

Top Tips



Volunteer Retention

People



This guide will be useful for: organisations who are looking for ideas to improve their volunteer retention.

What you want to achieve:

Recruiting the right volunteers for your organisation is a difficult and timely task. Once you find a volunteer that is in tune with the pulse of your organisation, it is important to hold on to them. The volunteer retention strategies you deploy as an organisation can mean the difference between reaching your goals or not. Everyone involved with your organisation needs to understand the value of retaining vital volunteers. ✓

What you'll need:

Knowledge of your organisation's volunteer retention strategies. ✓

An appreciation of the important and specific contributions your volunteers make. ✓

An understanding of the skills and knowledge of your volunteers and how you can employ them to benefit the organisation. ✓

How you'll do it:

Give volunteers clarity and commitment around their roles

- **Have clear volunteering policies and procedures in place** – this should clarify how volunteers fit into the organisation and what can be expected of them - It is useful to outline these in writing so volunteers can refer to it at any time.
- **Offer a comprehensive induction/training program**; this will help volunteers integrate into the organisation and make them understand the systems and procedures followed by the

organisation. Induction training helps new employees settle down quickly in the new work environment, and gives them a sense of belonging.

- **Ensure that your whole organisation is committed to involving and working with volunteers** – it is important that everyone at the organisation understands why volunteers are involved and the important contribution they make to the organisation. This could potentially be achieved through hosting a volunteer celebration day or showcasing the contribution volunteers make to your organisation.
- **Value your volunteers by integrating them into decision making processes**, for example, inviting them to contribute at staff meetings and draw upon their skills and experiences.
- **Provide on-going support and training for volunteers and seek opportunities for regular communication**. Ask your volunteers what they want. This will help the organisation identify any issues early on.
- **Integrate accessible recruitment procedures for your volunteers** - If your recruitment procedures are overly bureaucratic, e.g. lots of forms to complete, volunteers may decide to look at other volunteering opportunities before they've even started. It is important to set the right tone. This will also help your organisation to appropriately match the skills of a volunteer to the right volunteering role.

The Importance of Making Volunteers feel Valued

It is important to celebrate the work of your volunteers and show them that their contribution is valued. Not only will this boost volunteer confidence, but it will also encourage volunteer retention over longer periods of time. Recognising and rewarding the contribution of volunteers will help your organisation build a unique reputation for providing an excellent volunteer experience and could ultimately lead to more volunteers wanting to volunteer with your organisation. Here are some tips on how to celebrate your volunteers:

- **Recognise volunteers' contributions** through events like Volunteers' Week and small everyday gestures like 'thank you' emails or in person celebrations.
- **Ensure volunteers are given meaningful and varied roles** – like any employee, volunteers appreciate a challenge and strive when working with a diverse set of responsibilities.

Unavoidably, everyone must undertake mundane tasks in the workplace, however, varying monotonous duties with exciting ones will encourage volunteer retention.

- **Create a clear pathway for volunteer progression.** This may be included in the volunteer induction training.
 - **Be flexible with volunteer's availability and working times.** Ensure to ask your volunteers about their availability and try to understand that they may have other work or social commitments.
 - **Reimburse expenses – ensure that you reimburse your volunteers on a full cost recovery basis.** It is essential to have a complete system in place for claiming expenses. If you do not, please speak to your finance team to develop one.
 - Ensure a process is in place that **allows volunteers to provide feedback on their role.**
 - **There are so many ways that you could celebrate your ideas!** Take a look at some ideas below, but you know your volunteers best!
 - A letter from the Chief Executive after their first year of service.
 - Organising a thank you card from service users.
 - Thank them on social media #charitytuesday, #volunteersweek.
 - Host a meal for your volunteers.
 - Organise a volunteer awards.
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