

Volunteer INSIDER

"What we are is God's gift to us. What we become is our gift to God."
— Eleanor Powell

THE MONTHLY IDEA SOURCE FOR VOLUNTEERS LEADING THE WAY

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PROGRAMS WORTH EMULATING

PennPAC Provides Pro Bono Alumni Consulting

When graduates of the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA) walk across the stage, it's not just an exciting day for the student but for area nonprofits as well. "We have helped so many nonprofits grow their capabilities, become more efficient and increase their revenues," says Jackie Einstein Astrof, founder and executive director of PennPAC Pro bono Alumni Consulting.

So how are nonprofits benefiting from these alumni? A volunteer program called PennPAC is matching alumni volunteers with New York City- and Philadelphia-based nonprofits to provide pro bono alumni consulting work. "Our volunteers are so proud and rewarded to see the amazing difference they are making. It is a win-win. PennPAC really harnesses Penn pride to help nonprofits thrive," says Astrof.

The program started operations in the fall of 2011 and has since had hundreds of alumni participate. "Through PennPAC, alumni-volunteers are matched into small teams to work with specific nonprofits on well-scoped strategic consulting engagements with tangible deliverables," Astrof says.

The program is affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania Alumni Association of New York City and the Penn Alumni Club of Philadelphia and features an informational video on its website (www.pennpac.org).

PennPAC reaches out to area nonprofits through social media and listservs and encourages these nonprofits to apply. Once a nonprofit's pro bono request is approved, it is matched with an alumni team. From nonprofits who deal with arts and culture to social services and youth services, the alumni volunteers help these organizations with things such as marketing plans to financial analyses and more. "Our main program is the 8- to 10-week-long consulting project teams. For volunteers who want to commit less time, we also host ImpACT events, which are one-night, high-impact interactions with a single nonprofit. PennPAC also has MiniProjects that are shorter, smaller project opportunities. Finally, there is a lot of internal work alumni-volunteers engage in, such as volunteer relations, nonprofit relations, marketing and communications, etc.," she says.

An alumni volunteer program like this takes a lot of behind-the-scenes work. Astrof says there are three main reasons behind PennPAC's success:

1. **Parameters:** "We work very hard to make sure the parameters are very clearly articulated to both the clients and volunteers so expectations can be set and also that a project scope is created that is appropriate for a small group of alumni-volunteers to tackle in their 'free time' (a few hours a week over the course of 8 to 10 weeks)."
2. **Evaluations:** "We vet the nonprofits to assure the nonprofit has the bandwidth to work with a group of outside consultants."
3. **Strong teams:** "Our volunteer relations team skillfully creates teams of alumni-volunteers with complimentary backgrounds."

Alumni are made aware of the volunteer opportunities through social media as well as the university's regional alumni clubs.

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Set Appointments Prior to Solicitation Calls

When it comes to soliciting donations of any kind, there is no substitute for face-to-face visits. When possible, avoid soliciting someone by mail or phone. Meet with them face-to-face.

But go a step beyond that: Set an appointment rather than casually making an unexpected call. An appointment makes the reason for your meeting more important and adds credibility to the cause you're representing. Two additional appointment-setting tips:

- Whether you meet over lunch, in the prospect's home or at his/her office, be up-front in setting your appointment: "Susan, I want to meet with you on behalf of Girls, Inc. We are in the midst of an important campaign for the organization, and I want to meet with you to discuss it."
- Confirm the appointment in writing. Follow up your phone conversation with a note or letter confirming the time, place and purpose of your visit.

Displace Negative Thoughts With Positive Ones

Remember what you learned in physics class: Two objects can't occupy the same space at the same time (e.g., when you put a brick in a liquid, the liquid gets displaced). Well, your thoughts are like that — two thoughts can't occupy the same space at the same time. You can't think of failure and success at the same time. It's impossible.

So if you stop concentrating on failure and start focusing on success, the "success brick" will displace the "failure liquid."