

Five Simple Ways to Improve Outreach at Your Organization

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Outreach to the public is an essential part of growing your organization's ranks of supporters, volunteers, and clients. If you do not have an organizational outreach plan, it is time to create one. It should include outreach plans for your board members (individually and as a whole), the directors of the organization, all staff, and all key major donors and volunteers. At its core is your organization's message: what you want the public to know about your group. Your plan should list all outreach goals and the objectives (the "how's" of meetings your goals). Timelines and personnel assignments should also be included.

If you do not yet have a written outreach plan, here are five simple ways to immediately improve outreach at your organization:

1. **Keychain.** If you have a keychain displaying your organization's logo or name, use it. I used to strike up more conversations in the grocery line by holding my keys in my hand with the Habitat keychain prominent. "Oh, I just love Habitat", shoppers ahead of me in line would say, pointing to my keys. The conversation began. Move to #2.
2. **Always Carry Brochures, Newsletters.** Keep them in your bag, briefcase, office, and car. Leave some each place you go: the doctor's office, the grocery store, the library, etc. and hand them out when people (see #1) ask about your group. Move to #3.
3. **Create a Group Listserve.** Add people interested in your work to your listserve. Keep folks updated weekly, monthly, or whatever works best for your group and its work (and your audience). It's a great way to stay in touch, find volunteers, and keep your group and its work on the minds of people in town.
4. **Update Your Database.** Elected officials are connected individuals in town and should know about the work and programs of your organization. If they are not already on your mailing list, they must be added. And when new elections occur, be sure to add new names and positions to your list.
5. **Tell Five People Each Week About Your Group.** Make it a point to tell five new people each week about your organization - at church, your kid's soccer game, aerobics class, a business meeting, etc. Get the word out. As I gardened one day, a woman walked by, commenting on my

prairie plants. I worked for an environmental organization at the time and we struck up a conversation and I told her about my organization. We ended up talking for a half hour and she gave permission to be added to our mailing and email list. Within a month, she was volunteering and by year's end, a large check arrived. The next year, she was serving on the board. It began with a random conversation, a mention of the group I worked with, and a request to add her to our listserve.

Contact ***do good Consulting*** at 217-778-1687 or dogood@dogoodconsulting.org for more information on creating an organizational message or an organizational outreach plan or for more outreach techniques.