Basics of Volunteer Engagement and Introductory VolunteerMatch Training

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Get Started with VolunteerMatch!
8 Easy Steps for Recruiting Online

• Make the Title Work for You
  – Catchy, Fun, Interesting

• Keep it Brief
  – One Opportunity, 100 words

• Word it Simply and Make it Easy to Understand
  – No Jargon, no acronyms

• Make an Impact
  – Include a Strong Call to Action
8 Easy Steps for Recruiting Online

• Provide Direction and Support
  – Time Commitment, Training, Restrictions

• Make it Visually Appealing
  – Include Pictures, Graphics. Make use of White Space.

• Remember to Edit
  – Grammar, Spelling

• View your Listing as a Volunteer
  – Use a Critical Eye.
Best Practices for VolunteerMatch

• Title Stands Out
  – Call to Action

• Make Good Use of First Sentence
  – Visible to prospective volunteers

• Brainstorm and Use Keywords
  – What kinds of volunteers do you want to find you

• Keep Referrals on VolunteerMatch
  – Information is only useful if volunteers click ‘I Want to Help!’
Volunteer Retention and Program Evaluation
Keep the Volunteers You Have

Why do some volunteers leave and others stay?

• Difference in expectations
  – Organizational culture
  – Work v job description
  – Time commitment
  – Communication and style
  – Program support and training
  – Motivation and philosophy

• Maintain the relationship
  – Identify and address signs of disengagement

• Volunteers have lives, too. You can’t plan for life.
Position Descriptions and Retention

An accurate position description can help you recruit and keep more of the right volunteers.

- Clear positions and responsibilities can help mitigate difficult situations with volunteers.
  - Everyone is on the same page.

- Give your volunteers room to grow
  - Graded or leveled positions, leadership positions, an opportunity to take on more responsibility or have a role to work towards.

- Program managers and team leaders can better understand how volunteers fit into the organization.
  - Build support for volunteers, and the work they do.
Saying Thank You

• Create a culture of appreciation.
  – Incorporate impact into your thank you

• How a volunteer wants to be recognized is unique to each volunteer.
  – Ask! - Survey, questionnaire. What would they like to do, learn, see?
  – Recognize professional work in meaningful ways - Credit, public acknowledgement, portfolio
  – Don’t underestimate a heartfelt, handwritten note - Created by clients or staff
Evaluating your Impact

Quantitative impact is important. Think about what you can measure

- Number of volunteers
- Hours worked
- Clients served, or client satisfaction

But numbers are only the beginning…
Evaluating your Impact

Qualitative impact is important too.

• Short term impacts
• Long term impacts
• What’s different or better because of volunteers?
• How can you tell the story of why what volunteers do is important.

Share this information – with your volunteers, other staff members, clients, patrons, the community!
Plan for Success
Getting Started

• Identify Stakeholders
  – Board, Exec. Management, Program Managers, Paid Staff, Volunteer Staff

• Communicate to create buy-in
  – How could the impact of staff members, programs, the organization be expanded by engaging volunteers?

• Reach out to your champions
Identify Stakeholders

Who plays a role in your organization? How do they feel about engaging volunteers in new ways?

- Stakeholders could be organization leadership, staff, volunteers, or donors.

- Assess where each stakeholder is on the engagement continuum
  - “I’m evaluating our volunteer engagement program. I’d love to get your ideas”
  - One on one conversations
  - Opportunity for you to learn – don’t defend or attempt to change minds

- Group stakeholders into champions, those seeking more information, and those opposed to expanding volunteer engagement.
Create a Communication Plan

Based on your volunteer engagement continuum create a plan for each group or each individual stakeholder.

• What type of information should be included?
  – Quantitative – volunteer hours, number of clients served
  – Qualitative – quotes or feedback from clients
  – Opportunity for volunteer engagement

• Internal communication and external communication
  – Different audiences need different styles and tones – overarching message should be the same.

• Formal and informal communication channels
  – Newsletter – formal, external facing. Who is included on the mailing list?
  – Email/social media – less formal, internal and external
  – Daily conversations/communication – informal
Starting an Action Plan

First, assess your stakeholder continuum.

• Identify your champions

• Assess the barriers
  – Attitudes
  – Staff, money and other resources
  – Where can you make progress, and where are the big walls?

• Is there an natural starting point or path for action?
  – Remember where you want to go – 5 year strategic plan
Create Benchmarks

Working from your starting point identify the milestones or benchmarks that will help you achieve your plan.

• Engagement goals
  – New volunteer opportunities, new programs/departments using volunteers

• Communication goals
  – Internal communication strategies, external communication strategies

• Volunteer program goals
  – Leadership opportunities within volunteer program
Create a Timeline

When can you complete your benchmarks? Be realistic – you still have to accomplish the rest of your job.

• Engage volunteers to help you
  – You remove the barriers, volunteers build the program

• Leadership volunteers can help build the plan
  – New roles for volunteers
  – New opportunities for volunteers to use skills
  – Model the volunteer engagement you want to see
Make your Plan a Reality!

Remember the strategies for success.
• Start small and work with your champions
• Refer back to your strategic plan and goals.
  – It’s okay to reevaluate where you’re going as the program starts to evolved.
• Don’t get discouraged
  – Tout your successes and evaluate and learn from your mistakes.
Resources

**Learning Center**
Find upcoming webinar dates, how-to videos and more
http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/

**VolunteerMatch Community**
Ask and answer questions after the webinar – use keywords Volunteer Management
http://community.volunteermatch.org/volunteer

**California Library Get Involved Resource Center:**
Videos, sample documents, policies, and position descriptions, photos and more!
http://www.library.ca.gov/lds/getinvolved.html
Thanks for attending!

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