

JED's Rules of Engagement

for Recruiting and Retaining Community Volunteers

VARIETY: Meetings are not for everyone, especially night meetings. Give people many different ways to participate. Vary the activities, times, and places, so that anyone can find things that are interesting, comfortable, and convenient to do.

PROXIMITY: Engagement begins at home. People are much more likely to volunteer for activities that benefit their families, touch the lives of their neighbors, or affect their neighborhood. Start local.

FAMILIARITY: People come out and hang out with people they already know - or want to know. They need some sense of who's going to be there before they show up. They need to be welcomed when they walk through the door. They must feel like they belong.

SIMPLICITY: If your goal is to recruit lots of people, the tasks they are asked to do must require no prior skill, allowing quick mastery with less than one hour of training. The more complicated the task that volunteers are asked to do, the fewer the number who will volunteer to do it. Keep it simple.

CLARITY: Surprises are scary; unknowns are intimidating. Volunteers want to know when an activity will start, what it will entail, when it will end, and how much will be expected of them. Make it clear.

BREVITY: People are more likely to volunteer for tasks of limited duration than for those that require an open-ended commitment. Ask for a little time, at least at first. Keep it short.

UTILITY: People want to be of use. They want to feel that the precious time they have donated was productive, added value, made a difference.

LEVITY: People are willing to do serious work, but they want to laugh while doing it, especially as volunteers. Keep it light. Make it fun.

COURTESY: People want to be appreciated for the precious gifts of time they have generously contributed. Give recognition. Say thank you.