

Working with Groups and Organizations

Understanding Volunteer Motivation

To address community issues and solve problems, community developers are finding that it is essential to work with volunteers.

According to a survey conducted by the Gallup Organization for the Independent Sector, a nonprofit research group in Washington, DC, over 98 million American adults served as volunteers in 1990. Each worked an average of four hours a week for their causes.

People volunteer because they want to be helpful; they believe in a cause and work to make it happen. It gives them a chance to work with people they like. In addition, volunteer work provides opportunities for learning and the development of job skills. More and more people are adding their volunteer experiences to their resumes.

Managing Volunteers

Managing volunteers requires the use of interpersonal skills. Volunteers can do anything a paid worker can do. Many wish to use their professional skills in their volunteer work. Because time is limited, using their professional skills is the best use of their energy. This does not mean there is no room for people to do the routine, dull but necessary jobs. Some people want to do these jobs, or are willing to do them periodically. Few wish to do them all the time. It is important to be aware of how to help provide job satisfaction for volunteers.

Be aware of the volunteer's time constraints. They want to get involved on their own terms. Sometimes they want to be mentally challenged, and other times they want the physical exercise necessary to accomplish tasks.

When identifying prospective volunteers, it is important to expand the pool. Inclusiveness and diversity are ideas to remember.

It is a community development principle that all people have the right to participate in those things which affect them. Asking people to work on activities helps give them a sense of ownership and multiplies the goals and purposes of the community development project.

Managing volunteers requires consideration of their motivations. Identify why they want to volunteer. Match the job with their interests and the rewards to the motivations. Take time to find out how people want to be involved so they may do the job they have been asked to accomplish.

Orientation and training are cornerstones of successful volunteer experiences. Volunteers may want to take over the management of their volunteer tasks. If they are correctly trained to move ahead, there is less need for supervision from the community developer or the organization's paid staff.

Managers of volunteers are moving more toward use of job descriptions and written contracts. Job descriptions help volunteers know exactly what is expected. Job descriptions help in training and when monitoring work. Job training can be based on realistic expectations. The manager can evaluate and monitor based on the work described.

Sometimes volunteers do not perform as well as expected. It is very difficult to think of firing volunteers; however, keeping unproductive volunteers is inappropriate. You might consider preparing job descriptions for volunteer workers. These descriptions can provide a termination point.

It is neither always easy nor appropriate to fire a volunteer. Sometimes reassignment is the appropriate step. If a person is not performing, training may solve the problem. If not, assigning them to other jobs they can do successfully may be a solution.

Evaluation is important. When there is agreement on expectations, evaluations are simpler and more productive.

Everybody likes to be rewarded for a job well done. Sometimes a "thank you" is enough. At other times plaques, special ceremonies and gifts are appropriate. Job advancement may be a correct reward. It is not necessary to wait until a program is completed to issue a reward.

Importance of the Organization's Purpose and Vision

Successful organizations can explain their purpose and what they are trying to accomplish.

Volunteers can accomplish more by looking at their group's purpose and vision. Clarify personal and group motives by working with the group to identify its purpose. If one person's goal is to gather information and another's goal is to take action, disagreements about what to do next can be expected. If the purpose and vision are agreed upon from the start, misunderstanding and confusion will be lessened. Establishing purpose and vision gives a future orientation.

The stated purpose must be specific. It is difficult for people to grasp a large concept such as improving economic conditions in their town. It is much easier to understand smaller, more specific purposes. By breaking down "improving economic conditions" into smaller purposes such as concentrating on value-added processes on

goods already produced, or tourism, or making sure the labor force can read at the tenth grade level, then it is easier for people to see how they can contribute.

The purpose of a group may change as new information surfaces and situations change. For example, The March of Dimes was established to find a cure for polio, a major disease which maimed and killed children. Over the years, it supported many activities to support its major purpose -- finding the cure. When the polio vaccine was developed, the group's goal was met. Thereafter, the organization's purpose and vision focused on birth defects.

The activities a group generates must support the purpose. If not, the members and the outside world will not have a clear view of the purpose and support will decline.

Activities should reflect the needs and values of all the members as much as possible. Having many different activities increases the likelihood that all members get to participate in something important to them.

Organizational Structure

The structure of an organization is designed to facilitate getting the job done. The structure should be only as elaborate as necessary. Form follows function. Determine the purpose and what work needs to be done to accomplish goals before creating the organizational structure.

People who come together around an issue often feel the need to “get organized.” This can include appointing or electing officers, writing a constitution and by-laws and formalizing policies and procedures. An important question to keep asking during this process is, “Is this necessary to get the job done?”

Sometimes the original structure developed outlives its usefulness and revisions become necessary. Community developers are facilitators, helping groups accomplish goals. One of the challenges is to facilitate, not manipulate. Principles and values held cause bias. It is important not to impose procedures and solutions on the group. It is also important for the facilitator to question personal motives. A group facilitator will identify outdated group policies and procedures.

Adapted with permission from the *Community Development Handbook, A Guide for Facilitators, Community Leaders and Catalysts*, by Donald W. Littrell, Doris P. Littrell, Lee J. Cary, Murray Hardesty, Susan N. Maze, and Jack Timmons, Entergy Corporation, 1992.

Why People Volunteer

- ✓ opportunity to make a difference
- ✓ directly affects them or their families
- ✓ opportunity to socialize
- ✓ work experience

What else do volunteers want to know? Continue to build your own list from your experience.

What Volunteers Want to Know

- ✓ time
- ✓ cost
- ✓ will it make a difference
- ✓ who is involved
- ✓ resources to work with
- ✓ responsibility

What else do volunteers want to know? Continue to build your own list from your experience.

What Organizations Want to Know from Volunteers

- ✓ experience/skills/knowledge
- ✓ integrity/trustworthiness
- ✓ dependability
- ✓ desires/expectations
- ✓ availability
- ✓ reputation in the community

What else do organizations want to know? Continue to build your own list from your experience.

Volunteer Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers is a task faced by the leader of every service program. While there will be differences in the degree of voluntaries, the level of commitment demanded, and the types of incentives that can be offered, there are certain principles and approaches that are relevant to any effort to recruit volunteers.

What must be in place before you can recruit:

- A clearly defined goal, understandable to others.
- Clearly written, understandable plans of action and objectives.
- Clearly written, understandable job designs.
- Honest Work to Do!
- Trained, equipped supervisors.
- Assessment criteria and methods based on the work to be done.
- Trained interviewers who can communicate well with prospective recruits and place them appropriately.
- A real need!

Ways to distribute recruitment information:

- ❖ Word of mouth
- ❖ Job counseling offices
- ❖ Libraries
- ❖ Post offices
- ❖ Chambers of Commerce
- ❖ Laundromats
- ❖ University job offices
- ❖ High school counselors
- ❖ Service clubs
- ❖ Community centers
- ❖ Senior centers
- ❖ Bus signs
- ❖ Personals column in community newspapers
- ❖ Community information networks
- ❖ Believing in the cause
- ❖ Grocery bag stuffers
- ❖ Volunteer centers
- ❖ Billboards
- ❖ TV and radio PSA's
- ❖ Key community leaders, professional groups, ministers
- ❖ Stuffers in utility bills

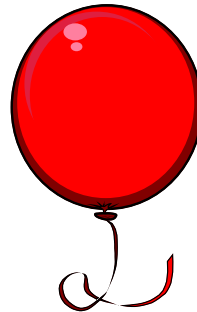
101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

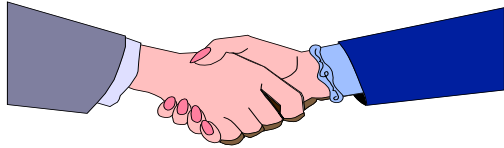
by Vern Lake
Volunteer Services Consultant
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Continuously, but always inconclusively, the subject of recognition is discussed by directors and coordinators of volunteer programs. There is great agreement as to its importance but great diversity in its implementation.

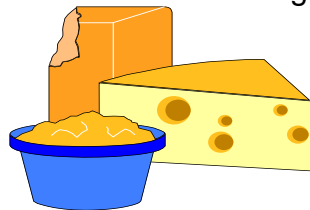
Listed below are 101 possibilities gathered from hither and yon. The duplication at 1 and 101 is for emphasis. The blank at 102 is for the beginning of your own list. I think it is important to remember that recognition is not so much something you do as it is something you are. It is sensitivity to others as persons, not a strategy for discharging obligations.

1. Smile
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box.
3. Treat to a soda.
4. Reimburse assignment related expenses.
5. Ask for a report.
6. Send a birthday card.
7. Arrange for discounts.
8. Give service stripes.
9. Maintain a coffee bar.
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions.
11. Invite to staff meeting.
12. Recognize personal needs and problems.
13. Accommodate personal needs and problems.
14. Be pleasant.
15. Use in an emergency situation.
16. Provide a baby sitter.
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area.
18. Respect their wishes.
19. Give informal teas.
20. Keep challenging them.
21. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family.
22. Provide a nursery.
23. Say "Good Morning."
24. Greet by name.
25. Provide good pre-service training.
26. Help develop self-confidence.
27. Award plaques to sponsoring group.
28. Take time to explain.
29. Be verbal.
30. Motivate agency VIP's to converse with them.
57. Utilize as consultants.



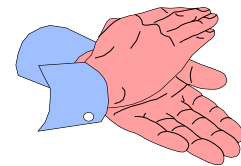


31. Hold rap sessions.
32. Give additional responsibility.
33. Afford participation in team planning.
34. Respect sensitivities.
35. Enable to grow on the job.
36. Enable to grow out of the job.
37. Send newsworthy information to the media
38. Have wine and cheese tasting parties.



39. Ask client-patient to evaluate their work-service.
40. Say "Good Afternoon."
41. Honor their preferences.
41. Create pleasant surroundings.
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks.
44. Enlist to train other volunteers.
45. Have a public reception.
46. Take time to talk.
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff.
48. Make good plans.
49. Commend to supervisory staff.
50. Send a valentine.
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements.
52. Persuade "personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience.
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff.
54. Recommend to prospective employer.
55. Provide scholarships to volunteer conferences or workshops.
56. Offer advocacy roles.

58. Write them thank you notes.
59. Invite participation in policy formulation.
60. Surprise with coffee and cake.
61. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements.
62. Nominate for volunteer awards.
63. Have a "Presidents Day" for new presidents of sponsoring groups.
64. Carefully match volunteer with job.
65. Praise them to their friends.
66. Provide substantive in-service training.
67. Provide useful tools in good working condition.
68. Say "Good Night."
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events.



70. Be a real person.
71. Rent billboard space for public laudation.
72. Accept their individuality.
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.
74. Identify age groups.
75. Maintain meaningful file.
76. Send impromptu fun cards.
77. Plan occasional extravaganzas.
78. Instigate client planned surprises.
79. Utilize purchased newspaper space.
80. Promote a "Volunteer-of-the-Month" program.
81. Send letter of appreciation to employer.
82. Plan a "Recognition Edition" of the agency newsletter.
83. Color code name tags to indicate particular achievements (hours, years, unit, etc.)
84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures.

85. Say “we missed you.”
86. Praise the sponsoring group or club.
87. Promote staff smiles.
88. Facilitate personal maturation.
89. Distinguish between groups and individuals in the group.
90. Maintain safe working conditions.
91. Adequately orientate.
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements.
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency.
94. Send Christmas cards.
95. Be familiar with the details of assignments.
96. Conduct community-wide, cooperative, inter-agency recognition events.



97. Plan a theater party.
98. Attend a sports event.
99. Have a picnic.
100. Say “Thank You.”
101. Smile.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR RESEARCH

Research

Value of Volunteer Time

The estimated dollar value of volunteer time is **\$19.51 per hour for 2007**.

The estimate helps acknowledge the millions of individuals who dedicate their time, talents, and energy to making a difference. Charitable organizations can use this estimate to quantify the enormous value volunteers provide.

Learn more about these figures, including how they are calculated and how nonprofit organizations often use them, at the [bottom of the page](#).

The dollar value of volunteer time for 2007 is estimated at \$19.51.

More on Volunteering

[Dollar Value of a Volunteer Hour: 1980-2006](#)

[Giving and Volunteering in the United States](#) report series

[Recent Studies on Giving and Volunteering](#)

[See IS Press Release](#)

Learn more [National Volunteer Week](#)

Dollar Value of a Volunteer Hour: 1980 - 2007		
1980: \$7.46	1990: \$11.41	2000: \$15.68
1981: \$8.12	1991: \$11.76	2001: \$16.27
1982: \$8.60	1992: \$12.05	2002: \$16.74
1983: \$8.98	1993: \$12.35	2003: \$17.19
1984: \$9.32	1994: \$12.68	2004: \$17.55
1985: \$9.60	1995: \$13.05	2005: \$18.04
1986: \$9.81	1996: \$13.47	2006: \$18.77
1987: \$10.06	1997: \$13.99	2007: \$19.77
1988: \$10.39	1998: \$14.56	2008: to be released In spring 2009
1989: \$10.82	1999: \$15.09	

Please note: Values for 1990-2006 were adjusted to reflect a new data series released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Dollar Value of a Volunteer Hour, by State: 2006

Please note that 2006 is the latest year for which state-by-state numbers are available. There is a lag of almost one year in the government's release of state level data which explains why the state volunteering values are one year behind the national value."

Alabama: \$16.33	Indiana: \$16.83	Nebraska: \$15.37	South Carolina: \$15.52
Alaska: \$18.65	Iowa: \$15.59	Nevada: \$17.98	South Dakota: \$13.72
Arizona: \$18.17	Kansas: \$16.64	New Hampshire: \$19.77	Tennessee: \$17.29
Arkansas: \$14.63	Kentucky: \$16.07	New Jersey: \$23.62	Texas: \$19.89
California: \$21.97	Louisiana: \$16.95	New Mexico: \$15.35	Utah: \$15.97
Colorado: \$20.08	Maine: \$15.25	New York: \$26.18	Vermont: \$16.08
Connecticut: \$25.75	Maryland: \$20.47	North Carolina: \$17.14	Virginia: \$20.08
Delaware: \$21.28	Massachusetts: \$24.29	North Dakota: \$14.27	Washington: \$19.53
Dist. of Columbia: \$30.10	Michigan: \$19.29	Ohio: \$17.53	West Virginia: \$14.70
Florida: \$17.38	Minnesota: \$19.46	Oklahoma: \$15.68	Wisconsin: \$16.76
Georgia: \$18.77	Mississippi: \$14.08	Oregon: \$17.33	Wyoming: \$16.69
Hawaii: \$16.52	Missouri: \$17.19	Pennsylvania: \$18.86	Puerto Rico: \$10.21
Idaho: \$14.90	Montana: \$13.51	Rhode Island: \$17.81	Virgin Islands: \$14.85
Illinois: \$21.09			

Notes: The value of volunteer time is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls (as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics). Independent Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits.

Charitable organizations most frequently use the value of volunteer time for recognition events or communications to show the amount of community support an organization receives from its volunteers.

According to the Financial Accounting Standards Board, the value of volunteer services can also be used on financial statements – including statements for internal and external purposes, grant proposals, and annual reports – only if a volunteer is performing a specialized skill for a nonprofit. The general rule to follow when determining if contributed services meet the FASB criteria for financial forms is to determine whether the organization would have purchased the services if they had not been donated. Accounting specialists may visit FASB's website for regulations on use of the value of volunteer time on financial forms: <http://www.fasb.org/pdf/fas116.pdf>.

It is very difficult to put a dollar value on volunteer time. Volunteers provide many intangibles that cannot be easily quantified. For example, volunteers demonstrate the amount of support an organization has within a community, provide work for short periods of time, and provide support on a wide range of projects.

The value of volunteer time presented here is the average wage of non-management, non-agricultural workers. This is only a tool and only one way to show the immense value volunteers provide to an organization. The Bureau of Labor Statistics does have [hourly wages by occupation](#) that can be used to determine the value of a specialized skill.

It is important to remember that when a doctor, lawyer, craftsman, or anyone with a specialized skill volunteers, the value of his or her work is based on his or her volunteer work, not his or her earning power. In other words, volunteers must be performing their special skill as volunteer work. If a doctor is painting a fence or a lawyer is sorting groceries, he or she is not performing his or her specialized skill for the nonprofit, and their volunteer hour value would not be higher.

http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html

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Community Economics

A Newsletter from the Center for Community and Economic Development; Department Agricultural and Applied Economics; Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development Programs, and University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension Service

No. 334

Community Economics Newsletter
August 2004

Volunteerism and Community Development

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“People aged 35 to 54 years are more likely to volunteer than those who are either younger or older. About one in three between the ages 35 to 54 volunteered, a rate that may be partially explained by the fact that a great majority of individuals of those ages have children at home.”

It is widely recognized that effective community development efforts require high levels of volunteerism amongst business leaders and concerned citizens. Few communities can afford a full-time development staff and hence the need for community-wide volunteerism. But what are the characteristics of those people who volunteer their time to better their community? Between September 2001 and September 2002 about 59 million people, or 27.6 percent of the population volunteered through or for an organization.

As expected, some population groups are more likely to volunteer than others. Parents of young children, for example, are likely to be involved with school or youth-related groups. Older persons, many of whom are in their early years of retirement, are more likely to volunteer than young adults. High school students are increasingly participating in volunteer activities in order to fulfill community service requirements. Women volunteered at a higher rate, 31.1 percent, than did men who volunteered at a rate of 23.8 percent. This pattern remained consistent across age groups, education levels and other major demographic characteristics. Whites had a considerably higher volunteerism rate (29.4 percent) than blacks (19.2 percent) and Hispanics (15.7 percent). This latter pattern held for all age groups.

People aged 35 to 54 years are more likely to volunteer than those who are either younger or older. About one in three between the ages 35 to 54 volunteered a rate that may be partially explained by the fact that a great majority of individuals of those ages have children at home. People with children at home volunteered at a rate of 36.5 percent compared to those who had no children at home, who volunteered at a rate of only 23.7 percent. Parents often volunteer for organizations for which their children participate. Indeed, volunteering to be a teacher or a coach is one of the most popular types of volunteer activity.

Education is one of the strongest predictors of volunteerism. When considering all volunteers, people with less than a high school diploma volunteered at a rate of only 10.1 percent, those with a high school diploma and no college volunteered at a rate of 21.3 percent, those with some college volunteered at a rate of 32.9 percent and 43.6 percent of those with a college degree volunteered. Somewhat surprisingly, however, employment status does not really seem to influence rates of volunteerism. For example, people who are employed full-time volunteered at a rate of 28.5 percent and those who are employed part-time volunteered at a rate of 35.5 percent. But 25.3 percent of unemployed persons volunteered and those who are not in the labor force such as retirees and stay-at-home mothers volunteered at a rate of 23.7 percent.

Volunteers spent a median of 52 hours performing volunteer activities annually. While 34.1 percent of volunteers reported to have spent more than 100 hours volunteering, 21.5 percent reported having volunteered less than 15 hours. Some of the same groups that have high volunteer rates also devote a large number of hours to volunteering. College graduates, for example, with a volunteer rate of 43.6 percent, spend a median of 60 hours volunteering whereas those with less than a high school diploma volunteered a median of 48 hours. In addition, while those who are not in the labor force tend to volunteer at a lower rate, those who do volunteer spend a median of 72 hours a year volunteering. In addition, those who are over age 65 tend to devote the most hours with a median of 96 hours a year and 10 percent volunteer more than 500 hours a year.

Volunteers performed many different types of activities. Among the more commonly reported were teaching or coaching (24.4 percent), canvassing, campaigning or fundraising (22.9 percent), collecting, making, serving or delivering goods (22.2 percent) and serving on a board, committee or neighborhood association (16.3 percent). Clearly, people volunteered in ways that are closest to their own self-interests or skills. For example, people with school age children are more likely to volunteer to teach or coach children activities than those who do not have school age children. Similarly, people with college educations are more likely to do consulting or administrative work than those without a high school diploma.

The data show that there are two primary ways in which individuals become involved in volunteering: two in five did so on their own initiative, approaching the organization for which they did volunteer work, and another two in five were asked to become involved by someone in the organization. There is little variation in how people become involved across age profiles, education levels, gender, or employment status.

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Effective and sustainable community development requires a diversified pool of volunteers that are willing to assume leadership positions in some situations while at other times are willing to follow. The results of this Bureau of Labor Statistics’ survey suggest that two of five volunteers are asked to become more involved. The results also suggest that people are most likely to volunteer for activities that they derive some direct benefit from such as parents coaching their children’s sport teams. The results also suggest that while some are willing to volunteer numerous hours, concern must be expressed about over taxing the pool of community volunteers.

¹ This essay draws on “Volunteerism in the United States” by Stephanie Boraas, *Monthly Labor Review* August 2003.

Steven C. Deller
Community Development Economist

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Arlen Leholm, Cooperative Extension, University of Wisconsin-Extension.

University of Wisconsin-Extension, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA.

<http://www.casanet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/fire.htm>

How to Fire a Volunteer and Live to Tell About It

Document Author: Steve McCurley **Reprinted From:** Grapevine, Jan/Feb 93

One of the recurrent nightmares of any volunteer manager is encountering a situation in which they may have to consider 'firing' a volunteer. For many this prospect creates severe stress, both over the appropriateness of the action and over fear of possible legal and political consequences. Ann Cook, in a survey of Foster Grandparents Programs in 23 communities discovered that 82% of responding volunteer managers rated the decision to terminate a volunteer as being a 'difficult or very difficult issue' for them. Over 60% of the volunteer directors reported delaying dealing with the issue when they encountered it.

This article is intended to provide some guidelines on developing a system that will assist both in confronting and managing decisions to terminate a volunteer's relationship with an agency.

Getting Philosophically Ready

The initial requirement in developing a system for handling volunteer termination decisions is to decide that firing volunteers is, in general, a potentially appropriate action. Over the years this has been a difficult issue for many individual coordinators to address, probably because they are very people-oriented and appreciate the willingness to others to help in their programs. These coordinators have had particular difficulty in dealing with situations in which the decision to terminate was not due to any particular 'fault' on the part of the volunteer, but was instead due to ill health or a change in program needs. Programs in which there has been a focus on volunteering as a benefit to the volunteer (such as most of ACTION's Older American Volunteer Programs) have also had great difficulty with this issue because they classify volunteers as 'clients' of the program, and it is philosophically difficult to justify terminating a client.

An agency which contemplates firing volunteers may adopt several philosophical justifications. One is simply that the bottom line is the ability to deliver quality service to the clients of the agency and any barrier to that delivery is not allowable. This standard would apply to both paid and unpaid staff, as Jane Mallory Park points out:

"Whether the personnel in question are paid or volunteer, it is important to have policies and practices which promote accountability and the highest levels of performance possible without ignoring the reality that all individuals have idiosyncrasies and limitations as well as strengths. A double standard which does not give respect and dignity to both volunteers and paid staff is not only unnecessary but is also unhealthy for individuals and organizations."

A second philosophical approach has to do with giving meaning and value to volunteer service. By denying that there is a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to do a volunteer job, one conveys the impression that the volunteer work done is irrelevant and insignificant. An agency which does not care enough about the work done by volunteers to enforce quality communicates to other volunteers that the agency believes their own work to be meaningless.

The philosophical decision by an agency to fire volunteers is one that should be addressed prior to any incident. It should be discussed and ratified by staff and then codified as part of the overall policy statement on volunteer utilization and included as part of the agency's volunteer policies.

Looking for Alternatives to Firing

Before addressing development of a system for firing volunteers, it is important to note that the decision to terminate a volunteer should always be, in practice, a reluctant last resort.

Firing a volunteer is an admission that volunteer management has failed. It means that the interviewing system did not work, or the job design was faulty, or that training and supervision did not operate the way it should. It is as much an indictment of the agency as it is of the volunteer.

And it is crucial to remember that many situations that appear to warrant firing may actually be remediable by less stringent methods. Before contemplating firing a volunteer, see if any of the following approaches may be more appropriate and less painful:

* **Re-Supervise.** You may have a volunteer who doesn't understand that the rules of the agency have to be followed. This is a common problem for agencies who utilize youth volunteers, some of whom automatically 'test' the rules as part of their self-expression. Re-enforcement may end the problem.

* **Re-Assign.** Transfer the volunteer to a new position. You may, on the basis of a short interview, have misread their skills or inclinations. They may simply not be getting along with the staff or other volunteers with whom they are working. Try them in a new setting; and see what happens.

* **Re-Train.** Send them back for a second education. Some people take longer than others to learn new techniques. Some may require a different training approach, such as one-on-one mentoring rather than classroom lectures. If the problem is lack of knowledge rather than lack of motivation, then work to provide the knowledge.

* **Re-Vitalize.** If a long-time volunteer has started to malfunction, they may just need a rest. This is particularly true with volunteers who have intense jobs, such as one-time work with troubled clients. The volunteer may not realize or admit that they're burned out. Give them a sabbatical and let them re-charge. Practice 'crop rotation' and transfer them temporarily to something that is less emotionally draining.

* **Refer.** Maybe they just need a whole new outlook of life, one they can only get by volunteering in an entirely different agency. Refer them to the Volunteer Center or set up an exchange program with a sister agency. Swap your volunteers for a few months and let them learn a few new tricks.

* **Retire.** Recognize that some volunteers may simply reach a diminished capacity in which they can no longer do the work they once did and may even be a danger to themselves and to others. Give them the honor they deserve and ensure that they don't end their volunteer careers in a way they will regret. Assist them in departing with dignity before the situation becomes a tragic crisis.

All of these alternatives are both easier to implement and managerially smarter than making a decision to terminate a volunteer. They recognize that there are many reasons why a person may be behaving inappropriately and that some of these reasons have answers other than separating that person from the program. We strongly urge that you consider each of these alternatives before deciding to fire any volunteer.

Developing a System for Making Firing Decisions

If you do, however, encounter a situation in which none of the alternatives work; it is helpful to have in place a system for dealing with problems. Some agencies have been sued by terminated volunteers and many agencies have encountered political and community relations problems. The system that follows is designed to help the volunteer manager both in making and in justifying the decision to terminate a volunteer. Essentially, it has three parts:

Firing Volunteers in a Membership Group

There are some differences involved when you are dealing with volunteers who belong to a membership group. Many membership groups do not realize that they already have some policies that must be followed when it comes to ending a relationship with a volunteer. One major one has to do with the rules for who is a member and how one retains membership. In most groups the only requirement for membership is payment of dues, which makes it impossible to discharge anyone as long as they are, in fact, paying dues on time. Another example has to do with members who serve in various offices. Usually the group's bylaws spell out the requirements for the job, but often fail to indicate what may be done in the event of non-performance of duties. This lack of clarity may leave the group in limbo until the next election. If you are encountering difficulties you may want to consider adding some of the policies on the next page to your by laws...

1. Forewarning/Notice

The first stage of the system is developing clear policies and information about the prospect of firing volunteers. To actualize these, an agency needs to develop the following:

- * A set of official policies regarding volunteer personnel issues. It is especially important to have policies on probation, suspension, and termination.
- * A system for informing volunteers, in advance, about the policies. This would include a planned orientation system which discusses the policies and provides examples of requirements and unacceptable behavior.
- * A way of relating the policies to each volunteer job. This means having a job description for the volunteer who explains the requirements of the job for which the volunteer has been accepted, and has some measurable objectives for determining whether the work was accomplished.

2. Investigation/Determination

The second part of the system involves developing a process for determining whether the volunteer has actually broken the rules. This implies having a fair investigator take the time to examine the situation and reach a determination that something has been done wrongly. This means, by the way, that one should never terminate a volunteer 'on the spot,' regardless of the infraction. 'Instant firing' doesn't allow one to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances. This is why a suspension policy is so important.

Essentially, in this part of the system the volunteer coordinator needs to establish a process for reviewing the behavior of volunteers and recording problems. On an on-going basis this should be done as part of the regular evaluation process for volunteers. Those volunteers whose performance is unsatisfactory are told of their deficiency, counseled on improving their work, and then re-evaluated. Failure to conform to the quality standard over time becomes grounds for termination. In cases where the wrongful performance is not incremental, but is substantial in nature (inappropriate relations with a client or breach of confidentiality) then what is needed is some 'proof' that the volunteer did in fact commit the wrong-doing. This might be testimony of other volunteers, staff, or the client.

During this part of the process the volunteer manager also investigates whether any of the alternatives to firing would be a more appropriate solution.

3. Application

This final part of the system requires that the volunteer manager do a fair job of enforcing the system. It requires equal and fair application of the rules (no playing favorites), appropriate penalties (graduated to the severity of the offense) and, if possible, a review process, so that the decision does not look like a personal one.

You will note that the above three processes mirror the common personnel practices for paid staff. They

are, in fact the same, and they should be, since evaluating either paid or unpaid staff should follow the same rules.

The advantages of this system are two-fold. First, they assist the volunteer manager in making the right decision, and in feeling comfortable about making that decision. The system is fair to both the volunteer and the agency if properly followed and tends to produce 'correct' answers. It also allows the volunteer manager to divert to a less drastic solution as appropriate.

Second, the system helps develop a case for firing that can be utilized to explain the decision to others, whether internally or externally. In practice, in fact, an odd side effect of this systematic approach is that many problem volunteers decide to voluntarily resign rather than face the inevitable and seemingly inexorable conclusion of the process. Most people prefer not to sit in front of an oncoming train...

Conducting the Firing Meeting

Regardless of the system utilized to reach the decision to terminate, someone has to actually convey that decision to the volunteer. This will never be a pleasant experience, but here are some tips which may help:

Conduct the meeting in a private setting. This will preserve the dignity of the volunteer and perhaps of yourself

Be quick, direct, and absolute. Don't beat around the bush. It is quite embarrassing to have the volunteer show up for work the next day because they didn't get the hint.

Practice the exact words you will use in telling the volunteer, and make sure they are unequivocal. Do not back down from them even if you want to preserve your image as a 'nice person.'

Announce, don't argue. The purpose of the meeting is simply, and only, to communicate to the volunteer that they are being separated from the agency. This meeting is not to re-discuss and re-argue the decision, because, if you followed the system, all the arguments have already been heard. You should also avoid arguing to make sure you don't put your foot in your mouth while venting your feelings. Expect the volunteer to vent, but keep yourself quiet.

Don't attempt to counsel. If counseling were an option, you would not be having this meeting. Face reality; at this point you are not the friend of this former volunteer and any attempt to appear so is mix-guided and insulting.

Follow-up. Follow-up the meeting with a letter to the volunteer re-iterating the decision and informing them of any departure details. Make sure you also follow-up with others. Inform staff and clients of the change in status, although you do not need to inform them of the reasons behind the change. In particular, make sure that clients with a long relationship with the volunteer are informed of the new volunteer to whom they are assigned.

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Steve McCurley Grapevine Jan/Feb 1993

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How to Revitalize Your Volunteer Program for Maximum Results

What would the nonprofit world be without volunteers? They provide a phenomenal amount of work hours and creative energy at minimal cost.

But maximizing the value of volunteers takes planning.

What Do You Expect?

The first step is to determine how volunteers can help the organization accomplish its goals. Volunteers can be effective at several levels:

1. Office work, ranging from addressing envelopes to calling members to remind them about an upcoming event.
2. Planning and implementing certain programs and services, and making commitments that the organization's staff follows through on.
3. Staffing specific functions or events, ranging from information desks on a regular basis to welcoming guests at major organizational events.
4. Development, by either directly or indirectly participating in ongoing fundraising efforts.
5. Public relations, by serving as ambassadors or spokes persons in the community to boost the organization's visibility.

Finding the Right People and Helping Them Find You

Before you send out a call for volunteers, review the projects you want help with. What would a prospective volunteer hope to get out of his or her involvement?

Many volunteers would be hard-pressed to articulate why they're involved, but they would generally agree that they share the following motivations:|

1. Contributing to an industry or field that is important or worthwhile to them. "Giving back something" is a phrase that often accompanies an expressed wish to use one's time and professional skills in new, important ways.
2. Developing social and professional contacts with like-minded individuals.
3. Developing new skills, such as events-planning or fundraising.
4. Having fun.

With your outline of what your organization can offer volunteers, identify types of people that would be interested. Then list ways to reach them.

If you're a membership organization, place a notice in an upcoming newsletter explaining the volunteer positions you have available, the level of commitment and how to get more information.

Other organizations that share your interests are also fertile ground for planting announcements, as are community newspapers.

Last, but not least, word of mouth is an excellent way to circulate the word that you're looking for people—especially if you already have an active volunteer force that you want to grow.

Clear Expectations Avoid Misunderstandings

Let prospective volunteers know very clearly what you expect of them. If a volunteer starts off with misconceptions, you'll both be disappointed.

Although you don't want to frighten a volunteer off by making a project or assignment sound overwhelming or overly serious, you also want the volunteer to understand that the work he or she does is important and that commitments a volunteer makes should be kept.

Match the Individual to the Assignment

Once you recruit a volunteer, match the individual's interests and abilities with the organization's goals. Determine the specific quality or ability the volunteer has to offer. Rely on the principle that even though the organization may have many levels of volunteers, they are each important and worthwhile.

Karen Burnstein, human resource director of the United Jewish Appeal Federation of the Greater Washington Area, says "the volunteer of today is a professional that is specialized in a particular field." Therefore, a nonprofit needs to use a volunteer's "specialty" so that both the organization and the volunteer benefit.

For instance, not everyone who is committed to an organization and its work may have the time and energy for committee projects.

However, helping with mailings or data entry may be exactly right—and a welcome change of pace—for a volunteer who wants to personally contribute to your organization and at the same time find relief from a demanding job.

On the other hand, a volunteer who is a CPA may welcome an appointment to the audit committee, where his or her professional skills can be put to good use.

Orient the Volunteer to the Organization

Help volunteers understand the organization's programs, policies, procedures, structure and staff responsibilities.

Volunteers don't want or need to know everything about the organization's history and day-to-day workings, but give them enough information so they feel a sense of context about the work they're doing and their role in the total organization. Also explain to them the resources within the organization and community that they'll work with.

Most important, let them see other volunteers who have made the same commitment they have. This gives volunteers the feeling that they are making the right decision in giving their time.

Volunteers-in-Training

Properly train volunteers for the work they do on behalf of the organization. If the right person for the job lacks a certain skill that would help him or her be more effective, then the organization should consider offering training.

For example, some volunteer roles require public-speaking skills, which can be taught to volunteers. Willingness to follow through on such a course of training is an important indication of a volunteer's level of commitment to the organization.

Many nonprofits that operate docent programs—volunteers who give tours or provide other services—charge a fee for the training. This fee defrays part of the organization’s costs, but it also ensures that the people who enroll are serious about their commitment.

Assigning Work

When assigning work to volunteers, factor in their strengths and interests as well as the organization’s schedules and priorities.

Assign projects judiciously. Expecting too much from volunteers makes them feel overwhelmed or exploited. But if you give them little to do, they may feel they’re not needed or that the organization gives little thought to its volunteers.

Recognition and Appreciation

Volunteers stay involved because participation is a positive experience, but feeling valued and appreciated is also a key element. Here are ways to give tangible expressions of that appreciation.

Give volunteers certificates or other personalized tokens of appreciation.

List volunteer’s names in the organization’s newsletter, annual report or other publication. If your volunteers are too numerous to list them all at once, break the list down so everyone’s name is published at least once a year.

Sponsor a volunteer appreciation event so volunteers can simply enjoy each others’ company as a change of pace from doing volunteer work.

The Best Motivator of All: Saying “Thank You”

Always, convey the message that everyone connected with the organization is important. Also, communicate the philosophy that staff and volunteers are a team that bring to the organization different strengths that they can maximize by working together.

The best way to keep volunteers active and involved is to say “Thank you” every chance you get.

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