

Why DO people volunteer?

Knowing what motivates people to volunteer is an important key to volunteer management. For some, it is the love of your organization or it may be to give something back to the community. For others, the motivation may be accomplishment, self-satisfaction, companionship, social prestige, status, or learning about the field.

DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

When developing or restructuring a volunteer program, take time to reflect on your organizational and volunteer needs. What could you not do or not do as well without the help of volunteers? You should already have a clearly defined mission statement for your organization. Now you will want to develop one for your volunteers—how they will help the organization and how their volunteerism will enhance its mission. Define the needed assistance areas and what the volunteers will contribute. Think about how you will manage the program, how much it will cost, if staff positions will need to be modified, etc. Make sure you have management support of the program and that you develop goals, a timeline, a budget, policies and procedures, and designate a volunteer liaison.

Determine what qualities and qualifications you require. Are there educational or physical requirements? How much time will be required, on what days, at what times, and where? Keep in mind that volunteers are not employees but are part-time and sometimes less than part-time helpers. Define your training, supervision and support. **Don't ask a volunteer to do anything you wouldn't do yourself.**

Job descriptions are a planning and management tool for each volunteer position. Including staff when designing new volunteer opportunities will create a more supportive relationship between staff and volunteers. Provide every volunteer with a short, clearly defined job description. Some points to include are: title, duties, goals, qualifications/skills, training, responsibilities, time commitment, work location, supervision, evaluation criteria, etc.

Only recruit volunteers for the positions you need. Volunteers find it particularly discouraging to go through training for a particular position only to learn that there are no openings and possibly nothing worthwhile for them to do.

RECRUITING

When you need volunteers, let people know you want them. Yes, you need them, but doesn't "want" sound more inviting? Start with your current staff and membership. Ask them to invite friends, family, or co-workers to events and to distribute membership information. Typical recruiting materials include brochures, invitations, membership forms, notices and posters. Make it easy to volunteer. According to Independent Sector research, 63 percent of people will volunteer when asked compared to 25 percent who volunteer on their own.

The best marketing tool is word of mouth, and your current volunteers are a good source for finding new members. Their family or friends may be interested or associates at church, clubs, businesses, community associations and other organizations where they belong. Suggest they talk about how much fun they have as a volunteer. **Get them to spread the word!**

Nothing is better than person-to-person communication so go out into the community and talk to groups or find a way to bring them to you. Explain why your organization is worthy of the donation of volunteer time, the good that can be done by volunteering, and how the community will benefit. Cultivate every potential connection to your organization. Newspapers and radio stations may also support your recruitment efforts.

Try networking with other organizations, posting the information on your Web site, or marketing volunteer opportunities online.

Don't overlook contacting corporations as many encourage employee volunteerism. Also, high schools, private schools, and colleges often have requirements for community service. Consider virtual volunteering where newsletters, Web site design and maintenance or research can be done entirely online.

Ensure that volunteers represent the population and community you are serving. Try to build a diverse volunteer workforce including those who are disabled.

SCREENING/INTERVIEWING

Let's assume that you have now received lots of calls and/or registration forms. What do you do? Contact those interested people within twenty-four hours! As you talk with them, make it clear you are truly happy they are interested in volunteering. Ask each one how they learned of this opportunity. That will assist you in the best use of recruiting resources. Provide basic information about the organization and the volunteer opportunities available. Get a general idea of what the volunteer is interested in doing and why she/he wants to be part of your program. Follow up by sending specifics about volunteering such as training and time involved.

An application form is another tool for learning about the volunteer and gaining an insight into their expectations. You might want to include a form to be completed. Also, add the names of your new contacts to the newsletter list immediately. It shows your interest, and they will learn more about the organization.

Holding a screening interview is a good way to learn more about the volunteer, make requirements, policies and procedures clear, and assess the volunteer's fit with the organization. Ask any questions you may have prepared based on your review of the job description and the potential volunteer's application form. Take time to describe the specifics of the role they would play as well as how they will make a difference. Without grilling them, ask enough questions so you feel good about putting the volunteer in a position that is a good match for their skills and interests as well as for the duties you need performed. Also invite questions, comments, and concerns from the volunteer so they feel like they have all the information they need, too. If you both agree to the arrangement, there should be an understanding that either party can change their mind if it doesn't work out.

You may also want to consider creating a written contract or agreement between the volunteer and your organization. It should spell out both the volunteer's and organization's responsibilities. This could be helpful in settling disagreements and for evaluations.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Now that you've taken the time to find the right volunteers, it's essential to make sure they feel comfortable in their new role with your organization. Invite them to an orientation. It could be a coffee or lunch. People who attend orientations tend to feel more comfortable and confident as they know what to expect and it gives them an opportunity to meet and make relationships with staff or other volunteers.

Greet the volunteers upon arrival and thank them for their interest. Introduce them to staff members, particularly those they will be working with, and the director or board members, if present.

Cover all basics not previously addressed such as the mission and history of the organization, who is served, the dress code, locations of rest rooms, telephones, the cost of membership, etc. Provide and discuss the volunteer handbook if you have developed one, bylaws, or policies and procedures. Explain volunteer rights and responsibilities. Talk about the job descriptions. Explain training requirements, benefits of volunteering, and the need (if you require it) for background checks if there is work with children, priceless items, or driving is involved, for instance. Then give the volunteers a tour, pointing out areas they will need to be familiar with.

Give volunteers a chance to ask questions. Provide them with a printed schedule of training dates and upcoming events they

should attend. Process them through your system as quickly as possible so they don't lose their motivation for volunteering.

RECOGNITION AND RETENTION

For the first day on the job, have someone greet the new volunteer and have a clean workspace, name tag, supplies, etc., ready. Initially, a staff member or other volunteer could mentor the new person, but allow the volunteer some freedom to develop the position. Ask for their input. All this makes them feel they are part of the group, are contributing, and helps you when assessing the position and/or program. Keep work interesting, meaningful and challenging according to their skills and interests. Provide work that can be accomplished in a relatively small commitment of time. It's also important to be flexible in scheduling.

If an event is to be held away from the office, make sure volunteers know what to expect. Provide information about the time to report, directions, supplies, parking, rest room locations, food, how to contact a supervisor after hours, etc. Make expectations clear.

People will stop volunteering when they are dissatisfied. Provide regular direct communication in person, by phone, e-mail, newsletters, bulletin boards or meetings. Provide continuing education by way of training to learn new things. Develop a relationship—get to know the volunteer—make sure they know their

worth and provide an “open door” to your office. Encourage them to tell you how they feel about their work. Keep them informed about the organization and the accomplishments of the volunteer program. Arrange activities so they can meet fellow volunteers, exchange ideas, and talk to and ask questions of staff. Do an annual volunteer satisfaction survey. Make volunteers feel competent, and they will do a good job.

Show that you value your volunteers for what they contribute and acknowledge the work they are doing. Thank them, smile when you see them, know their name, remember their birthday, keep track of their volunteer hours and recognize milestones including the anniversary of volunteering with your organization, give certificates, pins, plaques or even tickets to an event. Hold coffees, lunches, picnics, banquets or dinners in their honor. Be sure the means of recognition is meaningful, frequent, personal, cost effective and timely to the achievement. Let people know what your volunteers are doing—your donors, board, news media. Publicly recognize volunteers when the opportunity arises. Send thank you notes, cards, or establish a volunteer of the month award. Plan rewards for each person keeping in mind that just as people have different motivations for volunteering, so they have different ideas about what type of recognition is meaningful for them.

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

Day-to-day supervision and regular evaluation is essential for both the organization and the volunteer. Evaluation allows you and the volunteer to assess how the placement is working, whether they are fulfilling their role effectively, and whether changes need to be made. This can be done either formally or informally, but it will tie in with the overall program evaluation.

Evaluating the impact of volunteer programs is also vital. It's important to show you are making good use of resources, and CEOs, boards, and funders want to know both the positive impact and the difference volunteer programs are making on constituents, the organization, or the community as it relates to the mission. Since impact measures the extent to which people changed or benefited through your services and programs, focus on what volunteers do. Look at the goals of the program and determine who has been helped, in what way, what changes occurred, and to what degree. If the evaluation shows that the program is not meeting its potential, move toward change and track the movement as part of the ongoing process.

Volunteers are "donors" of their time—a valuable commodity. So, please take the time to appreciate the talent, knowledge, and assistance these volunteers give to you.

Volunteer Recruitment Web sites

These sites allow you to post volunteer opportunities and find volunteers:

www.volunteermatch.org

www.idealist.org

www.servenet.org

Resources

A worthwhile \$20 investment:

Developing Effective Volunteer Leadership Workshop Materials

Contact Jan Davis, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, 405.524.7559 or e-mail jdavis@oltn.odl.state.ok.us

Resources for Volunteer Managers

www.serviceleader.org/new/managers/

Volunteer Management Review <http://charitychannel.com/vmr.shtml>

Developing and Managing Volunteer Programs www.mapnp.org/library/staffing/outsrcng/volnteer/volnteer.htm

Best Practices for Developing a Volunteer Program www.gosv.state.md.us/volunteerism/publications.asp

The Volunteer Center of Central Oklahoma
405.842.2711 or www.volunteerok.net/

The Tulsa Volunteer Center, 918.585.5551
www.tulsavolunteercenter.org/

Independent Sector
www.independentsector.org/programs/research/gv01main.html



P.O. Box 52001-2001
OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73152-2001
405.521.2931
TDD 405.521.2931

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SBC Exclerator Competitive Technology Grants Program

The program seeks to fund projects that build the technology infrastructure of nonprofits enabling them to increase their organizational effectiveness and/or service delivery capability. Examples of qualifying projects include Internet access, data networking, online outreach, staff technology capacity, and pooled technology resources.

Deadline: 5:00 p.m., August 13, 2004
Information: Call 800.591.9663 or see
www.sbc.com/Common/files/doc/2004_regional_%20RFP.doc

"Driving Force"

VSA Arts and Volkswagen of America, Inc. have launched a call for entries to identify promising young artists aged 16-25 with disabilities. Selected artwork will be part of an exhibit in Washington, D.C., during October of 2004 that will then tour throughout the United States for the following two years.

This year's theme, "Driving Force," challenges artists to consider what motivates and inspires creativity.

Deadline: August 6, 2004
Information: 800.933.8721, ext. 3877 or
www.vsarts.org/programs/vw/