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DO YOUR BIT
for your community



Recruiting, rewarding and retaining volunteers

Getting the right people volunteering for your organisation can be the key to getting the right skills on board and making your organisation more effective.

Understand why people volunteer

There are many reasons why people volunteer. People are often very willing to help, but will be especially drawn to a volunteer role if it's with an organisation where they can:

- gain new skills such as job skills, communication skills, and further their personal and professional development
- gain experience to add to their CV or gain a reference for employment
- have fun
- meet new friends
- share their skills and expertise with others
- take on a new challenge and help to achieve a visible outcome
- make a real difference in the community.

Here are
some tips to help
you to attract the
right volunteers to
your organisation

Create the right environment

It's important that you create a positive working environment where people want to work. This comes from having:

- a strong sense of vision of what your organisation is working to achieve
- a clear sense of purpose in how you're going to achieve that vision
- a strong team ethos where people enjoy working together
- clarity of roles and excellent communication within the organisation.

When looking for volunteers, you need to be clear about what you need and up front about what tasks you will be asking your volunteers to carry out.

Ideally your organisation should have a volunteer coordinator who can take the lead in supporting and directing those who volunteer for you. The role of a volunteer coordinator should include:

- making sure your volunteers understand the purpose and direction of your organisation
- making sure volunteers are aware of your organisation's policies and procedures
- coordinating training
- making sure volunteers are reimbursed for out of pocket expenses in line with your organisation's policy.
- making sure volunteers are thanked and rewarded appropriately
- making sure adequate work space is provided for volunteers.

Creating the right role

It is important that you are clear about the tasks which you need to have help with and therefore know what you're looking for in a volunteer. There is a factsheet in the **Do Your Bit** recruitment pack called volunteer roles which will help you to know more clearly which roles you are looking for. This fact sheet also contains a skills audit form which potential volunteers can use to inform you of what specific roles they are best suited to.

Make the role appealing

It's really important that you make it easy for volunteers to get involved. Depending on your method of attracting volunteers, the following ideas can be used in advertising or provided to prospective volunteers with a copy of the position description.

- List what's in it for them. It may be a reference, something to add to their CV, training, meeting new people, personal satisfaction, helping a cause they believe in or learning new skills.
- Tell them if you have benefits particular to your organisation that provide added value such as reimbursements for travel expenses and social opportunities.
- Think creatively about your volunteer roles. Divide tasks into 'projects' and think about which tasks could be done by which volunteers.
- Make sure the volunteer job description sounds interesting.
- Be flexible about the timing of involvement.
- Look for shorter periods of commitment with more project based tasks. People are much more likely to volunteer for a shorter period of time than take on a long term commitment, especially if they are new to volunteering.
- Invite the volunteer to meet with you or your organisations volunteer coordinator (if you have one) so that you can tell them more about the position. If you are happy that they would be able to perform the role and they are still interested in helping you then set a time for them to start.
- Involve the volunteer in evaluating the programme to improve and develop it.
- It's worth bearing in mind that you, or someone you know, may already know someone who would be interested in volunteering. So make sure you mention and volunteering opportunities to friends and family.



Volunteers need to know the size and nature of the task ahead of them before deciding to commit their time and energy to a position. This is where an adequately prepared job description and clear timescales are very helpful.

It is important that volunteers feel valued and appreciated by your organisation, no matter how small or vast the role they have taken on. Be sure to take this seriously because lack of appreciation is one of the most common reasons why people step away from volunteering roles.