



Planning a volunteer open day

Why hold an Open day?

An Open Day is...

- A pro-active way to showcase what volunteering is like at your museum, rather than waiting for people to approach you individually to find out.
- A specific, time bound 'call to action' for prospective volunteers. You may have an ongoing recruitment strategy; an Open Day can make your recruitment campaign more current and active, when you offer it alongside an ongoing recruitment call out.
- Good use of time - rather than talking to individuals one by one, you can bring people together and introduce the museum to several people at one time.
- A chance for people to experience the culture of your organisation. This may be particularly helpful to individuals whose motivation for volunteering is social.
- A way for current volunteers to feel they are playing a part in the recruitment process.

How to make sure your open day is a success!

Plan your activities

Recruit a team to support the event

Decide whether people will need to book or can drop in. Asking people to book onto the session will help you to keep track of numbers and also gives you an opportunity to ask in advance if there are any special needs.

Be flexible – can you offer morning and afternoon arrival options and, within that, a rolling programme of activities so that people can drop in at different times?

Provide the option to shadow or have a go at volunteer roles where you can. If you do this, you'll need to risk assess and give a Health and Safety briefing.

Plan how you will introduce the organisation. Don't assume people know everything – or anything – about your museum! Try planning short introductory talks from people with different roles.

Advertise your session – on your website, on social media, via posters in arts, sports and community venues. An excellent way to generate interest is in local publications or on local radio.

Think about how you will evaluate.

Case study: Taster sessions at the Jet Age Museum

Deputy Volunteer Co-ordinator Paul Griffiths shares the Jet Age Museum's approach:

In common with many museums, Jet Age had to curtail volunteer recruiting and induction due to Covid restrictions being placed on us. All of the prospective volunteers awaiting their induction were forcibly 'put on hold'. During the pandemic, enquiries from other prospective volunteers

continued to trickle in but we could not progress these beyond putting them onto a waiting list.. Once we were able to, we wanted to maintain the interest of all these individuals. Our approach involved taster sessions. This approach could be adapted by other museums into drop in 'open days' to experience volunteering.

So, what did we do?

We emailed our new recruits and prospective recruits and:

- invited them to a taster sessions at the museum
- offered a couple of alternative dates to choose
- offered the choice of a morning or afternoon session

We got a good response, with more than two-thirds of those contacted saying they'd attend on their chosen day.

There was no set time to arrive nor pre-determined length of time for the taster session, the prospects were just asked to turn up for their chosen am or pm session during our normal opening hours – this gave flexibility so that people could drop in at a time to suit them.

As they arrived on the day, each attendee was given a short H&S/Fire Evacuation briefing and then matched up with experienced volunteers in the Display Hall to see and hear the interaction with visitors and generally get a feel for the role. They were invited to ask any questions they wanted to of any of the volunteers.

Free tea/coffee was provided from the museum Cafe or Volunteers Crew Room.

The attendees were swapped around the various volunteer positions at regular intervals and also given a tour of the Conservation & Restoration Department.

Finally we debriefed them - to a person they all said they'd enjoyed their taster session, were impressed with the museum and what it had to offer, were still interested in volunteering and would await the call to the informal interview/chat prior to form-filling and induction.

Some of the attendees said they'd be happier in more of a "backroom" volunteering role so the taster session was useful to them as it focused their attention on where they could make the greatest contribution. We can now respond to this and discuss alternative roles.

It was very worthwhile. It has reinforced the desire of those who attended to volunteer with Jet Age and our experienced volunteers felt valued as they became part of the recruiting process.

I think taster sessions as outlined above could be tailored for practically any museum that wishes to attract more prospective volunteers.



Displays at the Jet Age Museum, November 2021