who will pitch in if asked. People often respond well to a targeted pitch.
- Ask the leadership of the local Princeton Club if there are alumnae who'd welcome a request to volunteer.
- Encourage PWN members who are already active to recruit fellow alumnae/friends.

E-newsletters or notices

- Every PWN e-newsletter or notice should include a request for volunteers and a PWN leader for them to contact to sign-up.
- Ways to retain volunteers
 - Encourage them to do what they really want to do.
 - Set reasonable and realistic expectations. Let volunteers feel a sense of accomplishment, not guilt!
 - Support: Local PWN leadership should support volunteers, especially event planners. Check in with them to see how they are doing, especially in the early stages of planning an event. Emails can be productive, but touching base at least once by phone builds relationships. Anticipate what volunteers need and help them get it, such as leads for finding event spaces, additional help at the event, ordering food, etc. Make it easy for volunteers to publicize events by having a system for sending out e-newsletters/notices.
 - Build camaraderie among volunteers and leaders: Have one or two events just for them each year. "Planning meetings" can have a good vibe if managed well and not presented as a chore. Perhaps call them "leadership gatherings" and – within reason – give people a chance to stray off the agenda a bit if good conversation is happening.
 - Thanks and recognition: Find ways to thank and recognize volunteers – acknowledge them in newsletters and at events, let the local Princeton Club leadership know they are doing a great job, send their names to the Alumni Association so they can receive emails for volunteers and perhaps be invited to events for volunteers on campus.

GROWING LEADERS

- Spot potential

Current Chair/Co-Chair should keep an eye out for good successor(s). Who are the strong and committed volunteers/leaders? What should be done to encourage them to stay with PWN and become the Chair/Co-Chair?

- Look at the model of your local Princeton Club

How does someone become the local President?

- Models for selecting a new Chair/Co-Chair:
 - **Have a clear succession plan:** Identify a position an individual must hold before becoming a Chair/Co-Chair. This will depend on how structured the local PWN has decided to be. For example, if it has a Chair of Events, perhaps someone needs to serve in that role for two years before automatically becoming the Chair/Co-Chair of the PWN.
 - **Co-Chairs:** If a PWN has Co-Chairs, each one could serve for two years before one steps down and is replaced by someone else. Replacement could be selected by the Co-Chairs. Aside from providing a succession plan, a real benefit of Co-Chairs is that they inspire and support each other.
 - **Informal:** Current Chair could select new Chair based on her view of who would be a good in that role.
 - **Voting:** This is likely impractical and burdensome.
 - **Term Limits:** Good to have a defined term so Chair/Co-Chair doesn't get burned out and PWN benefits from fresh ideas and perspectives.
 - **Motivation:** How encourage someone to be a PWN Chair/Co-Chair? Different things motivate different people. Possible reasons to be a PWN Chair/Co-Chair:
 - Dedication to Princeton
 - Giving Back
 - Great way to connect with Princeton women who are smart, curious, open minded, funny and generally wonderful
 - Expand horizons
 - Networking
 - Good experience (resume building)
 - **Set realistic expectations.** This is not an impossible job.
 - **Personnel outreach** will often encourage someone to step up to leadership.

- Possible Leadership Characteristics
 - Flexibility
 - Interest in others and supporting them
 - Resourcefulness

- Additional leadership positions

This discussion has focused on the Chair or Co-Chair of the local PWN. As a PWN structures itself, it may want to have a variety of “leadership” positions such as e-newsletter editor, leaders of subgroups, etc. A variety of leadership positions are identified in the “Best Practices for Leading a PWN” on the Alumni Association’s PWN page:

<http://alumni.princeton.edu/communities/regions/pwn/> Informally selecting new leaders for those positions may be the best way to go. Also, depending on how a PWN develops and what individuals want to do, some positions may no longer be needed while new positions should be filled.

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