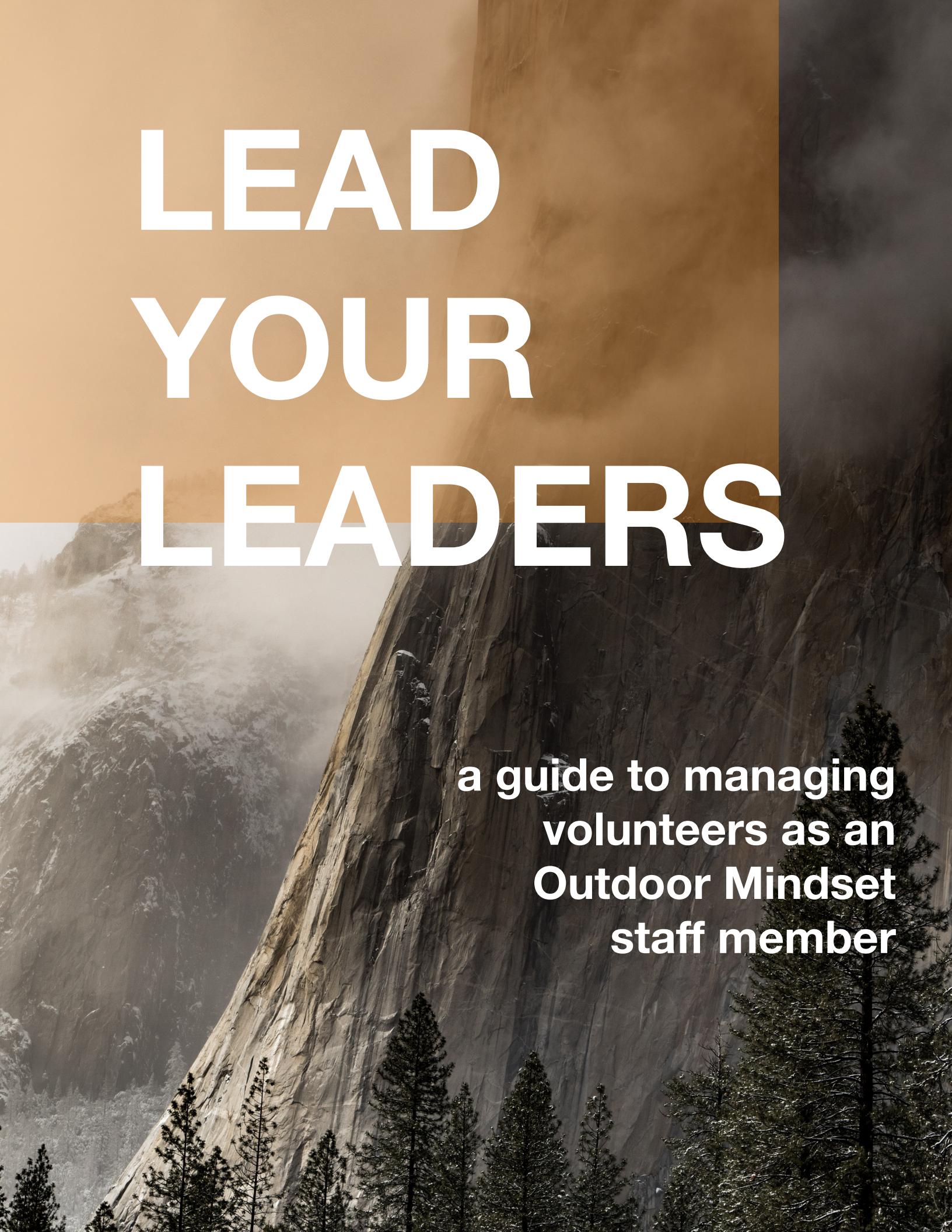


LEAD YOUR LEADERS



**a guide to managing
volunteers as an
Outdoor Mindset
staff member**

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*“It is about taking
each and every
second, and
making it count.
Why go out and
enjoy the full
moon? Because
you can.”*

- Jesse from Edwards, CO

Why Outdoor Mindset?

If we're going to lead ambassadors and other Outdoor Mindset community members, we've got to know WHY we're doing everything. Every action must be guided by how we define ourselves and our mission.

Outdoor Mindset is an outdoor-focused community for people affected by neurological challenges. We unite and empower people affected by neurological challenges through a common passion for the outdoors.

WE BELIEVE

In the positive power of the outdoors and a connected community.

WE STRIVE

To enhance quality of life for people affected by neurological challenges by uniting and empowering our community through a common passion for the outdoors.

WE ENVISION

In the positive power of the outdoors and a connected community.

EVERY YEAR IN THE UNITED STATES:



Social connections positively influence health. According to researchers and healthcare providers, personally connecting with others has a significant positive impact on patient health.

We all know someone who has faced a neurological challenge. Over 600 neurological disorders exist!

Getting outdoors and being active helps too. Exposure to the natural environment of the outdoors directly correlates to improved neuropsychological function and behavioral attitudes toward managing challenges in diagnosis. Research has shown physical activity to be a significant factor in improving quality of life indicators among neurologically diagnosed individuals.

Our response: In 2010, thirteen individuals came together inspired by a mutual friend's determination to make something positive come from a recent diagnosis of a brain tumor. Everyone shared a link to a neurological challenge (brain tumors, aneurysms, epilepsy, etc.). Their experiences ranged from personal diagnosis to supporting diagnosed family members and friends. The group also shared a passion for the outdoors, an unyielding enthusiasm for life, and a drive to overcome the hardship of a neurological challenge to focus on quality of life. These commonalities inspired the idea of Outdoor Mindset (OM). Now, the ongoing connections made by OM broaden the story.

Recruiting

How do I find people?

When recruiting volunteers, there are two main ways this publication focuses on: **word of mouth** and **social engagement**. The following pages describe some ways to disseminate information, either through building relationships with people in-person or online.



A note on board members:

When recruiting ambassadors, keep an eye out for potential board members. This will be especially useful when pursuing secondary paths to information (see page 7), as you will be talking to people with more specialized skills and greater financial aptitude.

Word of Mouth

Marketing is great, and social media is an important tool; however, nothing beats having an actual relationship with a real human being. The best advertisement for any product is a person who has experienced it themselves and LOVES it. The following are some examples of word of mouth engagement:

An Outdoor Mindset (OM) ambassador has a neighbor who has a neurological disorder and invites them to an OM meetup.

An OM community member in Denver alerts his family member in Austin about the meetup group.

An OM ambassador has a conversation in a doctor's office waiting room about how awesome his OM meetup was the night before. A similarly-diagnosed patient in the same waiting room overhears and asks about the meetup.

Intentional relationships are the basis for spreading information by word-of-mouth, and intentionality should be modeled for OM ambassadors by the OM team. Who is each ambassador? What's their story? What struggles are they facing? When are their birthdays? **Have a spreadsheet with information about each ambassador and schedule regular check-ins with them.**

Word of Mouth 2.0

The best way to hear about Outdoor Mindset is from someone within the community themselves. But there are secondary pathways to Word of Mouth dissemination. The following groups of people may not actively participate in the Outdoor Mindset community, but they have theoretical megaphones when it comes to disseminating information:



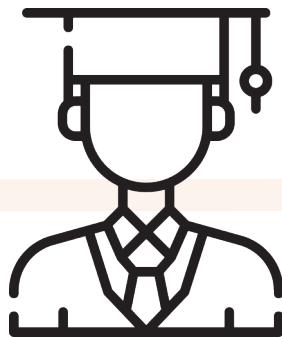
CONFERENCES



DOCTORS

Partnering with a conference or organizations within a conference can help spread the word about the OM message. Send some pamphlets with a non-profit director. Ask to set up a table outside the keynote hall. Connect with a conference and you connect with thousands.

Good doctors help patients implement good mental and self-care. Urge doctors who specialize in neurological disorders to mention Outdoor Mindset to their patients upon diagnosis, or perhaps at a checkup. Start by finding doctors in each OM city. Take them to coffee, give them free OM swag, and show them the beauty of the OM community.



OTHER NON-PROFITS

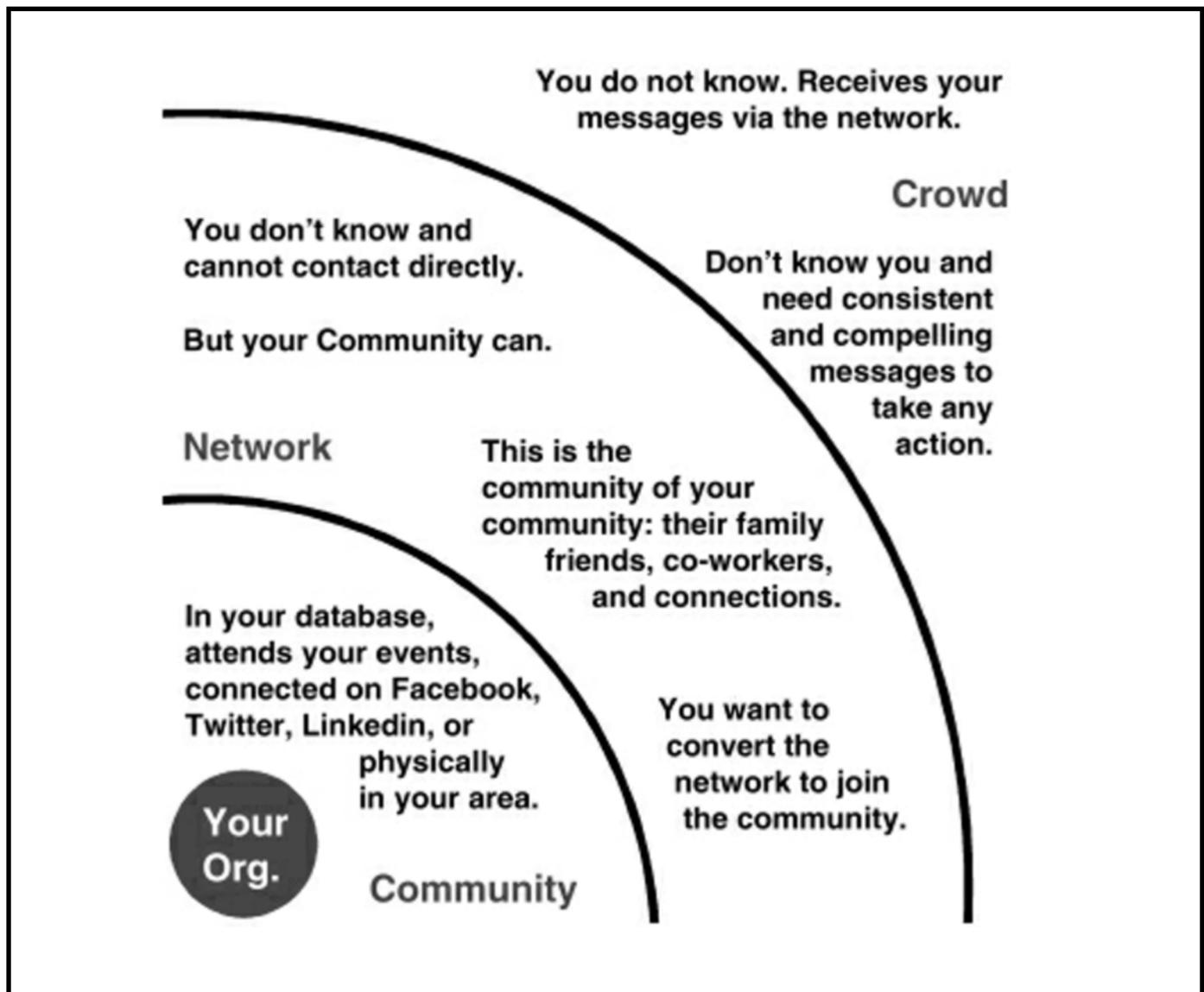
Partnering with similar organizations can be a great way to join hands and make the world a better place for people with neurological disorders. Is the Epilepsy Foundation having an event? Be there. Is a fellow non-profit director working to build their Instagram following? Collaborate a post with them.

SCHOOLS + UNIVERSITIES

Did you know the millennial generation is the most likely generation to volunteer? Colleges are great places to spread information and inspire people to get on board. Connect with student activities director's or medical students. Also connect with high schools and their student leaders to find teen participants.

Digital Engagement

Most people have a screen through which they connect to the rest of the world. Through social media, thousands of messages are thrown at us everyday. So how can Outdoor Mindset make their message stand out? First, it is important to start with a targeted approach. The graphic below shows how we can think about communicating OM goals to the OM community, network and crowd.



The Relationship of Organization to Community, Network, and Crowd Source: A. Kapin and A. Sample Ward, Social Change Anytime Anywhere (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2013).

9 Tips for Digital Engagement

1. Schedule your posts.

At the beginning of each quarter, go through and make a schedule. Typically three posts per week is a consistent pace. Start by figuring out what all the content will be for at least the first 2 weeks and put it in the calendar.

If you can get the schedule down, that is half the battle.

2. Schedule your events.

Keep your audience on their toes by posting about all the great things going on. To do this, go through the same schedule mentioned in Tip #1 and put in all the events for the quarter.

Each event should have a reminder about a week before, and a recap a couple weeks after. These make great #FlashbackFridays and #Wayback Wednesdays.

3. Write good content.

When writing a post, remember to write things that are both informative but also fun to read.

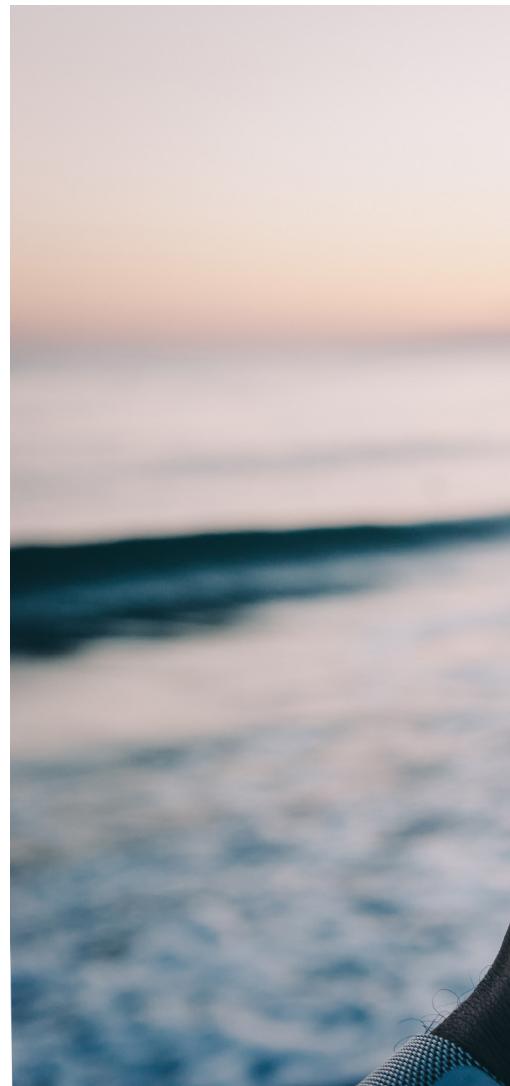
Our audience is mainly people with neurological disorders, but we want any person who does not have a neurological disorder to be able to understand our message and be inspired by the story of empowering each other through community.

4. Taking and edit good photos.

Taking quality photos can be done with a smart phone. However, the photos must be consistent.

Take photos that show action and engagement with people, and use consistent editing styles. One way to do this is by using the same filter every time, either on Instagram or on a free photo editing app like VSCO. Avoid using lots of text on an image; rather pair a great image with a great caption.

People are drawn in to messages by images, so make sure your images display the message well.



5. Use interactive aspects of social media.

Always, always, always use about 5 hashtags on each Instagram post, and use them consistently. #OutdoorMindset should be on every post. Tag everyone in photos: people in the photo, organizations in the photo, etc. You never know who might end up collaborating with you.

If there is an event, use the “Story” or “Live” tools on Facebook and Instagram. Use the “quiz” and “poll” options in Instagram stories to get people to engage. Get people excited about OM!



6. Make your life easy.

Using both Instagram and Facebook is crucial for communicating with the most number of potential Outdoor Mindset community members possible, but you need not post twice.

Integrate Instagram and Facebook by using 1) the apps themselves, or 2) an app like IFFT or Hootsuite.

7. Use more than just social media.

There are times when making a phone call to one individual may be the best action you can take to promote the relational community Outdoor Mindset is founded upon. There are multiple ways to communicate outside of Instagram and Facebook, such as:

- Email. Sending out blog updates or reminders via a MailChimp reminder can be incredibly helpful. Non-millenials often prefer this type of communication.

-Text Message. Millenials are more likely to respond to a text message than almost any other means of communication.

8. Stick to it.

If you say there will be a #linkinbio, put it there. If you commit to three posts per week, make sure they're posted. And without a doubt, strive to stay on schedule - it will make you and your audience members enjoy your feed a lot more.

Retention

How do I keep volunteers?

Finding people to get on board with the Outdoor Mindset message and community is one thing. But what about keeping them around? Sustainable volunteers stay because they receive feedback about their work and they feel supported by their supervisors. The following tips detail how to communicate with volunteers, a list taken from “Volunteer Engagement 2.0,” by Robert J. Rosenthal.



Retaining Volunteers Checklist

1. Be prepared.

The worst thing an organization can do is waste a volunteer's time. If volunteers show up prepared to work—whether for a committee meeting or to staff a silent auction or to mail invitations—you should be prepared to welcome them and support their work.

2. Manage conflict, don't avoid it.

We usually think of conflict in the negative sense, but there is something to be said for a "healthy tension" when passionate people work together to achieve the best results, each bringing their unique point of view and talents to the table. Of course "good conflict" can easily escalate into a no-win situation in which people become entrenched in their opinions and things turn personal. This usually happens when small disagreements or differences of opinion are ignored and a triggering event, usually something minor, escalates the conflict. When working with volunteers, it's important to always have open and honest discussions, be direct yet respectful, and keep the discussion always focused on what's best for your organization's mission.

3. Say "thank you" often.

I've never heard of a volunteer quitting because they felt over appreciated.

4. Practice active listening.

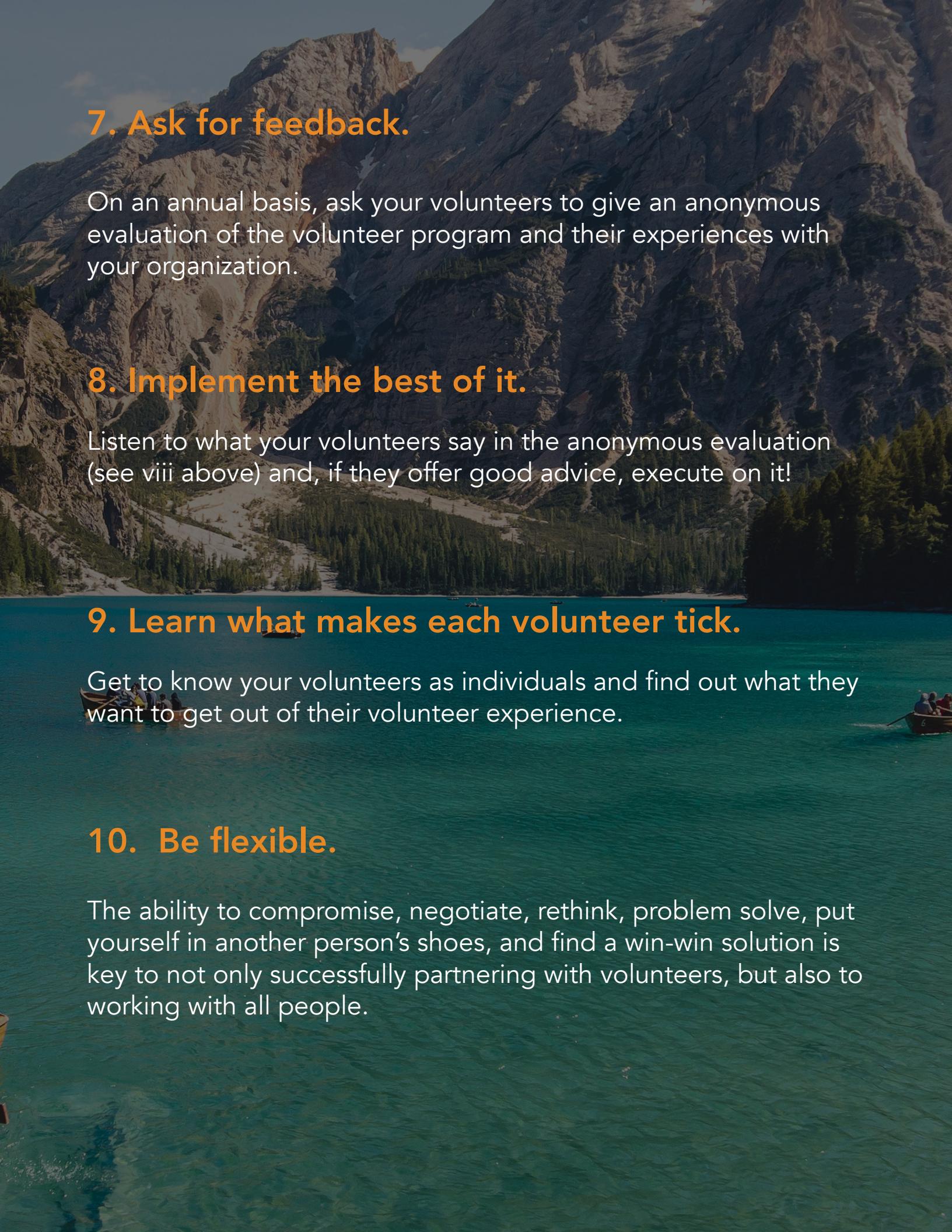
Active listening is not just about hearing what people say, it's about understanding what they mean. It means actively reaching out to your volunteers to ask them how they're feeling about their experience, what's working, what's not, and what they need to be successful. It's also about looking for danger signs ahead of time—the defensive driving of working with people—and picking up on signs that people may be discouraged, overwhelmed, or are becoming disengaged. It's also about making sure you're present when talking with your volunteers—not multitasking with smartphones, papers, or other distractions.

5. Understand that your organization is not your volunteer's number one priority in life.

Guilt may be a powerful motivator for some people, but it's not a good strategy to keep volunteers motivated and coming back.

6. Pick up the phone.

Every now and then, skip the e-mail and pick up the phone to communicate with your volunteer



7. Ask for feedback.

On an annual basis, ask your volunteers to give an anonymous evaluation of the volunteer program and their experiences with your organization.

8. Implement the best of it.

Listen to what your volunteers say in the anonymous evaluation (see viii above) and, if they offer good advice, execute on it!

9. Learn what makes each volunteer tick.

Get to know your volunteers as individuals and find out what they want to get out of their volunteer experience.

10. Be flexible.

The ability to compromise, negotiate, rethink, problem solve, put yourself in another person's shoes, and find a win-win solution is key to not only successfully partnering with volunteers, but also to working with all people.

11. Provide ongoing support.

Like all of us, volunteers need continuous feedback and support to stay connected and ensure everything is on track.

Even the best and most committed volunteers can get side-tracked or find themselves on overload, and it's important to check in at appropriate intervals to offer support, check progress, and of course, just say "thank you."

12. Practice the Platinum Rule

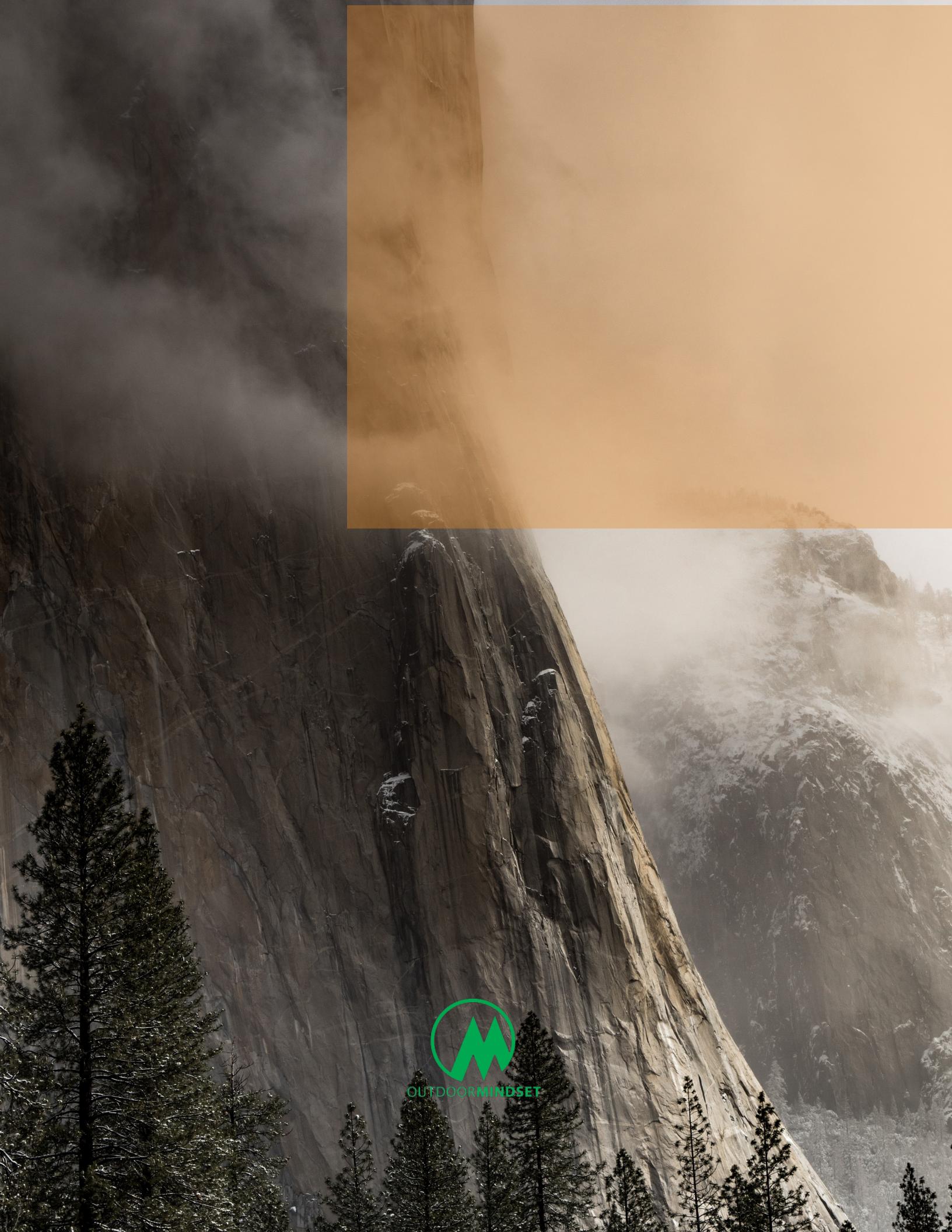
Treat others as they would want to be treated.

Our sector provides an incredible opportunity to work in partnership with caring, passionate, and giving people. At the end of the day, 99.9 percent of our volunteers want to roll up their sleeves, make an impact, and feel valued for their contributions.

Working with these people—all unique and wonderful—is a great gift. Putting ourselves in their shoes and understanding what they want to achieve helps us not only make a connection, but make a difference, too.

Conclusion

Managing volunteers is an often-forgotten aspect of running a non-profit that is crucial to its very success. A healthy non-profit will recruit volunteers that want to stay, and the non-profit's support and feedback will affirm that sustainability. Whether it be in-person or online, management of volunteers at Outdoor Mindset demands intentionality and consistency - two things lacking in the fast-paced society we live in today. Those two elements produce true relationship, which is the life blood of community necessary for building a team at Outdoor Mindset.



OUTDOORMINDSET