

# Volunteer Management: Recruitment and Retention



Erick Burren

SWRCB-Clean Water Team

July 2005



# Preparing to Use Volunteers

Obtaining volunteers, successfully using them, and experiencing high retention relies on a lot of project preparation work. This needs to be done before ever beginning to obtain and use volunteers. Well developed programs that include basic management practices experience better success in using volunteers.

# Vision

Volunteers are learning, sharing and making a commitment to your organizations vision.

Do you have a vision? If not you should develop one.

How do you plan on communicating this vision, especially to volunteers?



# Needs Assessment



What types of work will be done?

Go through your organizational hierarchy and project plans. Make an assessment of the work(s) and positions required to meet your goals.



How many positions will you need?

Do you need long term volunteers or short term volunteers?

Do you, or will you, have the resources needed to manage these volunteers? Only use what can be supported.

# Job Description(s)

From your needs assessment start developing jobs/volunteer opportunities.

- Design the job to be successful, to meet with expected results
- Make the job attractive

Workplace description and conditions

- Describe where the volunteer will be working (creeks, office, lab...).
- Describe the conditions under which the volunteer will work (weather, hazards, days/time...).

Disclose your volunteers rights and responsibilities.

# Job Description Outline

Job Title

Whom to Report to

Purpose

Job Responsibilities

Qualifications

Training

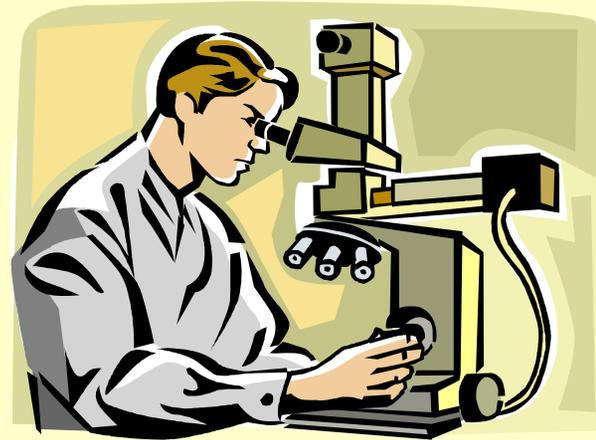
Work Dates/Times

Work Location/Conditions

Duration of Project

Expected Time Commitments

Contact Information for the Project/Organization



# Recruitment



- Who do you want to recruit?
  - What type of jobs, volunteer opportunities, do you have?
  - What kind of skills are you looking for?
- Where can you find these recruits?
  - Local organizations, businesses, communities
  - Volunteer centers

# Reaching Recruits

- How to communicate to potential recruits?
  - Direct media contact (mail stuffers, newspaper, radio, TV, chat rooms...).
- What to say to your potential recruits?
  - Your message.
  - Reasons why should they volunteer.



# Who's Recruiting

- Who will be doing the recruiting?
  - Someone in our office
  - Volunteer Center
  - Local grass roots organization,
  - Service organization, business district, county supervisor, college
- How will the recruits know what they would be doing?

# Recruit Do's

Do let recruits know what they would be doing?

- Organize your job descriptions into a book that recruits can browse.
- Show some of the volunteer activities within a news broadcast (try a Sunday).
- Post your jobs on the web.

Do ask what other organizations, even those not doing similar work, how they obtained their volunteers.

# Recruiting for Large Events

For large events make sure you can handle the crowds safely and without negatively impacting natural resources. Also advertise what the volunteers should wear and be prepared to do.



If finding enough volunteers for events like weed or trash removal is difficult, offer incentives. Try free snow cones or anything free that you can have donated or underwritten.

# Recruitment Reminder

Always refer back to your vision, project plan, and volunteer assessments. The chances of filling a volunteer opportunity are higher if you look where the potential volunteer is and not where you think they are.

Don't overlook non-traditional sources for volunteers.

# Improved Screening

Let potential volunteers know what it is that you are doing and what is expected of them.

Also let them know how and by whom their data will be used. Tell them why you are interested in certain types of measurements and pollutants.

Letting your recruits know about the projects time frame and desired goals (understanding of pollution sources vs. a fishable stream) is also very critical.

# Interview/Screening



Select the right types volunteers.

Get to know your recruits and let them get to know about your organization, the project, the jobs and what is expected of them.

Ask them what they want to do.

It is ok to not select everyone that shows up and wants to volunteer.

After selecting a volunteer make sure that you place them in a position that will allow them to be useful and have success.

There are many useful resources on how to conduct interviews. Most of us have been involved one way or another in an interview. Having the right tools to help one through the preparation and interview process are very beneficial. As this is a “volunteer” position try to make the interview “light”.

# Orientation

Describe your entity (agency, NGO...).

Share your vision.

Present the program/project.

- Basic introduction.
- Why the need?
- What are your goals

Clearly define levels of:

- Organization
- Responsibilities
- Commitments



# Training

Provide instruction that allows the volunteer to:

- Know how they are to perform their job.
- Understand what they are supposed to do.
- Have the knowledge and ability to respond to emergencies effectively.



# Volunteer Activities

Provide opportunities for success that will lead towards your project goals and fulfill the organizations mission.



Activities need to meet the volunteers expectations if you want to have good results and high retention.



# Supervision

Effective use of volunteers requires that time be spent managing their activities

- Who will be providing supervision?
- In what form will supervision be provided?
- How will evaluations be conducted (and periodicity)?
- Careful monitoring (of the volunteer) helps retention.
- Sustaining volunteer efforts (maintaining retention) can depend on providing successful experiences. This be measured and maintained by good supervision.
- Provide quick conflict resolution

# Enabling

Volunteers need to have the proper training, tools, and support for the tasks required of them. Then they need to be allowed the opportunity to go and perform those tasks and master them.



# Evaluating

Evaluating a volunteers performance allows the volunteer and the project to get the best work done.

The need for high quality data requires that QA/QC and performance audits be performed as well.



# Risk Management

All programs need to address health and human safety.

Volunteers need to know what risks they might be exposed to and how to minimize risk of injury.

When working in remote areas with out immediate supervision need to know how to respond to emergencies as well.



# Volunteer Retention

Why do you have a retention problem?

- Ask your volunteers. Perform exit interviews or provide questionnaires.

What does your organization have the ability to influence?

- You can change those things and help keep your volunteers and to ensure that you enroll the right volunteers.



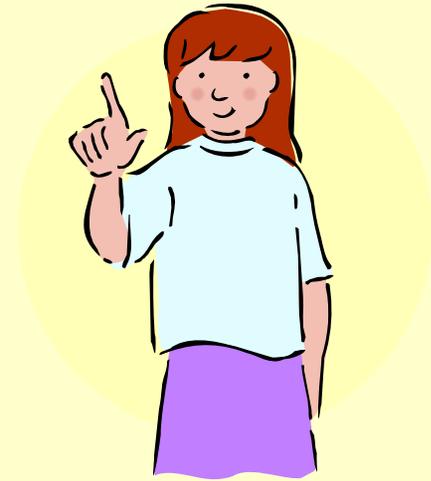
## Why did they leave?

- Boredom, loss of challenges, nothing to do.
- No sense of place within the program.
- Lack of feedback.
- No or little recognition.
- They did not expect to put in that much time.
- The project's goals do not meet their expectations.

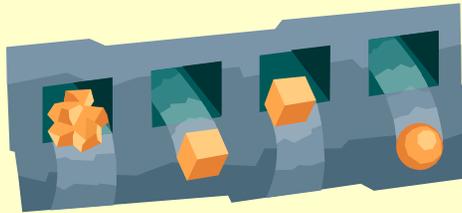
# Why did they volunteer?

People volunteer for a variety of reasons.

Improving your job of recruiting and retaining volunteer hinges on knowing what motivates your volunteers.



# Selective Recruitment



Enroll your volunteers selectively with a define commitment duration.

Your primary criterion is for those that can give a long term commitment to your program/organization.

# Volunteer Service Agreements



Volunteer Service Agreements are a communication and screening tool. They clearly define what is expected of your volunteers. This include a specified commitment of time.

These agreements show that you take your volunteers and the gift of their time and talents seriously. They also show that you're a serious about your vision.

Volunteer service agreements also serve as a screening tool and allows you to select the best volunteer for your program.



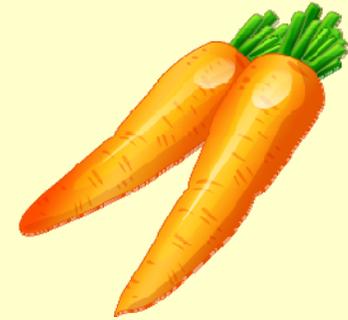
# Improved Feedback

Volunteers need to know the impact of their efforts.

- Feedback should be timely.
- Produce various types of feedback (reports, meetings, videos, brochures...).
- Feedback should be presented in a way that is understandable by your volunteers (easy on the unexplained graphs).

Dedicate a person within your organization to supervise your volunteers and provides them a person of direct contact and keep in touch with your volunteers.

# Motivation



All behavior is motivated.

What motivated your volunteers to join your program?

Providing rich and rewarding experiences that fulfill their motivation will help retention.

# Motivation Orientation



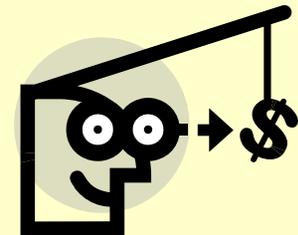
- **Achievement-oriented**
  - Offer recognition, awards, additional training, more challenging tasks.
- **Affiliation-oriented**
  - Offer recognition at events, personalized awards, more bonding experiences.
- **Power-oriented**
  - Offer promotions, commendations, recognition by leadership.

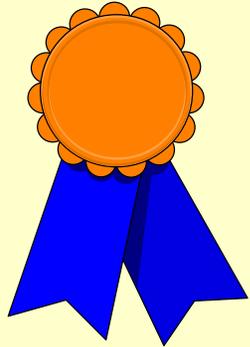


# Motivation Factors



- Social needs
  - Exercise
  - Knowledge
  - Shared Vision
  - Experience desired
  - Need to do community service
  - Desire to lead
  - Want to improve their community and give back
  - To try a new career
  - New challenges
  - Spend time outdoors
  - Be in charge
  - Get recognition
- .....And many others





# Awards/Recognition



Although awards and recognition are important if an organization solely relies on these to management tools, they will lose volunteers. Awards and recognition do not fulfill everyone's motivation for volunteering. We need to go beyond the parties, BBQs, awards, and t-shirts.

# Build a Sense of Belonging

Volunteer projects offer citizens a chance to build community, of working towards a shared vision

Develop ESPRIT DE CORP within your volunteers.

It is also important that the work performed by volunteers be valued by the program and benefit its vision.

Often times friendship, personal ties and obligations keep volunteers returning regardless of their interest in the cause.



# Build Leaders

Develop leaders within your organization

- Use project veterans as trainers.
- Offer more challenging work to your veterans.
- Involve everyone in fundraising and recruiting

# Other Ways to Motivate (Retain) Volunteers.

- Provide opportunities to learn new skills.
- Offer cross training.
- Offer unique educational events.
- Provide chances for organizational advancement.
- Provide references.
- Show appreciation in diverse ways.
- Provide clear and useful feedback.
- Help volunteers know the importance of dull tasks.

# Continued Commitment

As you perform project evaluations also conduct volunteer management audits.

Maintain commitment towards your vision.

Keep commitments to your volunteers, they are a vital part of maintaining your programs integrity.

# Examples of Web Resources for Volunteer Managers

- <http://www.calcasanet.org/ProgramManagement/volunteer-anage.htm>
- <http://www.paxxel.com/Volunteer%20Advocacy.htm>
- <http://charitychannel.com/publish/templates/?a=1189&z=0>
- <http://charitychannel.com/enewsletters/vmr/>
- <http://www.nbvol.com/English/resource5.html>
- <http://www.sms.humberc.on.ca/fundraise>
- [http://www.vcc.bc.ca/library/htm\\_subject\\_guides/nonprofit.htm](http://www.vcc.bc.ca/library/htm_subject_guides/nonprofit.htm)
- <http://www.nvfc.org/retention.html>
- <http://www.new.org/library/VolManagementInfo.html>
- [http://charitychannel.com/article\\_89.shtml](http://charitychannel.com/article_89.shtml)
- <http://www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca/ResourceCentre/resources/retention.html>
- <http://www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca/ResourceCentre/trends/volunteer.html>
- <http://www.shanti.org/snti/about.html>
- <http://www.changemakers.net/journal/99august/walbrancfm>
- <http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html>
- <http://academic.regis.edu/volunteer/RefGuide/>
- <http://www.volunteertoday.com/recruit.html>
- <http://www.pointsoflight.org/>
- <http://www.voluntarymatters3.org>
- <http://www.volunteering.org.uk>
- <http://www.volunteer.gov/aboutvolgov.cfm>
- <http://www.volunteer.ca/resource/eng/>
- <http://www.jjhill.org/pol/login.cfm?ref=%2Fpol%2FadvSearch%2Ecfm%3F>
- <http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca/volunteers/index.htm>
- <http://www.volunteertoday.com/>