



The Complete Volunteer Management Guide

For Nonprofits



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Understanding your volunteers' motivations

What motivates people to volunteer their time?

Volunteers are the unsung heroes of nearly every nonprofit. From day-to-day initiatives to special events, they are essential to the success of your nonprofit organization. Understanding their motivation behind the donation of their time is essential to fostering a healthy and sustainable volunteer program.

Below are three factors that often fuel volunteering: personal passion, connection and self-motivation.

Passion

One of the most common motivations for a volunteer in the nonprofit sector is their passion for the cause. Whether it is a personal connection or philosophical one, that passion should be fostered and shared. Finding people who are passionate about a cause is one of the best ways to guarantee a strong level of commitment. A volunteer who is highly motivated by a cause is often willing to put in a great deal of work to help an event supporting that cause. They understand that the initiative or event is working towards goals that they themselves believe. It's almost as if the event is helping them as much as they are helping the event.

Connection through personal network

How many of your existing volunteers are there? Imagine how many of them were asked to participate from a family member or friend? A great many volunteers show up because a friend, family member, or colleague asked them to come and lend a hand. People like being asked and they are more likely to say "yes" if they know the person asking them. When you've exhausted all of your direct connections, ask your existing team to ask people they know - particularly those who'd be a good fit for the job. Give your team the information that they'll need to spread the word. The easier you make it for them to share, the more likely they'll pass the message along.

Self motivation

Many volunteers offer their services because they have a driving desire to support a cause or help a friend. However, some of them have goals that center around benefiting themselves. This is not at all a bad thing. These people make good volunteers because they are benefiting in their own way of volunteering. How they benefit themselves will often depend on the type of event. For example, a corporate event is likely to attract some volunteers who are eager to network and gain contacts. They are going to work hard because they want to make a good impression.

So as you build out your volunteer management program, it is important to acknowledge and foster a culture that reinforces the motivation behind your volunteer team.



Establishing a process for your volunteer program

Every successful volunteer program starts with a well-planned volunteer management process. A volunteer management process ensures your nonprofit is operating efficiently, saving time and resources while ensuring volunteer retention.

We have created a six step volunteer management process to help you get started.



Volunteer management life cycle

-  **1 Planning**
-  **2 Recruitment**
-  **3 Scheduling**
-  **4 Training**
-  **5 Management**
-  **6 Evaluation**



Planning for success

Creating a strategic plan offers your nonprofit a long-term plan for your volunteer management program, providing a clear vision to reference at all stages of the process.

Setting your organizational goals

What are you looking to achieve through your volunteer program? Are you looking to increase your volunteer numbers? Donations? Or are you looking to increase your existing volunteer teams' activity level? By establishing what your goals are on an organizational level, you will be able to shape your program to meet those goals. Once you have determined your goals, make sure to document them, and include them in your volunteer program strategic plan. This will allow you to stay focused on meeting those goals as you move forward in the planning process.

Establishing your needs

Next up is establishing your needs through a staffing analysis. Your staffing analysis should include what tasks will need to be done and what expertise they require. This should provide a vision of ideal volunteer personas, offering a clear vision of what you are looking for during the recruitment phase of the process. Once this is outlined, you will need to write detailed role descriptions that include qualifications.

The more detailed your role descriptions are the better. Consider everything from skills, certifications, and even physical requirements. The last thing you want is a volunteer injuring themselves lifting a 50lb box of supplies!

Bonus

Consider creating a **volunteer program mission statement**. A mission statement articulates your nonprofits commitment and gratitude to volunteerism.



Volunteer role creation checklist

1

Role title

A descriptive title that is self-explanatory.

2

Description

A general description that explains what the role is on a high level.

3

Key responsibilities

A list of primary duties and responsibilities.

4

Skill qualifications

A list of skill requirements that includes detailed physical requirements and prior work experience.

5

Certifications

A list and description of any certifications or background checks required for the role.

Defining a leadership team

Who are the people with the answers?

Volunteers are no different than regular staff and require direction and support to get the job done. Creating a leadership team is essential to a successful volunteer management program. Establish your leadership needs by reviewing your staff analysis and considering what support those tasks require. Volunteer coordinator, shift supervisors, and team leads will ensure that your volunteers are effective and confident.





Recruiting the right people for the job

As you recruit volunteers, sheer numbers aren't enough. You need to make sure you're recruiting the right people to fill each role. After that, make sure you actually get them assigned to the right place so you can optimize your team.

When developing your volunteer recruitment strategy, there are three key questions to ask yourself:

- Which roles require special training, skills, or certifications? Whether it's CPR, IT, hair and make-up, teaching, or being able to type 70+ words per minute, make sure you identify the roles that must be filled by a professional or highly-skilled individual.
- Which roles have age requirements? Note if there are positions that can be filled by teenagers, or if you prefer that everyone is over the age of 18 (or 21 if they need to serve alcohol).
- Which roles have physical requirements? Some roles may require volunteers who can stand all day, go up and down stairs, or lift 50 lb boxes.

Instead of gathering volunteers and then sorting out who can do what, get specific about what you need and find people to fill these roles. Leverage your sign-up process to capture everyone's special skills, training, background, and certifications.

Spreading the word

Once you have established what you need, it's time to get the word out and start recruiting.

Invite your current volunteer list first

If you already have a list of volunteers who have worked previous events you've organized, make them feel appreciated by giving them exclusive access to the positions you have available now.

Added bonus to this strategy, you already know their strengths and where they fit best.

Share your recruitment link

Use social media, your website, email, and/or direct mailers to share your volunteer needs and sign up link. Don't forget to encourage previous volunteers to share the link with their friends.

Launch a prominent social media campaign

In addition to organically sharing your recruitment link on your social media channels, you'll want to launch a formal campaign using these channels. This can be a good opportunity to bring a previous volunteer on board early to help coordinate social media efforts.

Review and interview

Once you have reached your recruitment goal, it's time to start reviewing your volunteer application pool. Filter your applications by qualifications, competencies, and availability to quickly find your target volunteers. Now the qualitative evaluation process begins.

Volunteer interview

Have interview questions prepared in advance, keeping in mind the adage of behavior-based interviewing (**BBI**): past behavior is indicative of future performance. Volunteer Pro recommends making a list of desired knowledge, skills, and abilities (**KSA**) and tailoring your interview questions accordingly using the BBI method. An example of using this interview method is to ask how the interviewee responded to a specific situation in the past. Their answer should demonstrate the specific abilities you're looking for. If not, maybe they aren't the right fit for that role.



Background Screening

Screening is a comprehensive process that can entail police background checks, interview questions, and more depending on the role. The more risk involved—for instance, the more contact the volunteer will have with vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and the disabled—the more involved your screening needs to be.

References

Make sure you ask for references and communicate to potential volunteers that you will check them. And then do! You'll want each person you interview to provide multiple professional references from people who are not close friends or family members, such as past and current employers.

Placement

Even when all roles are filled, the screening process continues in the form of supervision, evaluation and feedback. This is especially true if you have volunteers responsible for delivering a higher level of personal care to vulnerable populations.



Building and managing your schedule

Scheduling staff and volunteers can seem overwhelming. So many people! So many tasks! Such varying availability! To make these activities as painless as possible, here is a six step process to get the job done.

1 Map out the tasks and stations by time & location

Identify the hours required for each station as well as the location of each station. Don't forget about set-up and take-down when mapping out tasks!

2 Determine your staffing requirements

What is the minimum number of staff members and volunteers required to perform each activity or cover each station? (It's a good idea to also identify the maximum number of volunteers a station can handle, in case you're dealing with small spaces or a limited amount of equipment.)

3 Identify roles and responsibilities for each station

Write specific descriptions for each role and identify any necessary qualifications, so you know who you need to find.

4 Determine shift lengths

How long will you require your volunteers to work? Keep in mind the nature of the task, as well as the volunteer's own limitations. A perk for volunteering at certain events might be getting in free, so you want to ensure the person has time to enjoy the event after the shift. In other cases, a volunteering task might be strenuous, or the weather might be challenging, so keeping the shifts shorter could help attract volunteers and keep them happy as they work.

5 Be concise

By offering your training in "bite-size" portions, you'll have a good chance at keeping everyone's attention. Be brief in all communications, from face-to-face training to online tutorials.

6 Use a volunteer management tool to share important documents

Standardize the communication tool used for the organization so that both regular staff and volunteers are using the same platform to access stored event information. Host a training session that doubles as a mixer is a great way to have everyone meet and learn to use the tool together. Offer ice-breaker activities and snacks at the training, so that people associate using the tool positively.



Training your volunteers

If your training materials seem overwhelming to your volunteers, consider offering your next training session in little bites—like a snack. After all, everybody loves snacks: They're quick and easy, they hit the spot, and they're fun to eat. So why not transform that four-hour training session into something a little easier to swallow? Here are six tips on how to make your volunteer training materials "snackable".

1 **Make training accessible online**

This can be done in a number of ways, including video conferencing. Have video tutorials available, as well as PowerPoints, testimonials and short quizzes to test how much the trainee has learned.

2 **Have face-to-face training options available**

Everybody's learning style is different, even for those who have been brought up with technology. Offer in-person training for everyone—for those who don't feel comfortable training online as well as for those who would like or need the extra reinforcement.

3 **Provide a centralized location where volunteers pick up training materials or important equipment**

Preferably, this location is the same or in the general vicinity of the volunteer need to avoid confusion and connect volunteers with the location. Having print materials available for pickup is another way to balance on-line training with real-time communication.

4 **Incorporate enticing visuals into your training materials**

Use a tool like Canva to create cool pamphlets and infographics. Its visuals are great for print and online materials. Or, even better, download a pre-made volunteer training guide.

5 **Be concise**

Breaking up your training into modules and smaller segments will help keep everyone's attention. Convey details simply and clearly and highlight critical pieces of information. Keep emails and all forms of communication brief.

6 **Use a volunteer management tool to share important documents**

A volunteer management tool is an easy way to standardize communications across organizational staff and your volunteer workforce. The platform has the ability to host, share and store critical information, ensuring everyone is working from the same information.



Volunteer management

Everything is planned and prepped and now it's time to start executing! Managing your volunteer team is essential to ensure everything runs smoothly and your volunteers feel supported. One person can't manage it all, so designating team supervisors to support the volunteers will go a long way.

1

Give clear expectations to your volunteer team ahead of time

Let them know the dress code, when to arrive and where to check-in. Do you want your volunteers wearing white shirts and black pants, or golf shirts and khakis? Are jeans allowed? Tell them. If you need volunteers to arrive fifteen minutes ahead of time, for example, have a staff member greet them and give them tasks to do before the initiative kicks off. Lastly, make sure this information has been shared and made available online beforehand.

2

Clearly communicate your nonprofits brand to your team

Do you want to present a casual, laid back image or something more polished and formal? Provide online communications with interesting articles that convey your brand's identity. Present concrete examples of how your team emulates that image. Depending upon the organization, you may want a standard, formal greeting for visitors versus the more casual "Hi, how's it going?"

3

Use a volunteer management tool that allows you to communicate over large areas (including outdoor spaces) and adapt easily to changes

Make sure both your regular and volunteer staff know how to access information on the tool. Schedule training that allows you or a regular staff member to train your volunteers on the tool, and be sure to post online instructions and a helpful list.

4

Stick to your timetable

Attendees appreciate it when they can rely on the program schedule. Make sure all of your volunteers and staff have access to the most up-to-date schedule at all times. An online, and consistently up-to-date, schedule is essential for these purposes.

5

Provide a private room where staff and volunteers can temporarily getaway to catch a breath and recharge

Don't assume all your volunteers know where that room is. It's helpful to provide an online map that highlights the break room and other key areas of the location. Be sure to have plenty of fresh water and some nutritious snacks on hand - particularly if the initiative is housed outside.

6**Schedule extra staff—you never know when you may need an extra set of hands**

Assign volunteer staff to serve as support for employees, and cross-train them to work in other areas in case someone gets sick or doesn't show up. In scheduling extra volunteers, make sure that everyone is engaged and feels valued. You don't want those extra volunteers standing around feeling useless, only to disappear when you need them most.

7**Lastly, keep all your important documents in one place**

Back up all print documents digitally and have them available online for the appropriate individuals to access. Better yet, use a volunteer management tool that stores all your documents, combines all the functions you need into one platform, and allows multi-level access to your documents.





Evaluation and optimization

The final stage in the volunteer management process is to evaluate and optimize your existing strategies to get even better results next time. When you understand where your volunteers are coming from, how they engaged, and how efficiently they used your volunteer communication tools, you can better tailor your marketing efforts, identify efficiencies, and adopt protocol to build the best volunteer program possible.

Recruitment

Determine what worked & what didn't

An analysis of your data can identify successful recruiting strategies, i.e. did you get more volunteers from social media, inbound web traffic, email blasts or the local newspaper? This information will help you decide whether you need to change or expand your marketing strategies in the future.

Identify your pool of volunteers

Examine the age groups and other demographics of volunteer staff that you're attracting. This will help you decide whether you're overlooking key talent that would be interested in filling some of your less popular roles. Determining who your volunteers are and where they come from can also help you identify which types of volunteers you are retaining—and which ones you may be inadvertently turning away.

Find next year's recruiting focus

By examining your volunteer demographics, motivations, training, and organization performance, you'll be able to set goals for the future. For example, if you're looking to broaden your volunteer demographic to include younger

demographics, the data on your volunteers will indicate whether you need to place more emphasis on their interests and needs.

Day of Efficiencies

Look for specific improvements. Everything may have looked good on paper, but once the initiative takes place, your volunteer data may show a different story. If you had to make several day of schedule changes due to volunteer no-shows, you probably need a more stringent attendance policy. Another common discovery is that you may have scheduled too many or too few volunteers for one role. Decide which adjustments you need to make for next time, such as having more volunteers scheduled in registration, or having a large pool of floaters to step into roles as appropriate. Be sure to document your findings.

Analyze shift lengths and staff engagement

Evaluate how practical the length of individual shifts were. If the shifts were too long or too short for top volunteers to be fully engaged with their work or with attendees, you'll want to adjust the shifts accordingly for next time so that nobody loses interest.

Protocol and training

Evaluate the effectiveness of your training documents & tutorials

Be sure to provide the appropriate level of due diligence after the program. By looking at how your volunteers performed, determine what sections of your training documents need to be updated or modified, and which documents and tutorials worked.

Get feedback from volunteers & staff

Have your volunteers fill out their own evaluations on what their experience was like. Take into consideration their thoughts on the online and offline training that was provided.

Assess volunteer engagement with your tools

The amount of engagement with your communications app is also a good indicator on the usefulness of the app and training. Check on the number of volunteers that used the app for communication, how valuable those communications were, and whether the app promoted engagement among members of the team themselves.

Determine how well people responded to emergencies

Finally, analyze how effective communication was during emergencies. Review how prompt communication was and whether the right people were notified. Use the reporting from this to justify the actions your team made and to assess what training would be necessary to improve emergency response for the future.

Bloomerang Volunteer will store all your data and allow you to break down and analyze it effectively before, during and after your initiative. Handle your safety, communications and scheduling for the entire team with our all-in-one mobile staff management tool.





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Online Fundraising

Email Marketing

Reporting & Analytics

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