

BEST PRACTICES FOR VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

“Don’t ever question the value of volunteers. Noah’s Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals.” - Dave Gynn

1. Make a Good First Impression - Provide a warm welcome to recruit and retain volunteers. Provide volunteer opportunities that engage and interest volunteers to give of their time, heart, and hands. Helping volunteers understand the “why” they are needed is critical. Ask about their interests and passions.

2. Train Volunteers - Some training sessions require in-depth, hands-on training and can last several hours, but even short onboarding will help make your volunteers become ambassadors. Volunteers will be successful if they are equipped with information about your nonprofit and mission:

- A task description & explanation of how their time helps your organization
- A tour of the facility or grounds where they’ll be working
- An introduction to a key staff member that can be a resource
- A packet that sums it all up in case they forget

3. Make the Experience Worth their Time - There are few things a person can give that are more valuable than their time. To make a volunteer shift meaningful, make sure that your volunteers have all the items and information that they need before they arrive to avoid spending far too long standing around waiting. Try to match volunteers with impactful tasks that align with their specific skills or that you think they will actually enjoy.

4. Be Flexible - Your volunteers typically have busy lives outside of your organization, just like you do! Be intentional when creating volunteer tasks that allow volunteers to create their own volunteer shifts that fit their lifestyle. Make it easy for volunteers to commit to helping in small ways.

5. Fuel Their Passion - If you really want to retain volunteers (or any type of supporter), consider how much time you are spending trying to fill positions vs. how much time you’re spending inspiring those around you about your mission. Help current and potential volunteers to connect more personally with your mission by keeping them informed of all the stories, details and successes in an engaging way. Always remind them what’s at stake and why their contributions are making a difference. Volunteers want to know that the time they spend directly impacts the lives of others. This can also make volunteers donors.

6. Be a Volunteer - Engaging in volunteer opportunities on your own will help you to better empathize with your own volunteers and will give you a better idea of how to make them feel great and encourage them to return. Many workplaces encourage and support you on your own time or with VTO (volunteer time off) Make it a habit to reflect upon your own volunteering experiences, noting the pros and cons, your overall impression and your likelihood to volunteer for that event or organization in the future.

7. Show Appreciation - This is HUGE! Sometimes, it’s just as simple as a heartfelt, “Thank you”, but you may be surprised at how many volunteers feel unappreciated or like their time didn’t make a difference. There are countless ways to show gratitude and appreciation.