

REDEFINING VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteers are individuals who reach out beyond the confines of their paid employment and of their normal responsibilities to contribute time and service to a not-for-profit cause in the belief that their activity is beneficial to others as well as satisfying to themselves.

- Volunteer 2000 Study

“VOLUNTEER VIEWPOINT”

If you want my loyalty, interest and best efforts, remember that

1. I need a SENSE OF BELONGING, a feeling that I am honestly needed for my total self, not just for my hands, nor because I take orders well.
2. I need to have a sense of sharing in planning our objectives. My need will be satisfied only when I feel that my ideas have had a fair hearing.
3. I need to feel that the goals and objectives arrived at are within reach and that they make sense to me.
4. I need to feel that what I'm doing has real purpose or contributes to human welfare - that its value extends even beyond my personal gain, or hours.
5. I need to share in making the the rules by which, together, we shall live, and work toward our goals.
6. I need to know in some clear detail just what is expected of me - not only my detailed task but where I have opportunity to make personal and final decisions.
7. I need to have some responsibilities that challenge, that are within range of my abilities and interest, and that contribute toward reaching my assigned goal, and that covers all goals.
8. I need to see that progress is being made toward the goals we have set.
9. I need to be kept informed. What I'm not up on, I may be down on. (Keeping me informed is one way to give me status as an individual.)
10. I need to have confidence in my superiors - confidence based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment, or recognition when it is due, and trust that loyalty will bring increased security.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

1. Continued participation depends upon rewards.
2. Volunteers must see the relationship of the job they do, however small, to the total effect.
3. Volunteers must be made to feel the importance of their contribution.
4. The first efforts of a volunteer must be simple enough to insure success.
5. Volunteers must have opportunities to grow and learn.
6. Volunteers must be encouraged to make as many decisions as possible.
7. Volunteers work best in a friendly, warm atmosphere, where their efforts are obviously needed and appreciated.
8. Volunteers must not be taken for granted.
9. Keep volunteers informed about developments in the organization.
10. Care enough about volunteers to learn about their strengths.

“WHAT DOES A VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR DO, ANYWAY?”

People ask that sometimes. Here are some of the roles that volunteer coordinators play.

A Volunteer Coordinator is:

- a manager handles planning, allocation of resources, operations, quality and quantity of volunteers; must satisfy three constituents - volunteers, staff and clients
- a personal expert interviews skillfully, matches volunteers and jobs, deals with inappropriate or nonproductive volunteers, motivates and evaluates volunteers
- a statistician keeps records, documents hours, calculates volunteer worth, demonstrates cost-effectiveness of program
- a communicator articulates orally and in writing, concisely and clearly, to a number of audiences through newsletters, correspondence, on the phone, speechmaking
- a trainer trains volunteers and staff, informally and on-the-job
- a diplomat & problem solver handles upset feelings and finds solutions to sticky problems; arbitrates for volunteers and staff in times of discord
- twice and expert knows probably more than anyone else in the agency about volunteer management, and knows that agency and all its parts
- a supervisor oversees the activities of, in some cases, more people than any other administrator in the agency
- a self starter and creative thinker does a job that often other people don't understand and is always aware of new ways to approach getting things done
- a social director plans recognition and appreciation activities, from sharing a cup of coffee to formal recognition events
- a salesperson sells volunteer jobs to volunteers, volunteers to staff, volunteerism to the administration, the agency to the public
- an advocate takes the side of the volunteer when appropriate



United Way of
Chittenden County
Volunteer Center

11 Basic Elements of Volunteer Management

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Whether you have been working with volunteers for 1 week or 20 years these eleven elements will always serve as the framework for working with volunteers. This list in its linear format is really deceptive; rather it is really a cyclical process.

As you read through this you will see that volunteer management has all of the elements of employee management, only without the paycheck. Please keep in mind that all of these elements should be considered and planned for before recruiting your first volunteer.

1. JOB/PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: What are you are looking for? You cannot go out and recruit volunteers until you have written a full job description. This includes not only the essential duties but also what skills a volunteer must already possess, the days and hours you need the person, what training will be provided, and who will supervise the volunteer. For consistency it is a good idea to develop a form that will be used throughout your agency. If there are several volunteer jobs that need to be filled keep copies of these job descriptions in a notebook for anyone to reference.

2. RECRUITMENT: What qualities/skills are you looking for in a volunteer? Where do you find people with these qualities/skills? This will tell you where you might start recruiting. How do you get the word out to the public; through what kind of media? Some of the best tools are small town newspapers and local access stations through your cable t.v. company. In addition more and more companies are trying to start volunteer programs with their employees; can you send a letter or talk to the Community Relations officer at a bank or a utilities company? Companies are beginning to realize that their employees are happier when they are contributing to the community, and, at the same time are learning skills that may be of value to the employer.

3. INTERVIEWING & SCREENING: Now that you have a job description and have found some potential volunteers, do you have an interviewing process in place? It is important to meet with someone without the assumption that this volunteer-agency partnership is a done deal. There has to be a good fit for both you and the volunteer. During, and at the conclusion of, this interview either or both sides of the equation must feel free to say if this will not work. You are not doing anyone a favor by starting to work with them if you can foresee a problem. Better to be up front from the beginning.

4. MATCHING/ASSIGNING: You may have several different kinds of volunteer needs; which best fit with the skills offered by the volunteer? A volunteer may come in with an idea about what they would like to do but you may see that their skills are better suited for another need.

5. ORIENTATION: One of the most forgotten steps. We are usually so eager to get a volunteer going on a project that we forget to orient this person to the agency as a whole. To do this you should first have an agency mission statement and be able to explain to the volunteer how the work that they are doing is "mission critical." Whether it be stuffing envelopes or tutoring, each person needs to know how they are helping the agency meet its goals and fulfill its mission. You should also be sure that the volunteer meets everyone in the office, learns where the coffeemaker, bathrooms and copier are and finally where their work-space will be. Most volunteers stay with an agency when they feel connected to **the people** of the agency; it is not just about the cause.

6. TRAINING: There is a training period and a learning curve for each volunteer. You need to expect and plan for this in an organized way. Volunteers need to feel free to ask many questions and not feel as though they are being a bother. Expect to repeat directions several times; it takes all of us a while to make certain practices a matter of habit.

7. SUPERVISION/SUPPORT: Again, who is responsible for supervising and supporting this volunteer? There must be a clear chain of command so that the volunteer knows who s/he can go to. Staff should be clear amongst themselves about who is responsible for this person's work.

8. EVALUATION: This is a step that many of us shy away from, and then we wonder what went wrong when we lose volunteers. There must be time, created by the supervisor, for the volunteer and supervisor to go over how things are working for both the volunteer and the agency. This is a mutual evaluation. Your volunteers have many ideas, thoughts and concerns to offer from a different perspective.

9. RECOGNITION/APPRECIATION: This does not have to be fancy. It can be anything from bringing in bagels or a pot-luck lunch made by staff, to a personal note sent to the volunteer at home simply saying "thank you." Volunteers also like to hear "good morning," "thank you," and "I'm so glad you're here."

10. REFLECTION: Take time to think about your whole volunteer management program; which pieces are working and which need some attention. You can do this with your volunteers as well as with fellow staff members.

11. RECORD KEEPING: Start a file on each volunteer. Have a sign-in book that tracks volunteers' hours and how long they have been with your agency. It is a very powerful statement to be able to announce how many volunteer hours your agency has leveraged per year and the dollar value of those donated hours. This kind of information should go to your board of directors, the media, your donors and back to your volunteers.

Revisit this list periodically; share it with your volunteers and other staff. There is no one perfect management system. These elements can be implemented in many different ways to fit each agency. It is a system that should be developed and implemented by the entire staff and reviewed periodically as your needs evolve.



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The United Way of Chittenden County Volunteer Center supports volunteerism by recruiting and referring individuals to satisfying volunteer opportunities, while providing non-profit organizations with volunteer management assistance, consultation and training support. We work with over 200 non-profit organizations and place well over 1,500 volunteers a year. Our programs include:



The Volunteer Connection is a referral service for students, adults and families as well as groups of volunteers from businesses, clubs, schools, colleges and other organizations.



RSVP provides adults 55 and over with one-to-one personalized service to find rewarding and satisfying volunteer opportunities that match their unique skills, talents and interests.



The Foster Grandparent Program serves Chittenden, Franklin, Grand Isle and Washington Counties. Adults 60 and over are matched with volunteer opportunities at educational sites where they can make a difference in the lives of children.

RECRUITMENT

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to be?
3. Who do we have now?
4. Who (& what) do we need?
5. How will we find them?
6. How will we ask them?
7. How do we match the right person to the right job?
8. What follow-through is needed?

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

The Message

- Most recruiting messages neglect mentioning why a person is wanted to do a particular job. The messages most often mention the activities the person will be performing.
- To be effective, a recruitment message should have a statement of need that shows people a particular problem that exists.

Statements of Need

- Hospital volunteer: “Many patients in the hospital for long stays are lonely and depressed.”
- Mental health receptionist: “Clients coming into the center are often embarrassed, confused and uneasy.”
- Art museum docent: “Many people who visit the museum would like to know more about the exhibits. Sometimes their lack of knowledge causes them to miss a great deal of the meaning and beauty of the exhibits, and their interest in returning to the museum wanes.”
- Literacy volunteer: “Many people from all walks of life are unable to take advantage of the full benefits of our society because they are unable to read or write.”
- Agency envelope stuffer: “A key part of our being able to meet the needs of the physically disabled in our community is a direct mail appeal, which is hindered by lack of staff time to stuff and address envelopes.”
- Community action agency bookkeeper: “In order to continue our efforts to improve the lives of the poor, we must account for our grants properly, a skill none of our staff have.”

Are you an Effective Volunteer Motivator?

1. When was the last time you greeted a volunteer by name?
2. When was the last time you welcomed a volunteer to your agency by saying “Thanks for coming to help us today”?
3. When was the last time you treated a volunteer to lunch?
4. When did you last ask a volunteer how he was enjoying his work?
5. When did you last update your volunteers on developments in the agency?
6. When did you last have a special event to honor your volunteers?
7. When was the last time your executive director and/or board chair spoke to the volunteers?
8. When was the last time you said, “We missed you” to a volunteer who had been on vacation?
9. When was the last time you called a volunteer who had been out sick to see how she was doing?
10. When did you last mention your volunteers in a newsletter or in the press?
11. When was the last time you sent a personal thank you letter to a volunteer?
12. When was the last time you called a volunteer just to say “thank you”?
13. When was the last time you sat down with a volunteer to evaluate his work, praise his talents and suggest ways to improve his efforts?
14. When was the last time you offered new opportunities to a volunteer?
15. When was the last time you asked your volunteers to suggest ways to improve your volunteer program?
16. When did you last ask volunteers to suggest ways to improve your agency?

Is it time for you to develop an ongoing plan to recognize and motivate your volunteers?

COACHING STEPS:

1. Explain purpose and importance of what you are trying to do.
2. Explain the process to be used.
3. Show how it's done.
4. Observe while the person practices the process.
5. Provide immediate and specific feedback (coach again or reinforce success).
6. Express confidence in the person's ability to be successful.
7. Agree on follow-up action.

TERMINATING A VOLUNTEER

REASONS FOR DISMISSAL

On rare occasions, Manager of Volunteers are faced with the unpleasant task of dismissing a volunteer. It should be noted that unless you have a good management system in place (clear job descriptions, orientation and supervision, etc.) it is very difficult to fire a volunteer. Most often firing is neglected, frequently with high costs to the individual and the organization.

Generally volunteers can be dismissed for the following reasons:

- Misconduct
- Unsatisfactory performance
- Breach of confidentiality
- Inappropriate behavior
- Disregard of policies and procedures
- Health unacceptable to the point of being a hazard to self and others
- Suitable assignment not available

ALTERNATIVES TO DISMISSAL

If the infraction is such that immediate dismissal is not called for, you may consider the following alternatives to firing:

1. Give a warning and develop a plan to improve behavior.
2. Provide additional training which may enable the volunteer to perform better.
3. Place in another more suitable job in the organization.
4. Refer to a Volunteer Center or other agency for more suitable placement.

5. Retire the volunteer. (This is the delicate situation in which a person is unable to do a satisfactory job due to increasing mental, physical or aging problems.) You might plan a nice retirement party honoring the volunteer for his/her service.
6. Reassign to a different person in the organization (if the problems stemmed from a poor personality match).

HOW TO FIRE A VOLUNTEER (AND SURVIVE)

It might be difficult to imagine yourself firing a volunteer, and often it is nearly impossible to do because the organization does not have the appropriate systems in place to perform a termination. When in doubt, use standards in place in the organization for firing a paid employee. Remember, however, that a volunteer must be clearly informed of his/her role and responsibilities through a clear job description and must understand from the start of the relationship that certain standards and expectations must be met for the success and continuation of the relationship between the volunteer and the organization.

Remember: Volunteers fire organizations frequently when they do not meet the volunteers' expectations. Occasionally, too, volunteers must be dismissed from the organization.

4 ESSENTIALS OF FIRING VOLUNTEERS

1. As part of orienting each volunteer, you should give him/her a copy of the agency policies on termination, including a policy on suspension and grievance procedures. This provides volunteers with forewarning that volunteers can be terminated. It also assures salaried staff that volunteers can be dismissed from the organization.
2. With few exceptions (i.e., observed harm to clients, theft, etc.) volunteers should not be fired until you have had an opportunity to provide an in-depth investigation, Making certain that you have proof of violation of agency policies or performance standards. You may choose to suspend the volunteer while the investigation is taking place. Determine if there are any excusable or extenuating circumstances, and always document, in writing, your investigation and conclusions. It is advised that you confirm the termination in writing with the volunteer.
3. Firing volunteers should be handled fairly and with the utmost diplomacy. Don't apologize for your decision. Allow for an appeals process.
4. Provide notification to staff, clients and others who need to be informed that the volunteer will no longer be working at the organization

EVALUATION-RATING YOUR OWN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The following is a recommended checklist to aid agencies in evaluating their volunteer programs.

1. Do you have a regular procedure for reporting your volunteer program activities to:
 - a. your board?
 - b. your agency?
 - c. your agency administrators?
2. How do you make staff members supervising volunteers aware of their responsibilities?
3. How do you make your staff aware of volunteer activities at your agency? How often?
4. Is each volunteer interviewed before a volunteer assignment is made?
5. Who does the interviewing?
6. Does the interview cover:
 - a. volunteer opportunities available?
 - b. amount of time required by volunteer?
 - c. duties of volunteer?
 - d. skills needed?
 - e. agency commitment?
 - f. other?
7. How many different volunteer opportunities are available in this agency?
8. How many written, up-to-date job descriptions are available?
9. How could volunteer opportunities in this agency be expanded?
10. How and by whom is orientation provided for the volunteer?
11. Does the orientation include:
 - a. purpose of the agency?
 - b. how the agency operates?
 - c. how the agency is structured?
 - d. overall agency policies?
 - e. an agency tour?
 - f. history of the agency?
 - g. other?
12. Is the orientation given:
 - a. formally or informally?
 - b. to a group or to each individual?
13. Are there major differences between orientation of volunteers and orientation of paid staff members?
14. Do all volunteers receive training for all assignments?
15. Does the agency have a written training plan?
16. Is additional training in particular areas available for interested volunteers? In which areas?