



Recruiting & Managing Volunteers

For most organisations recruiting the volunteers they need, getting the best out of them and retaining them involves investing time and resource, so it is worth getting it right. Below are some tips on:

- **Recruitment**
- **Induction**
- **Training**
- **Support and Supervision**
- **Motivation and Recognition of Volunteers**

Recruitment

What do volunteers enable your organisation to do? Research shows the main reasons people volunteer is to make a difference to others, meet new people, gain experience and learn new skills - to be an effective recruiter you need to match what people want with what you offer. For example, you may need someone to help in the office but what you are 'selling' is the opportunity to support the work of your organisation and thereby make a difference to your beneficiary group.

Identify who you want to recruit

Do you want to recruit any one or do you want a specific set of skills and/or experiences? If you need specifics think about the sort of message that will appeal to this audience and how the message will reach them. For example, younger people or those looking to return to work might be interested in gaining experience and you might contact your local college to advertise your opportunity online.

Create role descriptions

Role descriptions should reflect the contribution the volunteer will be making, the sorts of tasks they will be performing, the location, the availability you are looking for, the skills and qualities you need, the training and support you will offer, whether you will offer out of pocket expenses and the application process including any necessary safeguarding checks.

Use your existing network

If you already have volunteers ask them why they volunteer and why they stay. Use your existing volunteers, staff, beneficiaries, trustees and supporters as ambassadors to let others know you are looking for volunteers.

Other ways to get your message to potential volunteers

- Put up posters in the local area, advertising for volunteers.
- Place an ad in the local newspaper or use events and special occasions to get coverage from local press and radio (community newsletters, letters to the editor, church magazines, local radio).
- Give a talk or presentation to a targeted audience such as schools, colleges, local employers, job clubs, etc.
- Attend community festivals and events to raise your profile
- Use social media, community websites, your own and other organisations' face book posts, twitter and Instagram
- Register with free volunteering databases such as www.do-it.org

Think about what stops people volunteering

The sorts of reasons people give is lack of time, concern they lack the right experience, financial concerns (travel costs and mistakenly believing volunteering can affect social security

benefits), they might be put off by a formal 'long winded' application processes, they may feel they won't fit in with existing volunteers or they may feel volunteering is not valued.

Potential volunteers may express concerns and fears about working in situations which are unfamiliar, new, or challenging. Addressing these issues will help to clarify what is involved in volunteering and reassure people about their ability to do the work. Here are some suggestions about how to deal with these concerns:

- Have one-to-one discussions or informal interviews with volunteers as a way of finding out more about the work without making a definite commitment
- Stress that no previous experience is necessary if this is appropriate and accurate
- Emphasis that full training will be given before volunteers are expected to carry out any voluntary work
- Offer a trial period that allow volunteers to try out the work without committing themselves fully.

Induction

Once volunteers have been accepted into the organisation, a good way of getting things started is to have an induction session in which volunteers are introduced to the organisation. To keep volunteers you have to tap into whatever motivates them and key to this is making them feel they are making a positive contribution from the start and that they are valued.

Induction is a formal opportunity for new volunteers to ask questions about the organisation, clarify their role and find out what is involved. Good induction should help a volunteer feel part of the organisation and begin to develop a sense of commitment towards it.

Induction should include an overview of the work of the organisation, provide information about the aims of the project,

the work or services involved and an opportunity to meet other paid workers and volunteers. Induction can be organised in a variety of ways, including on a one to one or group basis.

Induction on a group basis if there are enough volunteers and resources to do this, is particularly useful as it enables new volunteers to get to know each other, build a sense of team spirit and develop supportive relationships.

It is a good idea to put together an induction pack so that new volunteers can have all the information they need. An induction pack could include a volunteer policy, volunteer agreement, voluntary work outline, equal opportunities policy, health and safety policy, information on expenses etc.

Training

Volunteers should be provided with all the training they need in order to carry out their role. If the task is quite demanding or specialised then there will be a need to have some specific training sessions before the volunteers can carry out their work. Having clear and simple voluntary work outlines will help in identifying training needs. A training programme can then be produced to develop the skills and qualities that are needed to carry out the work.

It will also be helpful to identify any on-going training needs that volunteers may have so the training programmes can be developed to facilitate volunteers progress in the organisation.

Support and Supervision

Regular opportunities for support and supervision are important and can help to identify and even prevent overload and burnout, which often results in volunteers leaving your organisation. Good supervision develops the skills of an individual volunteer and seeks to enhance the quality of service the organisation can offer. It is vital that volunteers are

adequately supported in their role and that they are genuinely enabled to deal with the demands of their voluntary work. It is also important that volunteers receive regular feedback on the effectiveness of their work so that any issues can be dealt with as they arise.

The format and regularity of support and supervision will depend on the type of voluntary work people are involved in. This can be provided through a one to one arrangement with a line manager, or a named buddy or mentor who could be a more experienced volunteer, available to discuss work related issues in confidence. Support and supervision could also be provided on a group basis which is often more cost effective. Group supervision also has the additional benefits of enabling volunteers to experience a variety of views on the issues being discussed.

It is important that attention is given to having a supportive and safe environment for regular review meetings with volunteers.

Motivation, Retention and Recognition of Volunteers

Once volunteers are working within the organisation it is essential to maintain their motivation and enthusiasm if they are to be retained. Care must be taken to treat volunteers in such a way that they will want to stay in the organisation. Developing activities that meet volunteers individual needs, provide recognition and appreciation of their work and celebrate a sense of achievement and promote self-esteem, strengthen commitment and develop a feeling of belonging and loyalty to the organisation.

Some of the issues that need very careful consideration are:

- **Regular opportunities to learn new skills**
- **Sense of personal achievement and contribution to the work of the organisation**

- **Making a difference to other people's lives, the wider community or environment**
- **Social needs and making new friends**
- **Having access to new and different experiences including other forms of voluntary work**
- **Volunteer appreciation and thanks**

Designing the volunteer roles and flexible systems that address these issues and provide volunteers with good quality induction, training and support is a complex challenge and yet this is the payback that volunteers increasingly expect from their organisations.

How to get the best from your volunteers - summary

- Be passionate about the work of volunteers in your organisation and that enthusiasm will attract people to you.
- Say thank you. A word of warning - if volunteers tell you they don't want to be thanked, try not doing it and see how attractive that makes you!
- Provide meaningful opportunities. Opportunities are to volunteering as food is to eating out. When people volunteer they want to do something that enables them to have the satisfaction of making a difference.
- Be flexible
- Provide expenses
- Get volunteers to attract other volunteers
- Go social
- Lead, don't manage
- Provide enjoyable volunteering