

Expectations of an Excellent Blood Drive Coordinator

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The founder of Walmart, Sam Walton, was often quoted as saying that “High expectations are the key to everything.” He attributed this philosophy, in part, to the incredible success of Walmart. Sam Walton had high expectations of himself, his employees, and the vendors that the business partners with to meet the needs of its shoppers. This belief, and hard work, propelled Walmart to the top of the list of the world’s biggest retailers.

A similar philosophy is held by blood drive coordinator, Erik Humber. He is the coordinator of the Kentfield Fire District / Marin Art & Garden Center (KFD/MAGC) blood drives. His efforts have catapulted the KFD/MAGC blood drive from 14 procedures at the August 2007 drive to 69 procedures at the November 2015 drive. Erik’s high expectations of himself, the Kentfield and broader Marin County community, and Blood Centers of the Pacific (BCP) have been a catalyst for the success of this sponsor’s blood drives. What follows is a closer look at each area and how blood banks can assist blood drive coordinators like Erik.

Erik Humber is a husband, father of two adult daughters, and an attorney by trade. Born in San Francisco and raised in Kentfield, 18 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge, Erik is a graduate of Stanford University and the University of San Francisco School of Law. He started donating blood while in college “always knowing it was the right thing to do”. Erik continues to donate at community blood drives at a ‘Gold Donor Level’ with BCP. The history of the KFD/MAGC blood drives and his involvement with the group are best expressed in his words. This is an excerpt from an October 2015 letter Erik sent to a local parents’ organization asking for their members’ support of a KFD/MAGC blood drive:



As you may know the Kentfield Association of Firefighters has been holding periodic community blood drives at the KFD Fire Station for over 30 years... I was a volunteer firefighter with KFD for 36 years, and am the Blood Drive Coordinator for the KFD/MAGC blood drives held quarterly at the Kentfield Fire Station...with me running them for about the last 10 years. These blood drives are a pure community service by KFD and we receive no remuneration for hosting them. My services as the KFD / MAGC Blood Drive Coordinator are entirely on a volunteer basis, involving 20 to 30 hours of time for each blood drive. Of course the donors at the drive generally receive nothing except a big thanks, and the satisfaction of knowing that their donation is critical to the

maintenance of an adequate local blood supply for those of us who find themselves in need of lifesaving blood transfusions.

The 20 to 30 hours that Erik dedicates to each blood drive starts about a month out from the drive date. Below is a snapshot of the general timeline with expectations Erik has of himself to make each drive a success:

30 days before the drive:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact vendors that are donating anything to the blood drive and confirm their donation before email to donors goes out.• First email blast to “all eligible donors by drive date”.• Reach out to media, Public Service Announcements; compose script and contact radio, cable television, local paper, etc.
21 to 14 days before the drive:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Second email blast to eligible donor list. The email subject line is a reminder: “only XX days to the blood drive”.• A few days after second email blast, start “dialing for donors”. Make phone calls to individual past drive donors. List of donors is from the database provided by BCP to its coordinators through the eDonor program.• A few days after the initial calls to donors, follow up again with those donors where voice mail messages were left or there was no answer.• If signups are going well, or appointment slots are filled up, call BCP and ask for more appointments / staff.
10 days to 1 week before the drive:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Third email blast to eligible donor list. The email subject line is a reminder: “only XX days to the blood drive”.
6 days before the drive:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put up large banner in front of fire station.
2 to 3 days before the drive:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Put out sandwich board signs at 4 major intersections in Kentfield.• Send blast email to all eligible blood donors without appointments.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send appointment reminder email to all donors with scheduled appointments.
Day of drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick up donations from local businesses. • Meet BCP staff at site and assist with set-up as needed. • Greet donors, circulate with donors, ask how it's going, and ask if there are any issues.

Eric has said, "I try to get to know the donors, let them know that I care and want to make the drives better, and generally emphasize that we are all part of the same team." His personal touch helps contribute to a successful blood drive.

In the post drive follow-up with donors, community partners and the blood bank, Erik is equally as dedicated. Within days of the drive he notifies all donors of the drive results and reminds them of the date of the next drive. He addresses any problems or positive feedback received from donors with his blood bank account representative. Erik recognizes the importance of a thorough post-drive process.

While, clearly, Erik is an experienced coordinator, he does believe that blood banks can improve peer to peer results by connecting blood drive coordinators with each other. In addition to quarterly newsletters with best practices from different drive coordinators, blood centers might find value in conducting an annual coordinator workshop. Facilitated by blood bank personnel, it can provide an opportunity for these committed individuals to share their experiences with each other and blood bank personnel in an effort to improve the donor experience and success of all blood drives. These blood drive coordinator brainstorming sessions might well provide new insight for blood bank personnel as how to improve both the coordinator and donor experience and grow blood drive results. Much of the success in the growth of the KFD/MAGC blood drives can be attributed to the personal commitment of Erik as a blood drive coordinator.

The high expectations that Erik has of the individuals, businesses, and organizations in the Kentfield area have paid off in strong support for the KFD/MAGC blood drives. In his email to eligible donors prior to the group's November 2015 drive, Erik reminded them that it was an opportunity for all to "express our thanks that we are healthy enough to be able to donate for others in our community who are in need of our blood". Erik knows that this community helps neighbors in need when the need is defined and a way to help has been identified. Spreading the word about the need for people to donate blood for local patients undergoing transfusion is something Erik does. He asks the KFD/MAGC donors to do the same. In his email to donors, Erik always asks that they "bring a family member, significant other, friend, or workmate" with them to the drive as there is always a need to add new members to the blood "donor family". Additionally he asks donors and other members of the community to "consider printing, posting, or forwarding the poster to others to help spread the word" about each KFD/MAGC blood drive. The Kentfield/ Marin business community also supports the local blood drive. Local

pizza restaurants, bakeries, and other business owners promote the drives at their facilities. Some businesses donate food as “thank-you” gifts for donors.

Blood banks can best assist coordinators like Erik and their donors by constantly looking for ways to improve the donor experience. As with most blood drives, the complaint about the length of the donation process is most challenging for Eric. At times, staffing challenges by the blood bank and new processes and procedures have resulted in longer-than-usual waits for blood donors. This has caused frustration for some donors, culminating in a feeling that their time is not respected. Erik keeps his BCP representative aware of concerns expressed to him from donors. Today’s blood donor has many responsibilities and time management is a challenge that many people face. Blood banks must find ways to keep the length of the donation process reasonable and honor donor appointment times, while accepting walk-in donors as they are able. This can be a challenge for blood banks in periods of staffing reductions. Finding the right balance, however, is critical to the continued success and growth of a blood drive such as this. Staffing capacities must at a minimum remain at a level that allows for unexpected staffing developments on the day of the drive that might negatively impact the donor experience.

Understandably, this experienced blood drive coordinator has high expectations of the blood bank he partners with for the KFD/MAGC blood drives. Erik has been very happy with the Account Representative, Jeanne Nielsen, direct liaison from BCP, and her efforts “to make each drive a success”. Jeanne describes Erik as “one of the most committed” blood drive coordinators she works with and applauds his longtime dedication to the cause as a blood donor. He communicates with her regularly in the lead-up to each drive. He knows how many collection staff members the blood bank sends to each drive. Years of watching the donor flow at each event has given him keen insight into what helps the flow of the blood drive. In addition to the appropriate number of staff based on projection and drive history, he believes that a staff member’s history with the drive can also impact the drive results. When possible, he suggests that blood banks would be wise to send the same staff members to these drives repeatedly. The staff builds upon a personal relationship with donors and the blood drive coordinator. It adds to the sense of the community blood drive. Also, staff is more used to the load-in and load-out responsibilities and needs for the drive site setup. Having a crew experienced with the KFD/MAGC drive and its donors “helps tremendously,” says Erik. “It’s important that the drive starts on time and the Head Nurse is accommodating of walk-ins,” he adds. He knows that there will be walk-ins and people who make an appointment but for some reason or another are not be able to make it to the drive. The blood drive must be staffed to a level to support this reality and staff must be trained to effectively manage drive flow while positively impacting the donation experience for all donors.

In conclusion, Erik Humber is a high-performing blood drive coordinator. He has high expectations of himself as to his responsibilities as a blood drive coordinator. He is the key to the success of the KFD/MAGC blood drives. His high expectations of the individuals, organizations and businesses in the Kentfield community, have resulted in an increasing number of blood donors and supporters of the KFD/MAGC drives. Lastly, his high expectation that BCP will continue to make improvements in the donation process, based on feedback from

donors and coordinators, only makes sense. If we in blood banking listen closely, drive coordinators such as Erik can offer needed perspective for improving the donation experience of those they recruit on behalf of the patients and hospitals we serve.