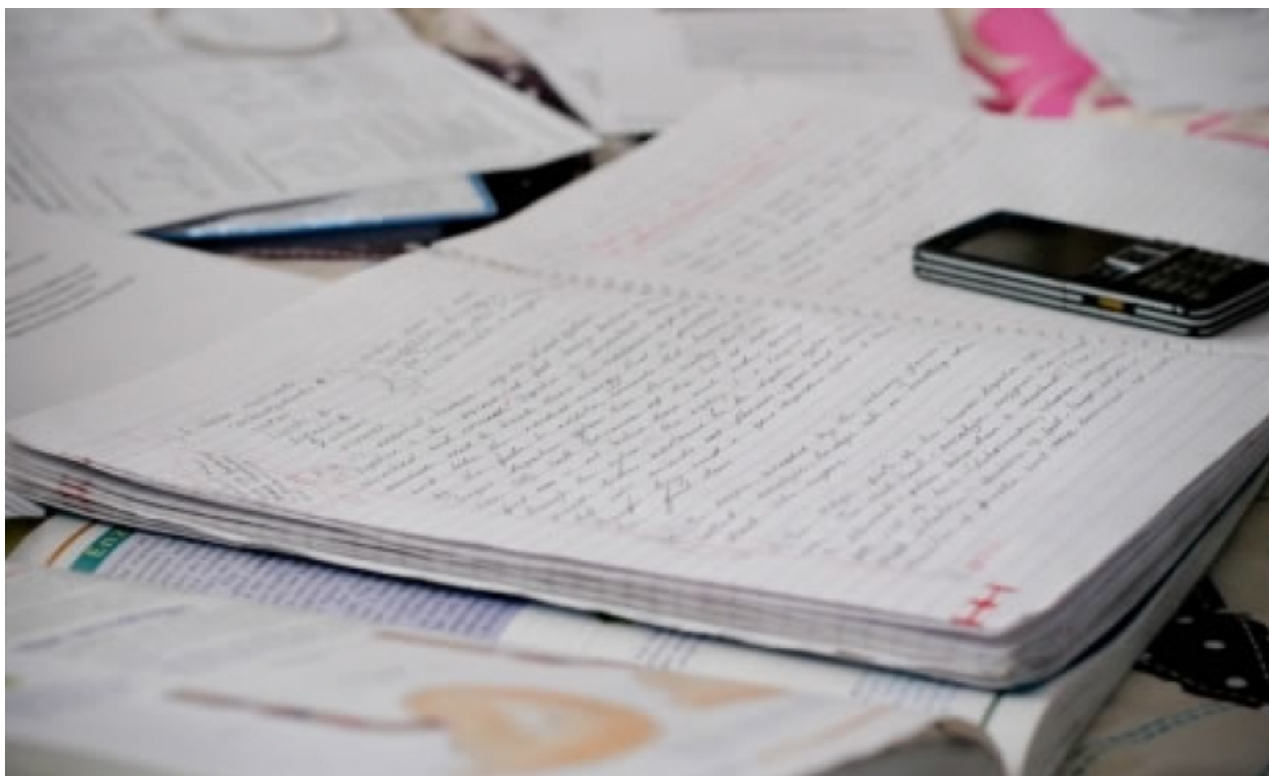


Volunteer or You'll Lose Everything!



07/19/2017 - 10:14



As long as we are truthful about our ads, why can't we use some marketing techniques to recruit volunteers?

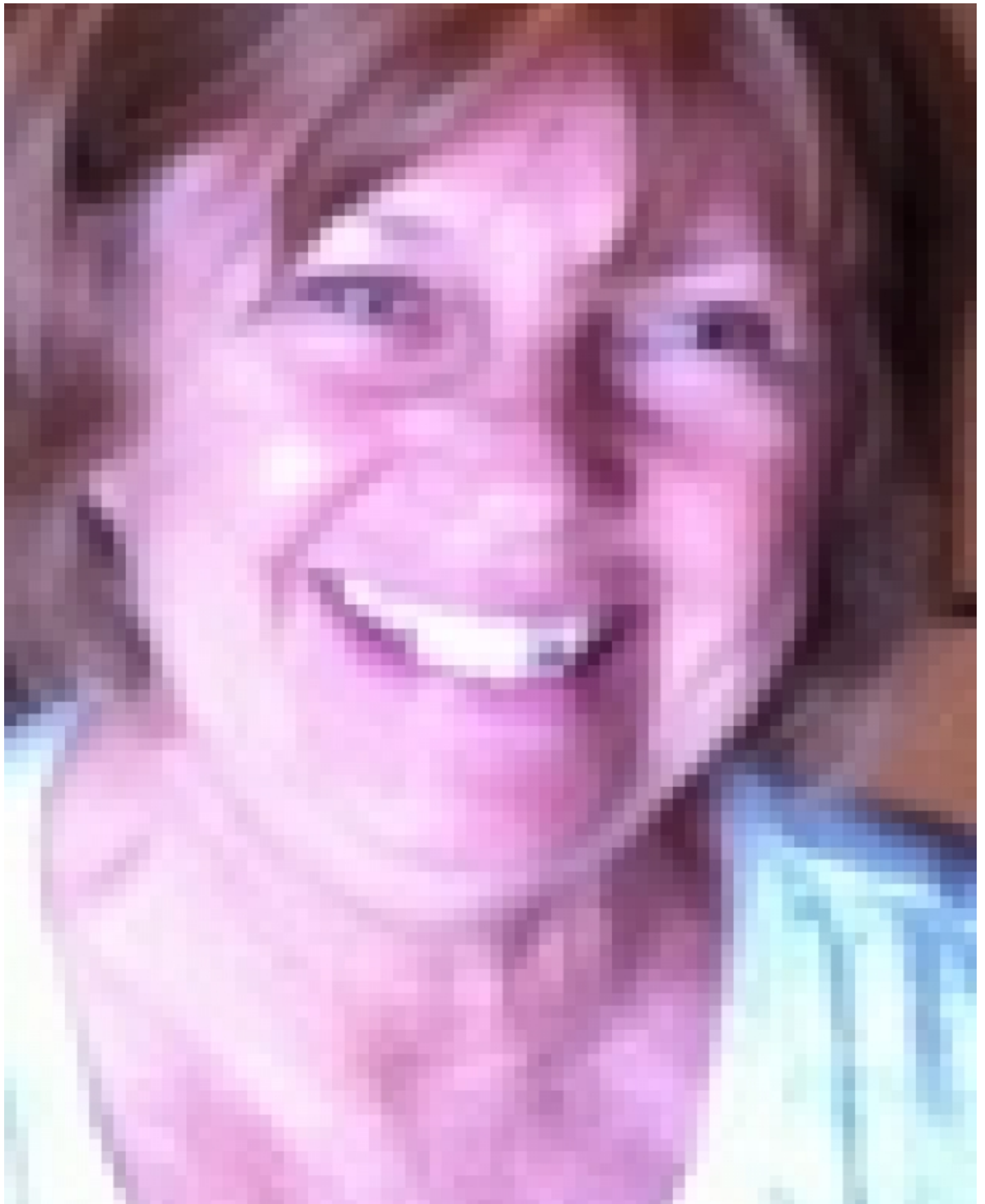
Meridian Swift

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on Wed, 07/19/2017 - 10:03

Description:

Meridian Swift is a pen name. She has managed volunteers for 20 years, is the author of [The Volunteer Shelf Life](#), blogs on [volunteerplaintalk](#), has written for [Energize Inc.](#), Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management, and Engaging Volunteers. She has held the CVA since 2005, and has presented on the state and national levels on volunteer management topics.

Vertical photo:



Square photo:



Twitter: [@MeridianSwift](https://twitter.com/MeridianSwift)



Horizontal photo:

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In decision theory, a [loss aversion](#) means that the pain of losing something is much greater than the pleasure of making an equivalent gain. Marketers everywhere utilize this theory to hawk their goods.

"Get it before it's gone!"

"Act fast. Limited supplies available!"

In volunteer management, we prefer the gain theory when marketing to potential volunteers. We use phrases such as "*the life you change may be your own*," or "*do something meaningful*" to entice others to join our cause. But what if these researchers are correct and we are hard wired to respond more to fear of loss?

How would this advertising trick work with volunteer recruitment ads?. To find out, I stopped in to see my good friend, Svin Dler who runs an ad agency in town. He's the genius behind such memorable ad campaigns as "Proud to Be Under Federal Investigation" and "Without Our Product, You're a Worthless Pile of #\$\$%@."

I walked into his inexplicably empty office and asked Svin to take some of our volunteer ads and apply the loss aversion theory to them. Here's what he came up with. (*after I passed a ten spot under the table to him-no, really he made me pass it under the table*)

Don't miss out on this exciting opportunity to file papers! All the beautiful people are doing it. File those papers before they're gone and then you won't be beautiful!

Volunteer now, or our charity will go out of business. Then, when your family needs help, no agency will help you because all agencies share a list of slackers. Don't get turned away you slacker.

Volunteer now or keep being your worthless selfish self. BTW, everyone hates you.

Save the world by volunteering. If you don't, the world will end and it will be YOUR FAULT.

Hmmmm, I don't know if those will work. Well, maybe the third one will..... no, no, they won't. But can we write worthwhile ads and throw in a bit of the loss aversion theory?

How about:

There's only a limited number of volunteering slots. Call 555-5555 to get started before the good ones are gone.

Don't miss our next life changing volunteer orientation. Refer to this coupon code:

Act now! Don't lose your chance to be a better person. Call this number:

Well, that's soul-less, isn't it? Maybe loss aversion can't be applied to volunteer recruitment. But wait. Perhaps if we lightly sprinkled in some loss aversion techniques, we could:

Create an ad using the wish list and implied loss:

"Do you wish to be more (circle all that apply): accomplished, social, engaged, in-tune, appreciated, worldly, satisfied, prepared, rejuvenated, self-aware, respected, content, experienced, understood? Join us next Saturday. *We have just three Volunteer Training slots still open.* Come, let's explore your wish list."

Create an email reminder for those who have expressed an interest:

"Our volunteer training is this Saturday at 1pm. *Seats are filling up* and we would love to see you there. Click here to join our amazing volunteers." (or diverse, or award winning or whatever adjective fits)

Use urgency:

"Our *last volunteer training of the year* is being held next Saturday at 1pm. As one of our volunteers, Jamal says,

Don't miss out on this life changing experience!"

So, can we actually use marketing techniques for volunteer recruitment? Is that ok?

Well, here's a question: When designing volunteer recruitment ads, do we inadvertently give these impressions:

There is no limit to the amount of volunteers we take

Time is never of the essence-we'll always be there kinda like death and taxes

The choice volunteer positions never get filled

Is there a boring and stale element to our ads that imply volunteering is a never-ending constant so heck, why not put it off?

We are not gimmicky marketers looking to sell something and move on. We deal in cultivating real human beings who offer meaningful involvement, so tricks and slick words are not us. However, we are also not complacent.

Here's a recent ad I came across:

"Join us for a Volunteer Orientation (date) to learn more about our organization and the many different ways you can help us. You will get an overview of our work and learn how you can help improve the lives in need by volunteering. To learn more about our volunteer program, check out our website."(here)

Now, let's re-imagine this ad with a sprinkling of loss aversion theory:

"A limited number of slots are still available for volunteer orientation on (date). Don't miss out on exploring the many flexible ways you can help." Visit our website (here) for a quick sign up. See you on (date)!"

So, as long as we are truthful about our ads, why can't we use some marketing techniques to recruit volunteers?

Try it before it's too late. (*oops, sorry*)

This article was originally published on [volunteerplaintalk.](#)

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