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# Nine Ways Nonprofits Can Increase Community Engagement



**Forbes Nonprofit Council** COUNCIL POST | Paid Program  
Leadership

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POST WRITTEN BY

## Forbes Nonprofit Council

Successful nonprofit executives from [Forbes Nonprofit Council](#) offer firsthand insights on nonprofit leadership & trends.



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As a nonprofit organization, it is important to be engaged and relevant to the community that you are located in. By becoming an active member in the local area, not only can you increase the recognition of your organization, but you can also meet the people that make up the very community you operate in. These people are your very direct base of volunteers and donors, and your nonprofit needs to recognize them and appreciate their efforts in supporting your cause.

With 23.5% of adults volunteering with an organization, according to a report by [Urban Institute](#), keeping it local when it comes to finding manpower may be wise, as these adults make up 8.7 billion volunteer hours a year. The same report also indicated that private

charitable donations account for 13.3% of a nonprofit’s revenue, a total that makes up plenty of local funding and the third largest revenue source for nonprofits.

To stay true to your local roots, nine members of [Forbes Nonprofit Council](#) recommend ways you can better engage with your community and get the volunteers and donations your nonprofit needs. Here is what they shared:



Members of Forbes Nonprofit Council share how organizations can increase community engagement. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS.

## **1. Encourage Discussion To Forge Relationships**

This is borrowed from a friend: We may not know it all or have every answer but we certainly can have a "PhD," aka "Passion to have a Discussion." By putting ourselves out there and having discussions with a wide range of stakeholders, we are able to find opportunities that align with what they are telling us matters to them. This ultimately creates deeper relationships both in terms of money and time. - [Blake Pang, United Ways Serving Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties](#)

## **2. Participate In Local Events**

Many cities and areas offer local events -- such as festivals and community events that involve local businesses -- so this is a great place to get a booth and get to know the community. It raises awareness and provides a face for your organization. You can share takeaway content to help those you met remember you and come back to your online presence to learn more. - [Gloria Horsley, Open to Hope](#)

## **3. Be A Partner For Your Community**

One of the keys to engaging local communities is to understand the issues that affect them the most. As an organization, if a goal is to increase volunteer ranks and/or giving, the community must view you as a partner that will be there long term with their concerns in mind. - [Joel Carboni, IPMA-USA](#)

#### **4. Target The Leaders On The Ground**

Target the leaders and influencers working on the ground -- an insider recommendation will always carry more weight. Give first before asking! Start by providing value to the leaders and community members. Once you show you are there to do good, these leaders will shout from the rooftops about you, and community members are much more likely to respond to your communications and outreach. - [Mickey Penzer, Life Trusts](#)

#### **5. Use Your Space To Inform Your Neighbors**

Most organizations have office spaces with meeting areas that go essentially unused during off hours. Consider hosting events, trainings and seminars. Give staff a chance to practice their pitches and teach about what they do best while promoting your organization. Limit the attendees to your space with an RSVP list and bring folks in via posts to local papers, meetups and online happenings. - [Roy Speckhardt, American Humanist Association](#)

#### **6. Leverage The Community For Knowledge**

In schools, we leverage the community by getting the parents involved in a nontraditional way of volunteering. Many of the parents offer unique life experiences and skills that should be highlighted with students to bring community issues into the classroom. The school places value in parents' knowledge to provide various views around resolutions to these community problems. - [Whitney McCormick, Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools](#)

## **7. Let Ambassadors Lead The Way**

One of the best things any nonprofit can do to get the local community involved is to pull together a dedicated and energized group of individuals who will, as ambassadors of the organization, go out and engage the people. Word of mouth, especially when it's passionate, is still one of the most effective ways to get folks interested and involved in just about anything. - [Chip Rogers, Asian American Hotel Owners Association \(AAHOA\)](#)

## **8. Be Consistent And Get Involved**

The nonprofit responsibility is to not just advocate for the mission of their organization but to be a voice for the broader service delivery system that supports disadvantaged, disenfranchised and vulnerable populations. Leadership is transactional and transformative in creating cohesion throughout the community. Be consistent and involved, promoting opportunities for giving and volunteering. - [Charles A. Archer, The THRIVE Network](#)

## **9. Create Mutually Beneficial Opportunities**

The key to engaging with the local community is to make sure that your activities are mutually beneficial for community members and the organization. To get people engaged, it is important that people feel fulfilled for their effort, so whether you are working with a volunteer or with students doing a service project, make sure to know what is important to them and what will make them proud. - [Bruce Maj Pelz, Maji Safi Group](#)



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