

BEST PRACTICES FOR VOLUNTEER MANAGERS

Are you new to managing volunteers? Curious how to utilize volunteers to maximize the impact of your organization's mission? In addition to offering volunteer-related professional development trainings to area nonprofits, United Way has compiled best practices in volunteer management.

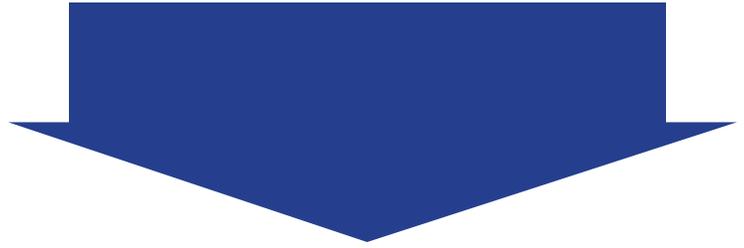
- 1. Recruit volunteers.** Use the Volunteer Portal to post all volunteer opportunities, including one time occurrences and ongoing opportunities. Descriptions should be simple yet have impact. For example, instead of "Reading Tutor Needed," write "Help a Child Learn to Read Today!"
- 2. Be respectful.** Volunteers serve as the most important marketers and fundraisers for your organization. Make sure volunteers feel they are being treated professionally and with respect. For ongoing opportunities, such as board, committee and administrative positions, interviews are a good idea. Volunteers will get a better sense of what is expected of them and you can decide if they will be a good fit for your organization. Maybe a volunteer had a different understanding of your organization's objectives and would like to be more involved, or perhaps you feel that a volunteer would be more helpful at events and single day opportunities rather than long-term opportunities.

LIVE UNITED



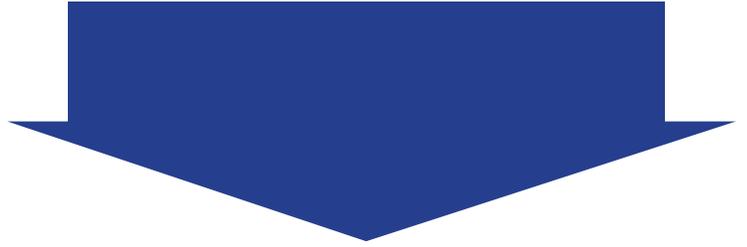
United Way of the
Dutchess-Orange Region

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- 3. Be clear.** Be upfront with all volunteer expectations. Expectations for ongoing volunteers should be in writing and volunteers should sign off. Example, “ I (volunteer) will commit to serve x hours per week, I will be on time, I will try to give notice 24 hours in advance if I cannot come to a meeting....” Does other documentation need to be filled out such as a liability waiver? Do you have a formal application? If volunteers are not aware of what is expected of them, it is difficult to evaluate their performance. If a volunteer is not satisfying expected commitments, but has good intentions, see if they can still assist your organization, but in a different capacity.
- 4. Don't waste their time.** Volunteers want to do meaningful work. Make sure that for events you do not have too many volunteers or little for them to do. Odds are they might not return if they do not feel vital.
- 5. Be organized.** Have your event put together successfully. Make sure to be early (before your volunteers arrive). All supplies should be already onsite. If errands need to be run make sure another staff person is responsible so that you can be attentive to your volunteers. Or on the other hand, make sure your meeting has a purpose. Have an agenda ahead of time. Volunteers should not spend their tenure brainstorming.
- 6. Follow-up.** Make sure to keep in regular contact with volunteers, engage them in your organization. Continue to let them know about upcoming opportunities with your organization. Offer ongoing opportunities to engaged one-time or event volunteers, when possible.
- 7. Be positive and encouraging.** Send thank you cards and emails, in a timely manner. If your organization is able to, recognize those volunteers who have gone above and beyond my hosting an appreciation breakfast or volunteer recognition ceremony.

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- 8. Be supportive.** Volunteers are helping out for a variety of reasons that are not mutually exclusive. While they are committed to making the world a better place they may also want to put their volunteer experiences on their resumes or use their volunteer experience to gain new skills and move up professionally. Write recommendation letters when possible, serve as a reference if you are comfortable and offer professional development opportunities when feasible.
- 9. Re-evaluate.** Measure your volunteer's performance. Take volunteer's suggestions seriously. Make sure that they are satisfied in their role and see if they have ideas that can benefit your organization. Make sure volunteers are contributing in a meaningful way. Volunteers may have to take on additional or reduced roles for your organization depending on your and their comfort level.
- 10. Have fun.** Make sure that volunteers are involved in your mission. Invite them to fundraisers and events. If possible allow them to interact with your clients in a positive way.

Volunteers are the backbone of every nonprofit organization.

With their help you can better realize your mission and grow as an organization.

Additional resources:

<http://www.idealists.org/info/VolunteerMgmt/Best>

http://www.handsonnetwork.org/files/resources/GB_TakeRoot_Volunteer_Management_unkn_HON.pdf

<http://www.501commons.org/resources/tools-and-best-practices/volunteer-management>

http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/Management_Brief.pdf

<http://www.energizeinc.com/>