



Power Booster

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

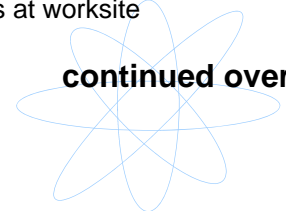
Effects of Recession on our Volunteer Programs

We are all seeing effects of the recession on our volunteer programs. On July 28, VCCI, the Volunteer Coordinators of Cultural Institutions, met at the Museum of Contemporary Art to discuss this topic. We are pleased to share with you highlights from their discussions.

Key Issues brought up during introductions:

- Large number of volunteer applicants in between jobs; will they stay after they find jobs?
- Current volunteers who are between jobs are volunteering more often, but can't commit to schedules due to interviews, part-time work, etc.
- Many of our institutions have seen a dramatic increase in guests/visitors/customers, some coming to see special exhibitions
- Large numbers of non-profit organizations are requesting volunteer tours for free – no revenue
- Although there are more guests, we are not seeing a corresponding increase in revenue
- Museum positions eliminated
- The volunteer program is now seen as a money “drain” – we are expected to generate revenue
- Need to find ways to cut budget, e.g., we pay \$11,500 annually to pay for volunteer parking
- Personal pressures – our family members are losing jobs
- At some organizations, the volunteers seem extremely grumpy/demanding/needy
- Currently going through organizational restructuring – an extremely tense period
- Our revenue is down – 2/3 of our organization's budget is not funded
- Dramatic increase in number of volunteer requests from departments in our organizations
- Have been asked to develop intern programs
- Dramatic increase in number of volunteer applicants
- Decline in our membership, camp revenues
- Lack of enthusiasm from current volunteers
- Increase in community service volunteers
- Quality/skill set of volunteer applicants is higher
- Our customer/internal service to our own volunteers has suffered due to lack of time
- Lost 1/3 of our paid staff
- We need to find ways to utilize volunteers in generating revenue
- Increase in networking requests; getting many requests for “informational interviews”
- Our job titles changed (or have not changed) but everyone's workload has increased
- Have created a corporate workday program
- Many more volunteers, much less paid staff
- Our unpaid internships have been much easier to fill this year
- With less staff supervision, very concerned about potential for volunteer injuries at worksite
- Volunteer recognition budget cut

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Effects of Recession on our Volunteer Programs continued

Key Issues/Solutions

Volunteer/staff Relations

- Communicate your culture to your volunteers
- Explain how your organization/internal processes work
- Conduct volunteer/staff training
- Have a neutral person communicate organizational changes to volunteers

Decreased Budgets

- Ask corporate sponsors for in-kind donations instead of monetary donations
- Involve volunteers in budget conversations; communicate budget changes and the reasons
- Create restaurant partnerships for donations for parties, events, etc.

Growth of Intern Programs

VCCI members have noticed, since their last meeting in February, a growth in intern programs. For some organizations, the focus on recruiting unpaid interns has overtaken the focus on regular volunteers

- Educate decision-makers on the time needed to effectively recruit/place/train/supervise interns
- Clearly define differences between interns and volunteers in your organization
- Be sure there is a structured process before taking on interns
- Meet with staff to clarify expectations of staff responsibilities and intern coordinator responsibilities
- Create an intern training & development schedule; provide talks for interns
- Be aware of IRS/labor law regulations re: interns
- Put intern FAQs/application on your website
- Recognize that unpaid-only internships may skew placement and not allow persons who need to be paid the opportunity of an intern experience
- MOST IMPORTANTLY – remember that the intern needs to be provided with a beneficial learning experience

Increase in Volunteer Applicants

- Conduct group interviews instead of individual interviews
- Look at www.moodle.com; a resource of electronic applications
- Stop recruiting once quota of volunteers is met
- List volunteer descriptions/expectations/dates needed on your website
- Streamline application; send acknowledgements to candidates and explain when they may expect to hear from you
- Eliminate waiting list – only recruit volunteers for currently needed positions

SUGGESTIONS FROM DAVA

As we have discussed in previous DAVA sessions

- continue to network and share experiences with other volunteer coordinators
- don't hesitate to utilize good ideas from other sources; now isn't the time to re-invent the wheel
- don't be afraid to make changes; just ensure that you communicate well with your volunteers so they understand why you are making changes. Tip: sometimes referring to a change as a "pilot project" seems less threatening to a lot of people.
- engage your volunteers in the solution; have brainstorming sessions, ask for their input and

**MOST IMPORTANTLY - do what you do best;
recruit great volunteers to help your own volunteer program!**