



Power Booster

DuPage Association of Volunteer Administration
www.dava-il.org

Recognizing Volunteers in Tough Economic Times

How can you recognize your volunteers when your budget has been cut? Try to view it as an opportunity to be more creative. Break free from the traditional plaques, pins and parties and search for less costly and less time intensive ways to recognize volunteers.

Be up front with your volunteers

- Tell them about your cut backs and the impact it has on your organization. If you have to cancel the annual party or their free coffee, be up front about it. Most volunteers are with you because of your mission and because they feel good when volunteering for you. Few will leave because there is no party or coffee. Most will understand and may even offer to help more.
- Invite them to be part of the solution. Tap into their contacts in the community and their creativity. Maybe they can offer services or find new sources of recognition.
- Share with them the impact cut backs have on your own job. Ask for one or two volunteers to step up to work with you. Break your overall recognition plans into smaller more manageable tasks and ask volunteers to assist.

Try to maintain individual recognition

Personal recognition is very effective but it takes time. Simple changes can often allow you to continue the recognition while saving staff time.

- Review your current recognition plans for such as birthday cards, notes, awards, photos, etc. Break each plan into component parts. Look for ways others could help you. For example, take a common task like recognition of birthdays. Instead of doing it yourself try the following:
 - ◇ Instead of you signing the birthday cards, take them to a department meeting and ask staff to sign while you all wait for those who are usually late.
 - ◇ Ask a current volunteer to call volunteers on their birthday.
 - ◇ Ask a volunteer to send free e-cards.
 - ◇ Ask a volunteer to create a birthday bulletin board. Each month post the volunteer names and ask staff to add birthday wishes.
 - ◇ Use whatever technology you have to its fullest to save time.
- Recruit other volunteers to help with recognition plans
 - ◇ If you haven't done so in awhile, ask volunteers how they want to be recognized and don't be afraid to change your plans based on their feedback.
 - ◇ Try to include some simple recognition of staff as staff buy-in for your volunteer program is critical. For example, on Valentine's Day, put out lollipops or candy with a note "Working with you is a treat!"
 - ◇ Create a committee of volunteers to work on recognition plans.
 - ◇ Develop a volunteer skills/interests list.
 - ◇ Utilize their skills to enhance your recognition plans.

