



Power Booster

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

Do you have Volunteer Satisfaction Plan?

You may have a Recognition Plan that focuses on awards, parties, etc. but does your recognition build relationships, satisfy and retain your volunteers? Perhaps you may want to consider a Volunteer Satisfaction Plan.

Susan Moscareillo, Director of Volunteer Services and Community Relations, Baltimore Ronald McDonald House, wrote the following in the Volunteer Management Review (*Volume 1, Number 14, February 20, 2002*).

"To retain a valuable volunteer, you must build a relationship by meeting the three fundamental and vital expectations of all volunteers: quality, value and trust. By building relationships and achieving volunteer satisfaction, your agency will keep more of the volunteers you already have, attract more volunteers, achieve an improved image in the community and create a potential for increased involvement by your volunteers. Incorporate quality, value and trust into the relationship you build with your volunteers every day with these seven steps.

Step One: Exceed Their Expectations

A quality volunteer experience should not only meet a volunteer's expectations but also exceed them. As you create your volunteer satisfaction plan, ask yourself if you are responsive and sensitive to the needs of the volunteers involved: are you giving them the materials and direction they need to do their assignment, as well as thorough training and a comfortable environment? In designing your plan, remember that volunteers need to perceive value in their assignment from day one. Work should feel meaningful and convey improved self-esteem or skills and be perceived by the volunteer as beneficial to your agency's clients. Share your plans, delegate and let your volunteer's problem solve - remember to use their minds as well as their hands.

Step Two: Deserve Their Trust

Give them an accurate written position description for each assignment. Ask for their input as you train. Position descriptions should get better with every new volunteer you train.

Step Three: Plan Their Greeting

Plan to greet your new volunteer not only with a smile and handshake, but a welcome packet or tote bag. Fill it with your volunteer guidebook, a welcome letter from you and your agency chief, a copy of the mission statement for your volunteer program, a special volunteer parking pass (design your own), a current copy of your volunteer newsletter and a nice welcome gift (coffee mug or t-shirt). We all love to get presents, so please be creative and make it fun.

Step Four: Assign a Mentor

Do you have a mentoring program that empowers your new volunteers? Enhance the quality of the experience and build trust by assigning a mentor to your new volunteer during their first ninety days with your agency. The attrition rate goes way down when you make a good match between the experienced volunteer and the novice who has the inevitable "Did this ever happen to you?" questions that only another volunteer can answer with "I've been there" empathy.

Step Five: Maintain Contact

After the first ninety days, make a plan regarding how to maintain continuous contact with your volunteer. Keep in touch with your monthly newsletter, thank you notes, cards for special occasions, invitations to agency social events and quarterly dinner meetings at your agency. Spending time together builds relationships. Be creative-always make the setting attractive with good food and some door prizes. Take photos, display them in the office and mail a copy to your volunteer with a note.

Step Six: Offer Continuous Training

Now that your volunteers are smiling and wearing your agency t-shirt, increase the value of the experience by offering continuous training, not only in person, but by developing and maintaining a library of videos and books to borrow and use. Coordinate your efforts with fellow directors of volunteers to increase the amount of materials available.

Step Seven: Survey Annually

Last, but not least, conduct an annual survey of your volunteer staff, conducting face-to-face interviews with at least 20 percent of the staff, and mailing a written survey to the remainder. Look at the results carefully, revise your satisfaction plan accordingly, and write a report to share with your entire volunteer staff.

When you create a volunteer satisfaction plan, you'll help your volunteers sustain the spirit of caring and enthusiasm that brought them to your agency in the first place. "