

Top Tips

Supporting and Thanking Volunteers

Taken and adapted from Volunteering Ireland web site: <http://www.volunteer.ie/>

1. Say thank you often, and mean it
2. Smile when you see them!
3. Differentiate clearly between the roles of paid staff, trainees and volunteers
4. Match the volunteer's desires with the organisation's needs
5. Send birthday cards
6. Provide a clear role description for every volunteer
7. Make sure new volunteers are welcomed warmly
8. Highlight the impact that the volunteer contribution is having on the organisation
9. Show an interest in volunteers' personal interests and their outside life
10. Tell volunteers they have done a good job
11. Always have work for your volunteers to do and never waste their time
12. Give volunteers a real voice within the organisation
13. Set up a volunteer support group
14. Provide meaningful and enjoyable work
15. Send 'thank you' notes and letters when appropriate
16. Say something positive about their personal qualities
17. Involve volunteers in decision-making processes
18. Give a certificate to commemorate anniversaries of involvement
19. Develop a volunteer policy
20. Evaluate volunteer involvement on an ongoing basis
21. Create a climate in which volunteers can feel motivated
22. Allow volunteers the opportunity to debrief, especially if they work in stressful situations
23. Have a volunteer comments box and consider any suggestions carefully
24. Make sure the volunteer coordinator is easily accessible and has an 'open door' policy
25. Provide insurance cover
26. Supervise volunteers' work
27. Have a vision for volunteer involvement in your organisation
28. Do not impose new policies and procedures without volunteers' input
29. Ask volunteers themselves how the organisation can show it cares
30. Permit volunteers to attend seminars, conferences and workshops from time to time
31. Give volunteers a proper induction
32. Celebrate the year's work together
33. Offer to write volunteers letters of reference
34. Accept that different volunteers are able to offer different levels of involvement
35. Accept that an individual volunteer's ability to commit may change over time
36. Ask volunteers' opinions when developing new policies and strategies
37. Make sure the Director (in large organisations) shows her/his personal appreciation of the volunteers' work
38. Pass on positive comments about volunteers from clients to the volunteers themselves
39. Provide the opportunity for 'leave of absence'
40. Add volunteers to memo and e-mail distribution lists
41. Set solid goals for volunteers and keep communicating them
42. Let volunteers put their names to something they have helped to produce or to make happen
43. Provide car or bike parking for volunteers
44. Give the volunteer a title which reflects the work they do (not just 'volunteer')
45. Consider providing, or paying for, child care for volunteers who are parents
46. Inform the local press about the excellent work of your volunteers

47. Undertake individual supervision and support sessions
48. Always be courteous
49. Maintain regular contact with volunteers, even if they work 'off-site' or at odd hours
50. Allow volunteers to 'get out' without feeling guilty
51. Keep volunteers informed of changes in structure and personnel
52. Provide adequate clothing and name badges if appropriate
53. Use quotes from volunteers in leaflets and annual reports
54. Devote resources (time and money) to volunteer support
55. Count up how many hours volunteers contribute and publicise this
56. Ensure all paid staff and trainees know how to work effectively with volunteers
57. Provide accredited training
58. Hang a volunteer photo board in a prominent position
59. Give volunteers the opportunity to evaluate their own performance and role
60. Do not overwhelm volunteers
61. Build volunteers' self-esteem by giving them a sense of ownership of their work
62. Always be appreciative of volunteers' contribution
63. Ensure volunteers have adequate space and equipment to do their work
64. Provide excellent training and coaching
65. Recognise that volunteers play a unique role
66. Have an annual volunteer award ceremony
67. Focus on the problem, if there is one, not the personality of the volunteer
68. Create two-way communication processes
69. Have occasional lunches, dinners, barbecues, picnics, etc
70. Create a volunteer notice board
71. Set up a volunteers forum
72. Allow volunteers to get involved in solving problems
73. Pay for an eye test if they sit in front of a computer all day
74. Review the progress of volunteers on a regular basis
75. Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses
76. Send a card at Christmas *
77. Conduct an exit interview when a volunteer leaves
78. Have a 'volunteer voice' section in your newsletter
79. Be honest at all times
80. Provide constructive appraisal
81. Make volunteers feel good about themselves
82. Don't treat volunteers as 'second class citizens'
83. Ensure confidentiality for your volunteers
84. Provide volunteers with a 'rights and responsibilities' charter
85. Don't bully them into doing tasks which they have made clear they don't want to do
86. Give free membership to your organisation
87. Ensure you have adequate support skills yourself
88. Ask why volunteers are leaving or have left
89. Throw a volunteers party
90. Use surveys as a way of eliciting your volunteers' views
91. Provide free refreshments during coffee and tea breaks
92. Celebrate United Nations International Volunteer Day (5 December each year)
93. Suggest sources of help and support for personal problems
94. Allow volunteers to air legitimate grievances and make sure they are dealt with swiftly
95. Send a card or flowers if volunteers are ill or bereaved
96. Encourage them to sit on committees and attend meetings
97. Ensure a safe and healthy working environment
98. Allow volunteers to take on more challenging responsibilities
99. Celebrate volunteers week: 1st - 7th June each year!
100. Respect and celebrate diversity!