



Making the Most of Your Volunteers

Volunteers provide valuable support for nonprofits, contributing significantly to their mission impact. Even more importantly, when volunteers are engaged and their experience properly managed, they have the potential to become generous donors and effective board members.

But how do you engage volunteers now for maximum long-term benefit?

Consider these ten tips:

1. People volunteer because they are asked. Use “consider” language when asking someone to get involved: “Would you consider volunteering with us? We could use someone with your skills to help out in our XYZ program.”
2. Get to know each volunteer, her abilities, and interests.
3. Outline volunteer opportunities, identify potential matches, suggest and agree on the assignment.
4. Provide a job description and written instructions to remove uncertainty about the assignment.
5. Have one person, a volunteer coordinator, consistently greet volunteers, thank them, and provide instructions. By getting to know each volunteer, the coordinator makes each person feel known, welcome, and appreciated. This will keep volunteers coming back.
6. Create a schedule of volunteer activity and stick to the schedule as closely as possible. Frequent changes convey a lack of appreciation for the volunteer’s time.
7. Orient volunteers to the organization, not just to their tasks. Provide training as needed, including periodic sessions covering the organization’s overall mission and programs.
8. Request and value input from volunteers. A true relationship includes talking and listening. You may learn much by listening to volunteers. Provide an opportunity to interact with the Executive Director and the Board, on occasion, to share information in both directions.
9. Engage volunteers beyond their tasks. Invite them to events, hold listening sessions, and include them among stakeholders participating in strategic planning sessions. Provide mission-related education opportunities that volunteers will value as another way of thanking them for their service.

10. Track volunteer involvement and recognize it on a regular basis and at an annual recognition event.

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