



K Street Café

Amy Showalter

Building Your Team: The State of Grassroots Volunteer Recruitment and Morale

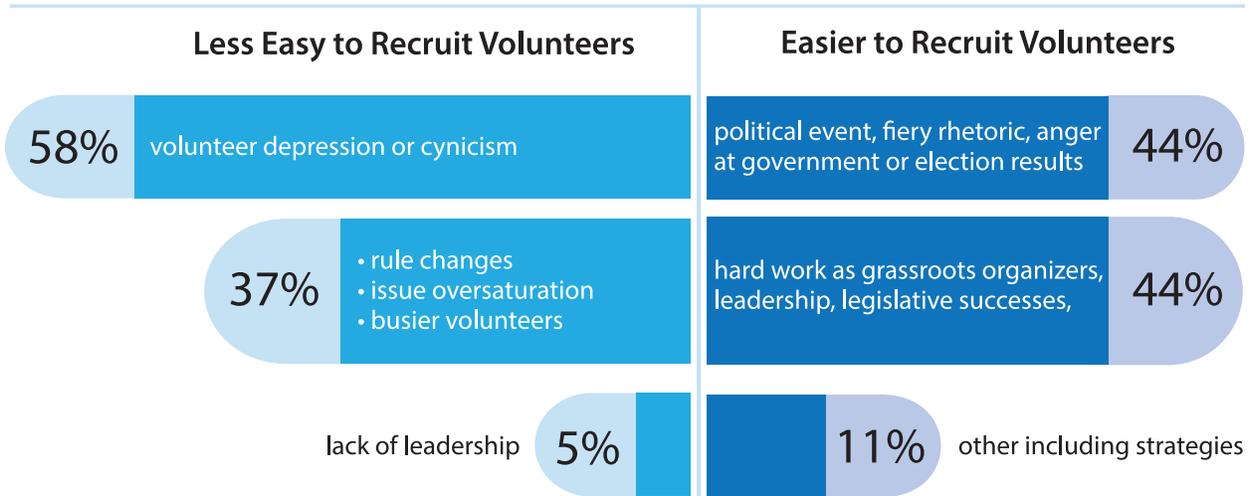
In recent posts, I've shared findings from our inaugural Grassroots Influence Pulse (GRIP®) report that reveals current trends in grassroots influence tactics, the time and money being directed to various grassroots techniques, and most important, the trends in how members of Congress are *responding (or not)* to grassroots influence strategies. Descriptive statistics were performed, followed by an analysis of specific correlations of interest.

One of the research subjects we explored was the state of grassroots volunteer recruitment and morale. Like you, when I gather with government relations professionals, regardless of the industry or cause, advocate morale is a prominent concern.

What Makes Volunteer Recruitment Easier?

Thirty-two percent (32%) of our respondents indicate they're having an easier time recruiting volunteers compared to the previous year, whereas 24% say they're having a harder time.

The following factors (below, left) were cited among those who reported it *less* easy to recruit volunteers: (respondents could select more than one factor)



Our four-year research project with over 900 grassroots volunteers who regularly attend lobby day events and hold grassroots leadership positions revealed that burnout is real and *disillusionment with legislator behavior is the top cause of burnout*. We believe that this can be traced to the volunteer’s unrealistic influence expectations—expectations they learned from grassroots staff.

The Bottom Line?

Ask yourself.

Do you regularly assess the morale of your grassroots volunteers?

Do you set unrealistic expectations for your volunteers?

Do you keep your volunteers focused only on the “ultimate” goal, such as a major legislative reform?

To mitigate burnout, do you share the realities of the legislative process, or the airbrushed “Civics 101” version?

Do you defend your volunteers against “legislators behaving badly?” Or do you rationalize and make excuses for their behavior?

Do you frame legislative, economic and social developments in a way that motivates your volunteers, or do you stick with the same messaging?

GRIP 2015 Research Commencing Soon!

If you want to participate in the 2015 GRIP ® project, please send me an email: amy@showaltergroup.com. All research participants receive a free copy of the extensive report.



Amy Showalter is a national authority on grassroots and PAC effectiveness. She is the author of “The Underdog Edge” (Morgan James) www.underdogedge.com and “The Art and Science of the BFF: 105 Ways to Build Relationships on The Hill, at the State House, and in City Hall.” Her insights have been featured in over 500 media outlets. Amy’s clients include many of the nation’s most prominent corporations, including HCA Healthcare, International Paper, Pfizer, Buffalo Wild Wings, and Monsanto, as well as leading national organizations such as the American Heart Association, the U.S. Green Building Council, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. www.showaltergroup.com. Twitter: @amyshowalter