

Creating Mentorship Programs to Recruit Volunteers



Volunteer Management

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Introduction

Volunteering is a challenging and rewarding element of being involved with a not-for-profit organisation. Becoming a volunteer gives people the opportunity to make friends, to learn new skills and to be involved in the planning and management of clubs and associations.

Volunteering Australia describes volunteering as below:¹

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in not for profit organisations or projects and is undertaken:

- to be of benefit to the community and the volunteer
- of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion
- for no financial payment
- in designated volunteer positions only

Principles of volunteering:

- 1 Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer
- 2 Volunteer work is unpaid
- 3 Volunteering is always a matter of choice
- 4 Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances
- 5 Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community
- 6 Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs
- 7 Volunteering is an activity performed in the not for profit sector only
- 8 Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work
- 9 Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others
- 10 Volunteering promotes human rights and equality

Good volunteer management involves the following five steps:

1. Recruitment
2. Selection and screening
3. Induction and training
4. Volunteer management
5. Rewards and recognition

¹ Volunteering Australia Inc.; *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations*, 2nd Edition, September 2001, Melbourne Australia, Appendix 1

People give a wide variety of reasons for their desire to become a volunteer. In a study conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the most common **motivations** people gave for choosing to volunteer were:

1. To help others or the community
2. Personal/family involvement
3. Personal satisfaction
4. To do something worthwhile
5. Social contact
6. Felt obliged/just happened
7. Use skills/experience
8. Gain work experience/reference
9. To be active
10. Religious beliefs
11. To learn new skills²

The same study returned the following responses from people asked to list the **benefits** they derived from volunteering:

1. Personal satisfaction
2. Social contact
3. Helped others or the community
4. Personal/family involvement
5. Do something worthwhile
6. Learned new skills
7. Have been active
8. Used skills/experience
9. Gained work experience/reference

It is clear from these survey results that people who volunteer are motivated by the benefits associated with volunteering.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics: *Voluntary Work Australia, Cat. 4441.0*, 1995, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra Australia

Creating Mentorship Programs to Recruit Volunteers

Mentoring provides an effective, informal and flexible approach to recruiting and up-skilling volunteers. By linking mentorship programs with good volunteer management, community, sport and recreation organisations can identify their volunteer support requirements and methods for recruiting and retaining their volunteers.

Through this program, you will analyse the current situation of your organisation's volunteer management practices to determine your future volunteer needs.

The program will help you to identify strategies for:

- ⊙ Recruiting volunteers
- ⊙ Appropriately selecting and screening volunteers for particular jobs
- ⊙ Providing training, mentorship, orientation and induction for volunteers
- ⊙ Effectively managing your volunteers
- ⊙ Recognising and rewarding the efforts of those who support your organisation
- ⊙ Resolving disputes and conflict

Sample Position Descriptions are provided as part of the program to offer you a base for developing detailed position descriptions for all of the volunteer positions within your organisation.

Volunteering Gaps

The first step in recognising the volunteer needs of an organisation is to look for gaps in the range of volunteer positions which are currently filled. Firstly, list the current volunteer positions within your organisation:



Current Volunteer Positions

Volunteer positions may include any of the following:

- ⊙ Management Committee
- ⊙ President
- ⊙ Vice President
- ⊙ Secretary
- ⊙ Treasurer
- ⊙ Registrar
- ⊙ Volunteer Coordinator
- ⊙ Equipment / Maintenance Officer
- ⊙ Events Coordinator
- ⊙ Head Coach / Coaching Coordinator
- ⊙ Team Coaches
- ⊙ Fitness Coaches
- ⊙ Team Managers
- ⊙ Team Trainers
- ⊙ Program Coordinators
- ⊙ Newsletter Editor
- ⊙ Media Liaison Officer
- ⊙ Grants Coordinator
- ⊙ Regional/State/National Association Delegate
- ⊙ Marketing Officer
- ⊙ Publicity Coordinator
- ⊙ Sponsorship Coordinator
- ⊙ Fundraising Coordinator
- ⊙ Day Coordinators
- ⊙ Duty Official
- ⊙ First Aid Officer
- ⊙ Safety and Risk Assessment Officer
- ⊙ Blue Card Registrar
- ⊙ Canteen Coordinator
- ⊙ Bar Manager
- ⊙ Web Officer
- ⊙ Safety Officer
- ⊙ Gear Coordinator
- ⊙ Event Volunteers
- ⊙ Ground Coordinator

Please note that this list is not exhaustive. The volunteer positions of any club or association should be structured around the specific needs of that organisation.

Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteers will come from various sources. They may be members themselves, parents of members, children of members, past members, devotees, friends or relatives.

It is important to consider the human resources within an organisation as potential volunteers, while also recognising opportunities to recruit people from outside the organisation.

When recruiting people externally, your organisation is selling itself to potential helpers. Talking about the benefits of being associated with the organisation is very important when communicating with future volunteers. It is important to consider the motivations for volunteering listed above to create a clear marketing message which could be used to recruit volunteers from outside the organisation.

Whether recruiting from within or marketing to people who are external to the organisation, the personal approach is recognised as being the most effective means of communicating an organisation's volunteer needs.

Finding volunteers takes an investment of time and effort from existing volunteers. In identifying the methods most suitable for finding volunteers, consider the following points:

- ⊙ Personal contact (i.e. asking potential volunteers for assistance, face-to-face) is usually most successful
- ⊙ It is necessary to create an awareness of your organisation's volunteer opportunities by effectively communicating the volunteer requirements of the organisation through publicity, promotion and personal interaction. Empower and encourage your members to recruit volunteers

- ⊙ Provide accurate position descriptions for each volunteer role so that potential volunteers can be made aware of the level of commitment required for any position
- ⊙ Some volunteers must be elected or appointed under the organisation's constitution (for example, the management committee)

Selection and Screening

Once found, volunteers must be screened to ensure their *fit* with the organisation and with the positions needing to be filled. For example, someone who has accountancy skills may be a good *fit* with the volunteer position of Treasurer.

In screening volunteers, assess the skills, experience and availability of potential volunteers to match them to the volunteer needs of your organisation.

NOTE: There are legal requirements and issues in screening volunteers, such as child protection legislation (the Blue Card), privacy and certification/qualifications which all must be taken into account when determining the best *fit* for volunteers.

Volunteer Induction, Mentoring and Training

It is important to make new volunteer recruits feel welcome and comfortable in an organisation. A sound induction program can achieve this by addressing some organisation-specific subjects which new recruits should understand.

Your induction program may include:

- ⊙ Job descriptions
- ⊙ Volunteer Agreements
- ⊙ Codes of Conduct
- ⊙ Volunteer support and resources available
- ⊙ Names of helpers, mentors or buddies
- ⊙ Future plans of the organisation

Your organisation should ensure that the volunteers recruited have the skills, experience and availability to match the needs of the organisation. This is important to both the organisation and to the individual being recruited.

Mentoring offers an effective, informal and flexible approach to leadership, supervision and professional development. At the same time, it can provide some longer-term structure to the initiation and induction of new recruits. Mentorship programs often develop naturally from ongoing induction activities.

There are two parties to a mentorship program - the *mentor* and the *protégé*.

Mentors should encourage protégé/s to find solutions themselves, rather than acting as the expert and simply providing answers. Protégé/s will draw on the mentor's experience to meet their goals and the goals of the organisation.

Mentorship programs can be developed to work specifically for the mentor and protégé. They provide opportunities for ongoing learning which can be paced to suit the individuals involved.

Mentorship programs provide:

- ⊙ Insights into workplace culture
- ⊙ Opportunities to efficiently and regularly share information
- ⊙ Chances to build corporate knowledge
- ⊙ Personal and professional development

Organisations should encourage the development of informal mentoring relationships between existing and new volunteers. Where required, committee members may suggest that certain people take on the role of mentor or protégé to work together for the ongoing development of the volunteers and the organisation.

Induction, mentoring and training should not only be conducted when a volunteer begins service. Rather, continuous improvement grows from continuous learning, meaning that regular professional development opportunities should be made available to volunteers.

Training that is properly planned and well-executed will increase volunteer confidence, will improve the competency of those people the organisation relies upon and will motivate volunteers to achieve organisational objectives.

Training volunteers not only helps to get the job done well, it also provides opportunities for individuals to develop new skills. Your organisation may be able to access funding to pay for (or to subsidise) the costs of training for volunteers.

Training and induction programs should be delivered in ways which make the volunteer feel valued and appreciated. Training and induction can be either *formal* or *informal*. **Formal training** is that which is provided in a structured manner, such as the training required for accreditation or certification (for example, coaching accreditation courses, first aid certificates, TAFE courses).

Informal training is non-structured education that is focused on conveying important information that will assist volunteers to do their jobs and to understand their roles and responsibilities. 'Learning by doing' is well recognised for its effectiveness and can be successfully implemented in the volunteer environment. It is important that adequate supervision is provided by experienced people where 'learning by doing' is being conducted.

An example of informal training would be on-the-job training for committee members in running effective meetings. Although the training is not certified, it is just as important for providing volunteers with the skills needed to make the organisation run smoothly.

Work with your committee to determine the training needs of your organisation and include them in the following *Training and Education Plan*. This plan should detail the training required, who should receive the training, training timeframes, potential providers of training, estimated costs and possible sources of funding.

Volunteer Management

The following strategies can help your organisation to effectively manage its volunteers. Successful volunteer management ensures that voluntary tasks are equitably distributed among volunteers and that volunteers feel comfortable and welcome in your organisation, thereby increasing the chances of them providing ongoing service.

Volunteer management strategies can include:

- ⊙ Codes of practice and volunteer rights
- ⊙ Volunteer position descriptions
- ⊙ Volunteer agreements

Code of Practice for Organisations Involving Volunteers

Volunteering Australia's *Model Code of Practice for Organisations Involving Volunteers*, below³, should form the basis of the way organisations engage and support volunteers.

In order to enhance the volunteers' experience and comply with legislation and duty of care, the organisation will:

- ⊙ interview and employ volunteer staff in accordance with anti discrimination and equal opportunity legislation
- ⊙ provide volunteer staff with orientation and training; provide volunteer staff with a healthy and safe workplace; provide appropriate and adequate insurance coverage for volunteer staff
- ⊙ not place volunteer staff in roles that were previously held by paid staff or have been identified as paid jobs
- ⊙ differentiate between paid and unpaid roles
- ⊙ define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions
- ⊙ provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteer staff
- ⊙ provide volunteers with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteer staff
- ⊙ ensure volunteers are not required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or paid staff shortages
- ⊙ provide all staff with information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures
- ⊙ acknowledge the rights of volunteer staff
- ⊙ ensure that the work of volunteer staff complements but does not undermine the work of paid staff
- ⊙ offer volunteer staff the opportunity for professional development
- ⊙ reimburse volunteer staff for out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation
- ⊙ treat volunteer staff as valuable team members, and advise them of the opportunities to participate in agency decisions
- ⊙ acknowledge the contributions of volunteer staff

³ Volunteering Australia Inc.; *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations*, 2nd Edition, September 2001, Melbourne Australia, Appendix 3

Volunteer Rights

The following sample list of rights of volunteers⁴ is an extract from Volunteering Australia's National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations. It provides examples of the manner in which volunteers should expect to be treated and details their rights. This sample should form the basis of the rights of volunteers within your organisation.

Unlike paid staff, volunteers are not covered by award conditions or work place agreements. Volunteers, however, do have rights, some of which are enshrined in legislation and some of which are the moral obligations of an organisation involving volunteers. The following list is the basis of your rights as a volunteer.

As a volunteer you have the right:

- ⊙ to work in a healthy and safe environment (refer to individual state Occupational Health and Safety Act[s])
- ⊙ to be interviewed and employed in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- ⊙ to be adequately covered by insurance
- ⊙ to be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation for which you are working
- ⊙ to be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation for which you are working
- ⊙ to be given a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work
- ⊙ not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker
- ⊙ not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes
- ⊙ to have a job description and agreed working hours
- ⊙ to have access to a grievance procedure
- ⊙ to be provided with orientation to the organisation
- ⊙ to have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988
- ⊙ to be provided with sufficient training for you to do your job

Volunteer Position Descriptions

To protect the rights of volunteers, it is vital that they know where they fit within an organisation. *Volunteer Position Descriptions* can help facilitate good volunteer management.

Volunteer Position Descriptions should clearly detail the parameters of the volunteer's job. Sample Volunteer Position Descriptions are provided at www.cprgroup.com.au/volunteers.

Volunteer Agreements

Your organisation and its volunteers may benefit from written Volunteer Agreements. A Volunteer Agreement may outline important details of the volunteer, the role they will be filling, their limits of authority and responsibility and the timing of the engagement. A comments section can be included to be completed by the volunteer at the conclusion of the engagement, to provide information to improve the position in the future.

⁴ Volunteering Australia Inc.; *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-For-Profit Organisations*, 2nd Edition, September 2001, Melbourne Australia, Appendix 2

Note: It is recommended that organisations seek legal advice regarding the implementation of Volunteer Agreements to ensure that they protect the rights of both parties (the prospective volunteer and the organisation), are not discriminatory in any way and will meet the needs and expectations of both parties for the duration of the agreement.

Rewards and Recognition

There are many ways for an organisation to recognise and reward its volunteers. Recognising and rewarding volunteers benefits the volunteer and can result in continuous improvement of volunteers' performance, as well as increasing the chances of the volunteer remaining with the organisation.

It is important that recognition and reward are not left exclusively to the end of the year. Your organisation should deliver consistent positive messages to its volunteers.

Rewarding volunteers should stem from genuinely valuing their efforts and commitment. Volunteers have responsibilities and they also have rights. Volunteer recognition should therefore be determined with consideration given to its timing, consistency, sincerity and enthusiasm.

Event Volunteers

There are a range of factors affecting the complexity of the volunteer management task during events. These include giving consideration to the following points:

- ⊙ Is the event a one-off or more frequent event?
- ⊙ Will the event go for single or multiple days?
- ⊙ Will the event use single or multiple venues?
- ⊙ Will the event involve a range of age groups and ability levels of participants with different needs?

It is important to clearly define exactly which event volunteers will support and what they should achieve. To assist in preparing for and running successful events, your organisation should develop a detailed list of the jobs that should be done during events. This document should be maintained and updated following each event based on any changes required to enhance the event. The document should be made available to volunteers who provide assistance in the preparation for and running of events.

Dispute Resolution

If disputes arise, it is important for an organisation that they can be swiftly addressed and hopefully quickly resolved. Effective dispute resolution procedures can simplify and even enhance volunteers' experiences.

The volunteer and the organisation should maintain a commitment to resolving issues in a constructive manner, seeking a resolution rather than assigning blame. Issues and disputes should be handled in a customer-focused manner, where these issues are seen as an opportunity to improve service delivery and maximise co-operation.

Issues should be resolved promptly, objectively, consistently and with regard for the people involved.

An issue notification, escalation and resolution process should be established which may cover the following topics:

1. Formal notification of issues between the organisation and its volunteers, as well as requests for a response or action, which should be in writing, signed and dated
2. A response should be received which resolves the issue satisfactorily in the required timeframe
3. The issue can be escalated if necessary
4. The organisation and/or the volunteer may need to engage an independent facilitator/mediator to resolve the issue
5. The issue should be reviewed with a view to preventing it in future and enhancing service
6. Some issues, such as alleged criminal activity, must be immediately referred to the appropriate authorities

Resolution of issues should be finalised as soon as practicable, usually within ten working days.

Dealing with Difficult Volunteers

At some stage, you will have had to deal with difficult people in the volunteer sector. The first step to dealing effectively with these people is to understand what makes them difficult. You could probably categorise them as one of the following types:

- ⊙ The Dominator
- ⊙ The Bludger
- ⊙ The Absentee
- ⊙ The Non-Contributor
- ⊙ The Empire Builder
- ⊙ The White-Anter
- ⊙ The Bore
- ⊙ The Dinosaur

Each of these difficult types of personalities can make other volunteers' experiences unenjoyable. Which of the following strategies do you think would be best in dealing with difficult volunteers?

- ⊙ Stand up for yourself or the group
- ⊙ Give them time to wear out
- ⊙ Engage in conversation
- ⊙ Listen attentively
- ⊙ Acknowledge them by paraphrasing their concerns
- ⊙ Put them in charge of "fixing" what they think is wrong
- ⊙ Ask open-ended questions
- ⊙ Ask them to be honest with you
- ⊙ Carefully point out inconsistencies in their behaviour (without judgement)
- ⊙ Be alert to avoid being pulled into their despair
- ⊙ Know what you are talking about when you converse with them
- ⊙ Question inaccurate facts or inconsistencies, but not in a group situation

You may not be able to successfully deal with every difficult volunteer you encounter. You can start with these strategies to practice dealing with difficult people. Remember to keep your eye on the big picture and avoid becoming a difficult volunteer yourself.

Singing from the same sheet

Make sure that your organisation is sending out consistent messages to your members. Effective mentorship and volunteer management programs can lead to the achievement of a shared vision.

An organisation where all of the volunteers work *together* is more likely to be successful. Supportive behaviour among committee members and managers should filter down to the 'on-the-ground' volunteers, who will then feel empowered to deliver excellent customer service.

An enjoyable workplace for your volunteers will help your organisation to grow and will present a united picture to your current and potential members.

And remember, if you support your volunteers to help them do a good job, they will feel confidence in their role and will derive job satisfaction that will keep them coming back.