



How to create Successful Volunteer Groups to combat graffiti vandalism

FACT:

Giving volunteer groups the correct tools to take charge of graffiti removal in their neighbourhood have always been available from Councils

CHALLENGE:

How to mobilize these groups to take up the challenge and become the custodians of their surrounds.

The reason I am offering a few suggestions, is because I hear a recurring theme when I talk with Councils that they advertise Kits, paint vouchers etc. however the uptake is less than desirable and usually all good intentions on behalf of the Council fall on deaf ears. The major problem is that residents believe as they pay rates Council should fix everything, the reality is that graffiti vandalism is a Community problem that Council has been lumbered with!

HOW TO DIFFUSE THAT MENTALITY:

Pose a simple question next time you are confronted by a ratepayer who demands that you remove graffiti from their property.

"If someone smashes your window as vandalism, do you think the Council should fix it"?

Of course not!

The importance of a question like this is to get an agreement and demonstrate that certain acts of vandalism require other authorities.

By listening to their request and establishing that you can help by providing them with a graffiti removal kit or paint voucher. Also while engaging with this person ask them if others in their neighbourhood, who have had tagging on their property were aware that Kits are available from Council, and leave a contact number with the resident so they can pass it on to their neighbours.

Now you have a new non - costing employee and a future ambassador who will act as source of information on behalf of the Council in their neighbourhood to help remove graffiti.

If that person passes on the information to say 7 people, you now have a Volunteer Group!

HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO VOTE WITH THEIR FEET:

Volunteer groups need to have an identity. As with most volunteer groups they are enthusiastic working toward a cause and goal and it may be a charity, a special project for an individual etc.

They are usually identified by a t-shirt, a vest, an apron with the name of what they are about eg: Save the Whales and many more.

Consider providing this with your City Logo and this will demonstrate that your Council is committed in being supportive, committed and proactive in its determination to eradicate graffiti vandalism in their municipality.

Volunteer groups removing graffiti need that identity as well to reflect their purpose for example:

- ◆ Neighbourhood Pride “Keeping Jonesville Clean & Green”
- ◆ “Graffiti Stop It NOW” City of Smithville
- ◆ “RAGE” Residents against graffiti EVERYWHERE

A Council I am working with at present hold 3 annual information days on consecutive Saturdays in a dedicated locations within their municipality to engage with the community on graffiti vandalism to inform them of the services that Council can offer.

This is a great platform to be at the coalface and get valuable information first hand.

It also presents as a great opportunity to unveil new initiatives.

RECOGNITION IS CRITICAL:

It underpins growth.

Recognition and reward for achievement needs to be integrated into any volunteer programme so that it sustains and creates longevity.

Create a neighbourhood PRIDE Graffiti Removal Trophy.

For example, if your uptake is now 6-8 volunteer groups, have a 3 monthly award for the team that removes the most graffiti in their neighbourhood. It is a little like the Tidy Towns competition it gives the groups a target to work toward.

The reason I suggest a three monthly award is that each group has a chance to win, as there would be nothing worse than toiling for 12 months, and not be recognized, I believe that some volunteers will lose interest.

Have the quarterly “winners group” featured in your Council newsletter a photo and editorial, on your council website or any other publications.

Host a morning tea, invite the local paper and the other volunteer groups, so they can share Experiences, learn about each other and engage positively, to move forward.

Really, what you’re achieving here is ‘making them feel important’...and they are!

More Information on issues that challenge Councils daily is available on our website www.graffitiremovalchemicals.com.au or always pleased to hear from you.

Working together, we can all make a difference!

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