

# CREATING THE VIV:

## *Very Important Volunteer*

By Elizabeth R. Kovar, MA

For many non-profits and community centers, the volunteer may be one of the most valuable assets to the organization. As these individuals donate hours of service, some events would not be possible without the help and assistance from volunteers. From special events to daily standard operating procedures, volunteers' duties range on a wide spectrum of responsibilities.

Yes, some duties maybe a bit basic or low-key such as manning a booth or a registration line. What if we took the volunteer's skill to the virtual level? Of course all volunteers are important; however, a volunteer to increase word of mouth communication and influence online users maybe one of the most important assets to the organization.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA MUST KNOWS**

Social media applications are buzzing out of control beyond the three popular Facebook, Twitter and YouTube sites. Additional social media applications include Flickr, Citysearch, Foursquare, Yelp, Pinterest, personal or professional blogs

and MySpace. If your organization is a user of any of these applications, it is beneficial to analyze: how involved are your followers? This is where your branding volunteer comes into play. However, it is necessary to understand the purpose and use of social media.

Social media's identity is broad, yet different with each application. Six types of social media include: collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, content communities, social networking sites, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. As each application is individualistic in it's own identity, some medias utilize one or all seven functional characteristics of the "honeycomb framework". This includes: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. Armed with this knowledge, we can apply our soon-to-be "Very Important Volunteer" from a believer into an advocate.



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PERSON

Do you have a participant that is active within your organization physically and virtually? If so, recognize their activity. Are they “liking” your comments, commenting on photos and sharing your posts? If so, what are they liking, commenting and sharing? Is it everything and anything you post? Or is it niched? A niche example is “seeing” what interests them such as group exercise information, youth updates or social responsibility involvement.

It is with caution to choose these individuals carefully and select the frequency and modality in what applications you want to use them for. Once you have identified some potential prospects, your organization’s social media master should start engaging with them online. Comment on their comments, say thank you for liking our post, or recognize them for sharing your link. Once this online relationship is “connected”, it may be the time to engage them with a conversation about your interest in having them be a part of your virtual team.



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## ENGAGE, ENGAGE, ENGAGE

If agreed, the volunteer can receive access to post on your walls without having the login information. Next, it is best to keep this volunteer feeling important and updated. Invite them to a sneak-peak trial of a new group exercise class, notify them in advance of special events that are taking place or give them a behind the scenes tour of your facility. Keep it interesting and creative to enhance the relationship, and give them exclusive information to post, tweet or share. Remember the more important they feel, the better the word of mouth will spread with their praise.

This type of influence marketing



provides a visible and powerful association of the brand. In addition, this online community hopes to create, connect and engage consumers in the facility too. Social media marketing can reach out to hundreds if not thousands people per day. This in turn transforms the “follower” into a “do-er” or yet, more powerfully, creates a believer into an advocate. **OSF**

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