

Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet

Second edition

Edited by Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson & Fraser Dyer



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Introduction to the first edition (2004)

Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson & Fraser Dyer

It's been over a year since we began our search for contributions to this book. Ultimately we wanted a neat little free resource that was fresh, accessible and could be dipped into by readers when in need of inspiration (rather than be read from cover to cover).

We are proud to present a resource that was both commissioned and produced by volunteer managers at the grassroots level. This project was a learning experience for all of us and we are grateful to everyone who contributed their writing, opinions, ideas, and suggestions.

What We Set Out to Do

There are many people that manage volunteers who are 'silent experts' – they have years of accumulated knowledge, insight and experience about how to run great volunteer programmes and bring the best out of their volunteers. Yet their expertise is not always seen outside of their organisation, and sometimes not even valued within it. It is like a vein of gold that runs through the profession which has

not, as yet, been uncovered. Even if these silent experts wanted to share their insights (and too many don't even acknowledge their own expertise), it's not always easy to break into the established volunteer management networks, conferences and journals to make one's voice heard.

With *Turn Your Organisation into a Volunteer Magnet*, we wanted to create a resource that gave an outlet to these silent experts. It wasn't important for contributors to be good writers. We even said they could simply give us outlines or list bullet points if they preferred and we would write their final piece for them. What we did want was The Stuff They Knew; their unrefined gold that – if necessary – we would polish up so that its brilliance could be seen more easily. And for budding writers who really wanted to get published, here was an opportunity to submit something that would be accepted not on the basis of 'who are you?' but on 'what do you have to say?'

There are some more established voices in this collection too, familiar names who have done the conference circuits, had books and articles published. They gave their time for free just like everyone else, to help support a project founded on the principle of giving something back to the profession and providing an 'open mike' for anyone who wanted to speak.

Because of the organic nature of the project, we never imagined that the book would say everything there was to say, nor that it would necessarily be representative of the wide range of practice in our field. Instead, we wanted to provide an outlet to some new voices to share their experiences with others. Each chapter therefore represents someone's passion, and we hope that will convey itself to readers and inspire them.

Why an Electronic Book?

An eBook fits well with the purpose of this project: it's simple to produce; it avoids print and distribution costs and therefore can be made available for free; and it can be as short or long as the contributions received.

One of the valuable aspects of this form of publishing is that the book need never be finished; rather it will continue to grow and evolve over time, and new contributions can be added easily. Accessibility is a key factor too. Anyone, anywhere can get the book and use it – so long as they have a computer. And, at a click of a 'send' button, people can pass the book on to others (the joy of "viral eMarketing").

The book got started by posting invitations to contribute on the OzVPM¹ and UKVPMs² newsgroups, so it seems fitting that it ends with a resource that can be accessed through the same medium. Although we initially targeted our Australian and British colleagues, we of course received contributions from North Americans too. The power of the Internet is that we can cast a wide net. Since we wanted to encourage people to write who may not usually have (or be encouraged to exercise) that opportunity, we achieved what we set out to do on a number of fronts, including presenting first-time writers.

So the project was win/win. It supported and extended the type of dialogue we are trying to encourage through newsgroups like OzVPM and UKVPMs, while providing another valuable resource to the volunteer community.

Why the Theme of a Magnet?

Each of us responded to this question with feeling. Fraser shared:

When I used to play with magnets as a kid I was fascinated by finding that point between them when you just couldn't hold them apart – the ping point, where they slam together. I'd spend ages trying to bring two magnets as close to each other as possible without them connecting, and of course always failed. What was this mysterious and invisible force that made attraction unavoidable?

It is this idea of being 'powerfully compelled' that we wanted to bring to volunteer recruitment. Rather than trying to find the right way of reaching out to people, what factors would have to be present in an agency for it to draw volunteers towards it – almost without trying? A magnetic approach to recruitment won't push people through your door, but will draw them in because of the compelling environment and opportunities on offer.

Rob discussed the implications of physics:

A magnet attracts. When it finds the right material, that attraction can be pretty strong. As volunteer managers we have to attract people to our programmes as volunteers. When those people's needs match closely with what we need, we have a stronger attraction and recruitment is easier.

A magnet repels. If a material doesn't have the right properties to be attracted to a magnet it feels a force pushing it away. When recruiting, this is exactly what we want if people are not going to make a difference to our organisation's mission and vision.

Once attracted, *a magnet holds fast.* It is hard to break the link between a magnet and something stuck to it. Likewise, when our

recruitment and management of volunteers is working effectively, it can be hard for either side to break off and retention becomes easier.

Finally, *magnets are a key aspect of producing electricity* (Physics 101). And when volunteers are really having an impact on the lives of people, that can be as powerful, impressive and inspiring as any display of electric power nature can show us.

Andy agreed and added these thoughts:

Volunteering when it works best is organic in nature. Despite the best efforts of some it can't be compartmentalised, contained, and turned into processes and rules. Whenever we try to do this, volunteerism changes to escape those constraints. It is in essence about *people* – people uniting behind a common goal with a shared desire to change the world in some way for better or, in some cases, for worse. That's why word of mouth is our most effective form of recruitment, because it is an honest reflection of the people-focused nature of volunteerism.

For me, this project is about creating something of benefit to volunteering managers that epitomises those characteristics of the nature of volunteerism. It is about VMs speaking to each other to share best practice, ideas and passions (word of mouth). It's about something that is different, escaping the constraints of how we normally pass on and share good practice. And, in being this, it is hopefully a reminder of our need to reflect the values and nature of volunteering in the work we do and keeping volunteering about people not processes.

We all hope that you'll not only be inspired by the contributions here,

but that you might look at some and say "I could have written that." If you do, then we hope it will help you to value your own expertise. And if you think there is something missing here, do let us know. It's not too late to make your voice heard. You can contact us at magnet2007@mail.com.

If you *want* something to evolve from this – even if you have your doubts that it might happen – please try to express your vision with us all.

*Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson & Fraser Dyer
Adelaide and London
November 2004*

¹OzVPM <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ozvpm>
An active listserv dedicated to discussing volunteer management issues -- particularly as they relate to the Australian/Australasian scene..."but of course we are happy to discuss issues with our colleagues from elsewhere, too." To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to: ozvpm-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

²UKVPMs <http://www.onelist.com/community/UKVPMs>
UKVPMs mission is to increase the scope, scale and quality of both voluntary activity and the management of volunteers. UKVPMs seeks to achieve this by bringing Volunteer Programme Managers together in a virtual community to develop their skills and knowledge for the purpose of taking action towards our common goal. To subscribe send an e-mail to: UKVPMs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Introduction to the second edition (2007)

Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson & Fraser Dyer

It is hard to believe it has been three years since we launched the first edition of *Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet* and we have been both surprised and delighted with the success of the first edition.

For a start, it was downloaded many thousands of times, which has most likely made it one of the most read books on volunteer recruitment and retention in history! The vast number of downloads created by the first book certainly confirmed our belief that the creation of a free, quality, resource written for volunteer leaders was something that would be welcomed by the broader volunteerism community.

Further to this, the original publication spawned a series of national workshops of the same name that were convened by the three of us at various times, along with our colleague and friend Martin J Cowling. Turning the lessons we learnt from the e-book process into practical

training sessions has availed many hundreds of additional volunteer programme managers across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to better equip themselves in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

However, the greatest reward gained from the first edition was the personal feedback we received directly from volunteer managers on the ground, expressing their appreciation about the book and its contents.

For this second edition, we wanted to continue with the same philosophy we brought to the first project – a free resource written by and for the volunteerism community, especially those working at a grass roots level. In addition, we made the decision with the latest book, based on feedback from readers, to use a print-on-demand printing company to produce a hard copy version for those who prefer something a little more tactile! In keeping with our ‘free resource’ policy, it is our intent that books purchased via this means will incur only printing and some postage and handling costs. (Visit www.lulu.com to order a print edition at cost price).

When we decided to tackle this second edition we again began by posting requests for articles onto the UKVPMs, OzVPM and CyberVPM newsgroups. We were thrilled with the response we received and the extended number of people who were willing to author an article. Combined with the articles we kept from the first book, we believe that the new version represents a comprehensive resource worthy of inclusion in the library of every leader of volunteers.

Finally, we wanted to thank everyone who has contributed to the project thus far and trust that this latest resource will prove to be

equally as valuable as the first. We hope you will find some great ideas within these pages that will help to make volunteering for your organisation a truly compelling experience.

*Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson & Fraser Dyer
Adelaide and London
October 2007*

I. Volunteer Programme Administration

Magnetic Management

A Company Is Known By The People It Keeps

Rosemary Sage

For the most part magnets are used to hold, separate, control, convey and elevate products and to convert electrical energy into mechanical energy or vice versa.

The key words for me are magnetism, attraction, polarity and creative energy. If we apply them to an organisation let's see how we can use these principles.

To create a magnetic field within an organisation there has to be some attraction, energy or excitement to make a person want to volunteer. So what draws people to each other?

The image of any organisation is paramount. People will not be drawn to an organisation that is perceived as being old fashioned and out dated, or where volunteer jobs are viewed as dull, colorless and boring.

Volunteers can and do have lots of energy, so it is up to the Manager

of Volunteers to harness that energy and direct it into something creative. Volunteers tend to have lots of ideas about how to do things and how to make things happen. It takes skill to direct the energy into volunteer work without losing the momentum or vitality.

Organisations tend to develop their own ambience and culture. If there is a can-do atmosphere, a willingness to make things happen and some allowance for spontaneity, energy and enthusiasm, volunteers will want to return to see what's new. Where there is a warm welcoming feel about the place people will want to stay and enjoy it, while if it is difficult to get accepted, or people form cliques, volunteers won't want to return.

Humour in the workplace is also very important. As someone once said, "Humour is a great lubricant for teamwork." While humour should not be used against people, it can be effective in helping to build a sense of fun and spark off creativity and imagination. In our office we cut out topical cartoons from the paper and place them on the notice board.

It is also good to share your passion for the work you do with one another. So many volunteer programs started with a person who had a passion, and passionate people will go to extra ordinary lengths to make things happen or to forward the vision of the organisation. People with a passion often seek each other out and help to encourage and support collective activities, so take time to nurture that passion.

Rosemary Sage is CEO of Recreation SA, peak industry body for the recreation sector in the state of South Australia. She has worked closely with volunteers for over 27 years in local government community services and, until recently, as Executive Director of Volunteering SA. She remains involved in volunteering in the Sport and Recreation sector.

Making Volunteering Good Practice A Part Of Your Organisation

Erin Tierney

Volunteering is crucial to the work of voluntary sector organisations. Without it most organisations' reach would be severely limited. It's important that we, as managers of volunteers, make sure that our volunteers are well supported. In my work in promoting volunteering good practice, I have noticed three key points that, if ignored, become stumbling blocks to successfully managing volunteers. To push the magnet analogy, these stumbling blocks cause an organisation's magnetism to lose its stick.

1. Make sure there is someone responsible for volunteering at the highest level.

If volunteers are underpinning the work of our organisations, it only makes sense that we reciprocate their efforts by supporting them from the top-down. This could include senior managers, board members, trustees, etc. Ensuring that key senior people in your organisation are responsible for sharing information pertaining to volunteers will help

to raise the profile of volunteering in your organisation and keep it in focus.

2. Knowledge for volunteering should be spread throughout the whole of the organisation and not just with one person.

Too often organisations tell stories of volunteer managers leaving their post and taking all their knowledge of volunteering practice with them. This frustrating scenario doesn't need to be a reality for your organisation provided the knowledge of your volunteering policy and commitment to your organisation's volunteering practices are shared with everyone in the organisation, regardless of whether or not they manage volunteers. This doesn't have to be complicated. You can start by simply letting people know that you have a volunteering policy and where they can find it, as well as how many volunteers your organisation involves and an overall view of the support and services they help to provide.

3. Decide on a regular timeframe for reviewing volunteering practice: set a date and stick to it!

Once you've got a policy and system of supporting volunteers in place, it's important to review it regularly as a team. This helps to make sure that your policy stays relevant. It's also a fail-safe way of making sure that everyone in your organisation is aware of how your organisation manages its volunteers.

Paying attention to these three key elements will help to ensure that volunteers are continually supported at all levels of your organisation and will maintain your organisation's magnetic personality!

Erin Tierney is coordinator of an in-house volunteering good practice programme at Age Concern England.

Are You Passionate About The Work of Your Volunteers?

Fraser Dyer

By ‘passionate’ I mean are you excited about the *opportunities* you are offering to volunteers and about the *difference* they will make?

I remember a woman on a recruitment workshop who was really struggling to come up with a strong recruitment message for an advertisement. We talked for a bit about the work her volunteers did and the ways in which it was rewarding. It wasn’t long before she said, in frustration; “The real problem is that I feel embarrassed asking volunteers to do this work. And I don’t really believe we should be asking people to do this for nothing – the government should employ people to provide this service.”

And there was her recruitment problem – not that she couldn’t find people, but that she felt awkward about asking for help *and* that she was ideologically opposed to the role her volunteers undertook. No wonder she couldn’t find the right words to put in her ad.

If you lack passion or belief in the work of your volunteers you're not going to feel energized, motivated or creative enough to engage properly with the task of recruitment. But where you have genuine enthusiasm for your organisation and the work volunteers contribute to it, you will more easily be able to convey the right message to prospective volunteers. Tap into your natural excitement about volunteering and let it infuse your recruitment activity.

Action

1. What is exciting about the work your volunteers do? Take a sheet of paper and list numbers 1 to 25. Against each number write down one positive aspect about your volunteers and the work they do.

2. Can you think of any aspects of your volunteer programme that you feel disappointed, awkward or embarrassed about? If so, you need to fix these before you can really be enthusiastic about asking people to volunteer. Take time to list any issues that come to mind, and put together an action plan that will address these problems. Even if you haven't got them completely fixed you will start to feel more enthusiastic about recruitment when you know you are taking action to make things better.

Your passion for volunteering doesn't need to end with the work they do for your organisation. Your recruitment and management of volunteers will benefit if anchored in the context of wider community and social involvement.

I'm excited about the work of volunteers in society for lots of reasons. Here are just a few:

- It is democratic. The individual can take direct action to address a

need or cause they feel strongly about. They don't have to wait for a law to be passed or a government agency to solve the problem. They can go out right now and do something about it.

- I believe that people find a sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment from the work they do – whether paid or unpaid. Volunteering (if well organised) offers us the opportunity to get more out of life while at the same time making a positive contribution to the needs of others.
- It is inclusive. Many people who feel marginalized by society have been given the opportunity to get involved and be accepted. They might be people who have made mistakes in the past and are seeking rehabilitation. Or they might be people who have been made to feel different, unwelcome or seen as having little to contribute – seniors, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian volunteers, troubled young people, and so on. Volunteering builds communities and encourages cooperative relationships between people who might not otherwise interact.

When you are clear about your volunteer programme's contribution to society you will be better placed to sell the volunteering opportunities you have available. If, say, part of your philosophy is about being inclusive you will be more focused on recruiting people from the margins of society. This will open up your recruitment activity to a wider audience and will encourage you to look in places you wouldn't perhaps have considered when seeking volunteers.

So tap into your own enthusiasm and passion for volunteerism and make your recruitment activity truly magnetic.

Fraser Dyer is co-editor of Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet.

You're A Volunteer Manager, Now What?

Kelly Moore

Remember your playground days of swings and slides? You and your friends chatting about what you want to be when you grow up.

Little Johnny says, "I'm going to be a doctor." Mary exclaims that she will be a lawyer. Stevie states enthusiastically that he will create a computerized system and get rich. Janie, quietly says "I'm going to manage volunteers and change the world."

Ok, so not many of us decide at a young age we want to manage volunteers for a career. In fact, we usually "fall into" the position. The job came open at your company, you thought it seemed challenging and different, and in a blink you are now the Manager of Volunteer Services. What do you do now?

When I facilitate my *Volunteer Management Basics* seminar, I usually

begin the day with questioning my audience of volunteer managers on how many of them have had their jobs for less than two years. Most will raise their hands. Then I ask about one year, six months and so forth. I finally ask, how many of them got their jobs yesterday? Amidst a few chuckles, one or two will raise their hands.

In the next few paragraphs, my hope is to provide you with some *useful* tools that will help you to start building a successfully managed and magnetic program that will in Jane's words, "change the world."

Program Purpose/Mission

What is the mission of your volunteer program? What is it you hope to achieve?

Program Development

7-Steps to Success:

- 1. Education** – *Yours!* Get to know your organization, what they do, their objectives, their constituents; whose world are you changing?
- 2. Identify Needs** – What needs will your volunteers meet? What are the specific tasks they will perform? What special skills are required?
- 3. Recruitment** – Recruit referring to the needs identified. Are you seeking men, women, does age matter, geographical areas? *Be specific.*
- 4. Orientation** – Does your organization have orientation requirements? What forms are needed? What can your volunteer do or not do? Have your orientation prepared *before* you recruit.
- 5. Assignments** – Do your homework! Know your volunteer; know your need. The more you know, the better you can match that

volunteer with an assignment. The result? A great experience for all involved!

6. Retention – Keep those volunteers happy! Recognize them for their work. Remember birthdays and other significant dates; offer continued education and opportunities to build skills.

7. Evaluation – *Measurement!* Know your success rate. What's working, what isn't?

The most important step? *Own your program!* The success of a volunteer program hinges on the passion, enthusiasm and 'buy-in' of the one who manages it. You have to believe in what you're doing. Think about it this way, you're asking people to do things for no financial compensation. If you don't have the conviction of the difference they'll make, then how can they?

Lastly, let's not look outside the box. *There is no box!* See through the volunteers' eyes and you will see a world that is changing one moment at a time.

Kelly R. Moore is Volunteer Services Program Coordinator for Intermountain Homecare and owner/principal of VRM Consulting. She has more than 25 years experience of volunteering and volunteer management and resides in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Lead The Way

Rob Jackson

As volunteerism professionals we spend sizeable chunks of our time advocating to staff, management and others about the value and benefits of working with volunteers. Whether we're trying to get a reluctant colleague to work with volunteers or to get our CEO to support the volunteer programme beyond mere rhetoric, advocating for the benefits of working with volunteers is a significant part of our role in turning our organisations into volunteer magnets.

Yet do we practice what we preach? Do volunteers make a meaningful contribution to the management and oversight of the volunteer programme we lead? If your answer is 'no' ask a supplementary question – 'Why don't we involve volunteers in the management and oversight of the volunteer programme we lead?'

Is it because we don't have the time? Is it because we don't trust volunteers with that kind of responsibility? Is it because a volunteer couldn't do the job as well as us? Is it because a volunteer wouldn't

be reliable enough to take on that kind of responsibility?

Now just stop and think. Aren't these the same kind of reasons colleagues give us for not working with volunteers when we are out there trying to get their support?

In other words, if we don't involve volunteers in the management and oversight of the programmes we lead, why should anyone listen to us when we start trying to influence them about the potential value of volunteers to their own work?

Here are some examples of how you could engage volunteers in your own work, modelling good practice in successful volunteer involvement and taking a big step towards turning your organisation into a volunteer magnet:

- Recruit one volunteer to oversee orientation and another to specific aspects of your training programme for new volunteers.
- Source one person to prepare recruitment messages, another to do recruitment talks and maybe another to identify target markets for each volunteer role – N.B. this brings the added benefit of involving the very people you want to attract to your organisation in the process of drawing others in.
- Practice good succession planning within your volunteer team. For example, get each of the volunteers working alongside you to identify and train another person to be trained to work alongside them. This brings two benefits: a replacement should the primary volunteer leave & the primary volunteer has a sense of ownership and responsibility over the tasks you have delegated.

Rob Jackson is co-editor of Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet.

Setting The Standard

Roxanne Withers

Key performance indicators, customer service standards, continuous improvement... we are constantly defining the work that we do and measuring our performance, but how often do we involve volunteers in the development of the things we ask them to commit to?

Reflecting on how we, as Volunteer Managers, had direct input into establishing the standards and targets that we set for our programs within the City of Adelaide. We investigated ways that we might better involve our Visitor Information Service volunteers (*who receive some 250,000 enquiries per year from visitors to the City*) in setting their own standards with particular focus on customer service.

The Volunteer Manager worked with the Visitor Information Coordinator and was particularly fortunate to engage a current volunteer within the program who was a retired customer service

lecturer to facilitate the sessions (*you would be amazed at the many skills your volunteers may be hiding!*).

We developed an interactive workshop which we ran with small groups, to ensure that everyone had a chance to actively participate. It was also a great opportunity for the volunteers to get to know each other better.

We held five sessions, with a total of 73 volunteers and five staff members participating. The information was then collated, standards drafted and the results presented at a volunteer training day where it was given the final approval.

The hard work resulted in six categories and a variety of performance indicators being developed under the following headings:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Personal Presentation</i> | 4. <i>Teamwork</i> |
| 2. <i>Customer Interaction</i> | 5. <i>Feedback</i> |
| 3. <i>Information Provision</i> | 6. <i>Organisation/Management</i> |

As a result the volunteers now carry themselves with an increased sense of pride and professionalism. We also have a really effective management framework which we can base our existing and future training programs on and know that what we are asking the volunteers to commit to is realistic, appropriate and comes with a large degree of volunteer 'ownership'.

As a footnote, the Visitor Information Centre went on to win the 2007 VIC Award of excellence for Customer Service.

Success certainly breeds success – what better magnet!

Roxanne Withers has worked within Local Government for the past 12 years in a variety of Community Development roles that have all involved working with volunteers.

Keeping it Meaningful

The objectives of volunteers

Liz O'Neill

Organizations devote significant resources to attract the quantity and quality of volunteers needed to offer the programs and services they provide. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area (BBBSE) is no exception here. Through investment in recruitment and marketing, and continuous improvement in our processes, we have grown our volunteer numbers from 800 to 2,100 over the last four years.

However, getting applicants “to the door” is just one step. As we reflect on BBBSE’s success to date, a key learning has been around fostering meaningful and magnetic experiences for our volunteers, in addition to effective outcomes for the children we serve. Based on this reflection, our advice to others would be the following:

Provide a flexible range of volunteer experiences through a broad range of partners. BBBSE provides a range of flexible mentoring options and locations to serve children of all ages, so that volunteers

can pick the type of mentoring option that fits their interests, needs or schedule. BBBSE has also been part of developing a broad base of partnerships in the public, non-profit and private sector that recognize volunteer mentoring outcomes as essential for our youth. As a result, our volunteer base is as diverse as our community partnerships (i.e. high school students to senior citizens, and across socio-economic and cultural groups).

Prepare volunteers so that they understand the significance of their role. Many adults seek a volunteer mentoring role because they themselves have been impacted by a mentor. While potential volunteers often understand the *what* of the mentor role, they may not understand the *why* of how this role is important.

We have found that orientation sessions *prior to volunteers assuming their role* enhance volunteer confidence, effectiveness, and satisfaction. Potential volunteers often bring very different life experiences and assumptions than the children or youth served. Interactive orientations on resiliency, child development, match safety and relationships building pay off immediately in volunteer satisfaction.

Building A Web of Support Relationships For Volunteer Success.

We know from research that stable mentoring relationships lead to very positive outcomes for children and youth. We also know that this generates positive outcomes for mentors. *We have found that when we support volunteers with a web of relationships that continue to build volunteer confidence and effectiveness, volunteers are retained.*

BBBSE's community-based match support staff plays a primary role here. Workers touch base regularly with mentors, children and parents, to help identify emerging questions. Staff then link mentors to people that can help. For example, parents are skilled in helping

mentors plan for issues that might arise for a child with a disability. Community agencies can connect mentors to activities that reflect the aspirations of a child's cultural community. Introductions to experienced BBBSE mentors that have encountered similar issues may also yield good advice.

Volunteers come to our organizations because they "want to make a difference." Our major task is to educate, support and recognize volunteers, so that they experience success in this important personal objective.

Liz O'Neill is the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters Society of Edmonton (Alberta Canada) and Area.

Reverse Polarity And The Volunteer Magnet

Steve McCurley

Magnets attract. They also repel, as anyone who has watched a child attempting to put together two similar poles of a bar magnet can attest.

Making your charity a magnet for volunteers is a good goal, but it is important to realize that small things can make an important difference in whether you are perceived as attractive – or as repulsive.

Here's an example from one of my favorite research projects on volunteer involvement; a 'favorite' because, while simple, it produced very practical information about why some volunteer programs are successful at attracting volunteers and others fail without ever understanding why they were unsuccessful.

In 1999 Charles Hobson and Kathryn Malec* undertook a quick study

of 500 charitable agencies in the metropolitan Chicago area of the United States. These charities were not novices in volunteer involvement; each received funding from the United Way charitable system and part of what they were evaluated on in that funding process was their involvement of volunteers. You would think, then, that these charities would demonstrate some proficiency in appealing to potential volunteers.

The study worked as follows: students were recruited to call the central phone number of each charity, posing as a potential volunteer, and asking for assistance in becoming a volunteer to the first person who answered their call. The students were straightforward and articulate in voicing their interest – no tricks involved.

Now you'd think this would result in a relatively simple process of connecting the caller to the charity's volunteer manager, who would then quickly initiate the process of engaging them further. Unless, of course, you've ever worked in a charity and seen the chaos that swirls around the front desk and the rather harried fashion in which over-worked staff tend to respond to callers.

Hobson and Malec recorded the responses given to the students and the degree of help provided by whoever answered to their phone in connecting the students to proper channels for becoming a volunteer. Here are some of their results:

- only 49.3% of the callers received an offer of assistance (“May I help you?”)
- 69.3% did not receive the name of staff person answering the phone
- 26.4% were not referred to the appropriate contact person

- when the contact person was not available, only 48.7% were asked for name and phone number
- only 30% actually received callbacks
- in 16.1% of calls, prospective volunteers were not thanked for contacting the agency

Pretty repulsive, wouldn't you say?

* If you want to read the whole study: Hobson, Charles and Kathryn Malec, *Initial Telephone Contact of Prospective Volunteers with Nonprofits: An Operational Definition of Quality and Norms for 500 Agencies*, Journal of Volunteer Administration, Summer/Fall 1999.

Steve McCurley has been a US-based consultant on volunteer involvement for over 30 years.

Customer Service – It's *Your* Call

Gillian Hughes

The following is based on my own personal experiences as a potential volunteer and supports the study mentioned in Steve McCurley's chapter (above).

Is your organisation thriving or does it merely *exist* due to lack of volunteer assistance? Your answer could lie in the way your organisation handles the all-important initial enquiry of potential volunteers.

I am currently a volunteer Recruitment Officer for the Lyell McEwin Regional Volunteers Association (LMRVA) based in South Australia. The decision to volunteer here was a very easy one for me. It all came down to *first impressions* and *customer service*.

When I decided to do some voluntary work I began to contact numerous, well-known organisations, including some who said they were “desperately seeking volunteers.”

Sadly, I noticed a trend emerge:

- My initial enquiry was often greeted in a rude or abrupt manner;
- The receptionist / telephone operator was either not focussed on my call or not knowledgeable about their organisation;
- If I did succeed in being connected to a recruitment extension, my call was often met with voicemail, or just left to ring unanswered.

In nearly all cases, my phone calls *were* eventually returned – generally between a week and month later, which was much too late for me.

So why did I choose to volunteer with the LMRVA? Firstly, they had a web presence with just enough content to get me hooked. When I followed up with a phone call, a very cheerful and polite Scottish accent gave me all the relevant details about their next volunteer information session. True to their word an informative brochure and covering letter appeared in the mail the next day.

Not only did this initial feedback give me the information I needed, it also confirmed my gut instinct that I wanted to volunteer here because they were taking my enquiry, and me, seriously.

I attended a well-organised Information Session with an exceptional PowerPoint presentation, where I filled in a quick questionnaire on why I wanted to volunteer and the area of particular interest to me.

A day or two later I was sitting in a Volunteer Program Manager's office being interviewed. The office was warm and inviting and so were the staff and volunteers alike – how could I refuse?

Customer service and first impressions go hand in hand. Just who in your organisation is going to be *that* first contact? Does the potential

volunteer hear a friendly voice over the telephone, or see a warm and welcoming smile when they enter through your front door? Are your volunteers and staff focussed on the task at hand and knowledgeable of your organisation's operation? And is a request for further information dealt with promptly?

With careful recruitment and some simple customer service training, your frontline staff have the potential to be *a magnet!* And by the way, when did you last telephone your own organisation and inquire about becoming a volunteer?

*Gillian Hughes is the Program Coordinator of Northern Respite Care Services, auspiced by the Lyell McEwin Regional Volunteers Association, and has also been an active volunteer in various capacities since the age of 18.
www.lyellmcewinvolunteers.org.au.*

Balancing The Needs Of Volunteer And Project

Martin J Cowling

I want to begin by sharing a true story with you.

Mary¹ volunteered for a community project who had no real experience in engaging volunteers, but who were in need of administrative assistance. They gratefully accepted her offer of help, providing her with a desk, a telephone and a computer.

Mary found that the volunteer opportunity filled a niche in her life and soon the agency gave her a key of her own to get into the building early, bought shelves for her to store the resources she was gathering and purchased a second desk for Mary's use. Mary moved in a couch from her home, installed a food cupboard and cooked most of her meals at the centre. At this point, she was arriving at 7am and leaving between 6 and 8pm five days per week!

Some of the paid staff began to feel uncomfortable with Mary taking

¹ name has been altered

up more and more of “their” office space. When “confronted”, she became “aggressive” and unfriendly.

The staff then began to avoid working in the office altogether, choosing instead to spend time at external locations. This accelerated the element of control Mary had over the office and she began refusing to take on additional allocated tasks and started instead to run her own projects. As the staff became unfriendly towards her, she became increasingly hostile and openly rude.

The agency felt out of control and powerless, unable to manage Mary or even ‘sack’ her. Their experiment with “volunteers” was relegated to failure status and they sought external expertise.

Volunteering provides a powerful opportunity for members of the community to give, grow and be nurtured. It can be a means of giving balance to lives. Volunteering can also become a haven for people whose world needs meaning in order for them to survive – this was Mary’s case.

When the organisation finally had a chance to sit down with Mary, it was clear that this badly hurting individual had found something that made her feel good about herself, her life and her situation. She viewed the organisations attempt to take away a part of it from her as a direct affront on her personal well being, yet when probed it was found that the actual rewards she gained from her volunteer work were low.

Individuals often obtain benefits from volunteering which are not open to them in their everyday life; e.g. the opportunity to have a say, lead projects, utilise gifts, talents and skills. Somewhere there needs to be a balance between providing a volunteer with the opportunity

to fully express themselves and placing limits on their time and emotional commitment. Volunteer managers need to ensure that volunteering is only one element in a person's life and that it supports their other relationships and activities.

While volunteer managers can assist individuals with confidence, skills and opportunities, we must remember that volunteer programs are not baby-sitting services or providers of therapy to volunteers. Those recruiting volunteers need to monitor volunteers who are seeking something an agency is unable to provide.

Position descriptions need to state the expectations on volunteers while giving flexibility and scope within roles. Agencies need to be clear about the days and hours that volunteers can provide, and I suggest setting an upper limit to prevent both exploitation by the agency while minimising the opportunity for volunteers to spend excessive time in one activity. By being clear about the time commitment and expectations involved in any position, volunteers will be able to accurately assess their time commitments prior to joining an agency.

Mary went on to deal with her own issues through a recommended counsellor. Her new project was successful and the agency went on to engage volunteers who were both productive and supportive but who also had very positive life enriching experiences.

Martin J Cowling, a leading Australian based consultant on volunteer management, provides training and consultancy to organisations and individuals globally.

Hang On... There Are A Number Of Hoops To Jump Though First!

Rosie Williams

As the years pass, the expectations on volunteer programming continue to expand with increasing requirements to work within standards, to operate within the constraints of appropriate policies and practices, to manage risk, to work within a 'best practice' environment, to meet funding expectations and to protect our consumer groups.

Although all these issues are really important, do these ever-increasing processes scare potential volunteers away?

Are we becoming too rigid?

Several years ago I was fortunate enough to be able to undertake a work exchange from Adelaide, Australia to Alberta, Canada.

There were several volunteer opportunities I applied for whilst I was there. One role in particular was a new venture that I had not heard of in my country and so I was very motivated and really excited about

the possibility of participating in and learning more about this program.

I spoke with the Manager of the service asking if I could apply to volunteer. I was disappointed to learn that they had just completed their training program (*literally the night before!*) and would not be running the training again for another six months.

I was unable to be considered for this role until I had undertaken the training program and as I was scheduled to return home to Australia a few weeks prior to their next formal training date there was nothing I could do to take part in this venture.

Because I had missed the training no further discussion was entered into about the possibility of my becoming a volunteer. My extensive work experience in the human services field or my tertiary studies in Social Sciences were not recognised and there was no flexibility within the 'policies' to consider such things.

Fair enough you might say? Rules are rules!

So how flexible can we be when we are engaging potential volunteers?

- Are we recognising prior learning and life skills?
- Are we offering training within a flexible learning model?
- Have we really considered what training is absolutely necessary before a volunteer can begin their role and what could be undertaken on an ongoing basis?
- How flexible can we be whilst still maintaining standards and working within best practice principles?

Training is just one example of the many processes I can think of that a new volunteer might need to complete before they can get on with the business of volunteering. Could it be a possibility that we lose some really good potential volunteers because of the inflexibility of these processes?

The argument is often offered that completing the set intake process shows commitment to the organisation and a willingness to accept its practices. As my example indicates it was a problem with time lines rather than an unwillingness to comply which lost a potential volunteer for the organisation.

And do you know what? Although I applied to volunteer in a number of organisations whilst in Canada the end result was that I never did get an opportunity to experience working as a volunteer in another country.

What a missed opportunity – not only for myself but also for the agencies I applied to.

Ask yourself – just how flexible are your organisation's intake processes to cater for potential volunteers who might need to be recruited outside your established routines?

Rosie Williams has worked in a range of positions in the area of volunteer management since the late seventies; she has been a presenter at both international and national conferences and continues to advocate strongly for the sector.

Making The Most Of Short-Term Volunteers

Margaret Robertson

It's great to have volunteers, but if they stay only a short time is it worth the time and energy going through recruitment and training processes?

We all know there are increasing numbers of short-term volunteers: people who are eager to volunteer while job-seeking; people who would like to try volunteering in your area just for a while, for whatever reason.

A few strategies that help us with short-term volunteers:

At first contact

- If you're not sure if you want them or not, post or email organisational information and an application form. Then if they don't respond, it was a good PR exercise and it's only cost you a minimal amount. If they do respond, you know they are interested – and still available.

- If the interview is off-site for you, phone before you leave to confirm their attendance. If the interview is at your office and they don't turn up at least you have some unexpected spare time for other things.
- Do you have enough new volunteers to run a basic information session monthly? If so, invite inquirers to that first, then interview the ones who attend.
- Be careful: some people will contact a number of organisations. You need to get in first if you really want them, so arrange an interview date and time immediately if they sound ideal for your requirements.

Placement

- Think about the roles you have available: some may need minimal training (eg photocopying, sitting beside someone at Bingo), others more extensive (eg data entry on specific software; home visiting). Can you re-design roles for someone who is likely to be short-term to limit the training?
- If the role involves significant training, and/or if continuity of personnel is important for the clients, it's not a short-term role. Ask for a minimum commitment (3, 6 or 12 months depending on what it is) and explain why.
- Require existing skills for some roles: you may be able to give someone the opportunity to develop or use their skills but not to teach them from scratch.
- Write up "how to" manuals for basic tasks, as easy references – eg how to use the photocopier, how to make up client charts

- Can you turn some of your on-going volunteer roles into a series of one-off projects or occasional tasks? Eg cataloguing existing resources leads to updating the resource catalogue.

Screening

- Is it easier for you to do basic reference checks by phone or by letter? We have volunteers (e.g. Human Resource Management students) who do those by phone – and there's a small written training package on how to do reference checks, compiled when I had a series of short-term HR volunteers.
- If it's by letter and you don't get an answer, have the volunteer chase up the referee.
- How much screening is needed for the particular role the volunteer is doing? Do you need two referees and a police check for all roles or only some roles?

Training

- Basic orientation is done as self-paced learning and the package provided at interview, then the volunteer contacts us when it's completed.
- Include new volunteers in staff orientation if there's one happening at the appropriate time.
- Identify existing volunteers who would be good at, and enjoy, training new volunteers and pair them up.

Finally, check why your short term volunteers are leaving. Is it a 'good' reason – they have found work – or is there a problem you should identify and fix?

So short term volunteers – are they worth it? My answer is “Yes! But manage it well.”

Margaret Robertson describes her position as Manager Volunteer Services for Spiritus, a member of Anglicare Australia, as “HR Manager for the volunteer component of our workforce, supporting 50 volunteer coordinators & about 800 volunteers in a wide variety of locations, services and roles.” www.spiritus.org.au.

Magnetic, Meaningful Meetings

(for volunteers)

Sue Fink

One of my goals as a volunteer manager for Holy Family Memorial Hospice is to disprove this quote: *“Meetings take minutes and waste hours”*

Other goals include: amplifying attendance, prompting positive bonding, and providing attractive education for meaningful meetings.

Amplifying attendance

What would your volunteers like to learn more about, discuss, or review? I learn this by including (and valuing) their answers in an annual program evaluation. Questions include:

- Do you receive adequate continued education to perform your volunteer role(s)?
- What other topics or skills should be included for next year?
- Which meeting times/ days are you more likely to attend?

Our volunteers receive information about meetings annually. Email and snail mail reminders are sent a week before each date. The week of the meeting, I initiate our phone tree where volunteers personally contact others.

Attendance may also be amplified by using the pot-luck approach: if each person is assigned to bring something to the meeting, the better the chances they will show up. This can involve food, a door prize, a book recommendation, or a volunteer experience to share.

Prompting positive bonding

Taking five minutes for a mixer activity reduces meeting anxiety and adds fun!

Volunteer management books and internet searches offer abundant resources. Some ideas I've used include:

- Everyone receives and reads a fortune cookie, then explains how it *does* or *does not* relate to them.
- Ask attendees to sit next to someone they don't know very well. Give three unusual questions to ask each other. Then have the partners report to the group what they learned about the other.
- Provide a box full of silly clothing and crazy props. Ask everyone to pick out something to 'wear' and pose for memorable photos.

Attractive education opportunities

Ask your volunteers and other volunteer managers to recommend speakers, video tapes DVDs and presentations. Encourage your volunteers who participate in extended learning opportunities to share what they've gleaned.

For attention-keeping purposes alternate inactive parts of the meeting with participatory sections. If the presenter is not providing user-friendly lessons, redirect them with questions and request practical examples.

Just as a volunteer coordinator's job is to learn and then utilize volunteer talents, the same can be done with paid staff. With our hospice team, I utilize our chaplain's communication skills, our team leader's overall knowledge, the skilled nurse's comfort care experience and the social worker's grief counseling gifts, by requesting their input at volunteer meetings. Probably the biggest plus of asking them to share their expertise is the awareness (and appreciation) of all roles in our hospice team.

Using the above tips will help provide magnetic, meaningful meetings for those priceless volunteers of yours. And with luck, you can look forward to receiving feedback like this:

“The volunteer meetings this year were inspirational, educational, and fun! I come away from them feeling encouraged and appreciated. Thanks for your work organizing them!”

Sue Fink (Manitowoc, Wisconsin) has been working with Holy Family Memorial Hospice for the past 4 years and previous to this she was the program coordinator for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program and Volunteer Center.

II. Recruiting Volunteers

Increasing Your Drawing Power

If It Looks Like A Magnet...

Andy Fryar

The way any organisation is perceived by potential volunteers is just as important as the quality of the volunteer opportunity that awaits them once fully inducted into your volunteer program. After all, what use are the greatest support and recognition systems if you don't get potential volunteers past first base?

So what are the major considerations that you may need to consider?

Firstly, take the time to analyse your organisation. How well do the general public understand the nature of your business? Do they even know you exist? Does your organisation have a strong public profile? Is there likely to be any sort of stigma or misunderstanding associated with your organisation's mission or client group?

For example, most hospitals would have very little difficulty in attracting volunteer inquiries, as most community members would believe they have a good understanding of the hospital's core

business. However, a clinic serving the needs of mental health patients in the same area may find that attracting volunteers is not so easy, primarily due to the stigma that so often surrounds mental health issues.

The key here is to give consideration to the way you believe a potential volunteer *views* your organisation. Viewing your program through their eyes is of paramount importance, as it allows you the opportunity to tailor your recruitment methods and messages around the perceptions that individuals may have of your agency.

The truth is, many volunteers who approach a local general hospital may in fact know very *little* about the true opportunities that await them, but what is important is that local hospitals have a ready-made image that can easily be played on when volunteer numbers need to be boosted.

Conversely, the mental health clinic may in fact need to embark on an educational message for potential volunteers as a part of any recruitment spiel. What good is a message saying “we need you,” when a large portion of potential volunteers are too afraid of what may await them to take that first step?

A more appropriate approach is to try and address the barriers that stop people from volunteering in your organisation. For instance, if you believe fear is a major barrier to volunteering, embark on a promotional campaign that educates your audience about the safety aspects of your program and allays any fears that they may have. Once you have done this, the ‘we need you’ message will be far more effective.

Creating a strong perception of the work that your organisation does

and the roles that volunteers play will become the magnet that draws potential volunteers through your door. Once people properly understand your organisation and its core business, you'll begin to attract the volunteers you require.

The final consideration is to ensure that your program is geared up to meet the expectations of new volunteers once they get started. After all, it is no good proclaiming your desire to attract new volunteers if new volunteers are made to feel unwelcome, or are greeted by a disorganised volunteer program once they make their way through your door.

Remember – a potential volunteer's perception may not always be accurate – but to that person it is the reality!

Andy Fryar is co-editor of Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet

Meeting Madness And Missed Opportunities

How small organizations unintentionally discourage volunteers
Allison Trimarco

Recently, I presented a series of trainings for chapters of a statewide nonprofit. Each chapter was run entirely by volunteers, and each was struggling to find enough people to carry out its work. I started the sessions by asking participants why they needed more volunteers.

“We want more people to come to our meetings,” was invariably the answer.

“Why?” I asked. “How will having more people at your meetings help you achieve your mission?”

This always got the conversation going, as the group discovered that coming to a meeting was the only way a new volunteer could enter the organization.

This kind of *meeting madness* is common in small nonprofits, even though insisting that volunteers come to meetings in the evening,

after a long day's work, is a surefire way of discouraging people from participating. Some people have low meeting tolerance – they are burned out from attending meetings at work, have family responsibilities, or just don't enjoy discussion and debate.

There is a tremendous untapped pool of volunteers, made up of people who want to do good works in the community but have no interest in organizational management. These are people who could be counted upon to clean up a riverbank, or play ball with kids, or build scenery at the community theatre.

They do not want to sit in your business meeting.

There has to be a 'side door' through which volunteers can enter and go directly to the heart of the matter – hands-on work that advances the mission of the organization. This side door exists in large institutions, usually in the form of a paid volunteer manager. But how can an all-volunteer group construct a side door when there is so much other work to be done?

1. Commit to a new way of recruiting volunteers.

At one of those business meetings, get everyone's agreement to open up the organization to more people, even those who cannot attend regular meetings.

2. Designate a coordinator.

A tried and true strategy, to be sure, but it has lasted for a reason! Nominate your most friendly leader to be the Volunteer Coordinator. Relieve this person of all other responsibilities within the organization, so s/he can concentrate on finding and placing new volunteers.

3. Match and coach.

The Coordinator helps the new volunteer figure out what they'd like to do and when they can do it. S/he also keeps in touch to make sure they are doing a good job.

4. Embrace change.

Expanding the organization's network in this way may feel odd at first, as tasks start to be carried out by volunteers who the core leadership doesn't know very well. As long as these new volunteers are doing a good job, however, value what they **do** contribute to the group rather than focusing on the meetings they are skipping.

And whatever you do, keep the front door to your organization's meetings wide open. You never know...a volunteer might just get inspired to walk in!

Allison Trimarco is the owner of Consulting for Nonprofits, and works with small and mid-sized nonprofits on planning, fundraising, and volunteer development projects in the greater Philadelphia area.

Magnetically Attracting New Volunteers

Steve Gee

If you are fortunate enough to have a good number of people passing by your premises on foot (*such as a charity shop, library or museum*) here is an easy tool to attract people with the skills you need.

1. Briefly describe the roles you need, the nature of the work, the skills required and an indication of the likely time commitment. Write clearly on postcards or A5 paper. Include the names and contact details of the people recruiting for each role.
2. Obtain a notice board and head it with your organisation's name/logo.
3. Present the roles you have created on the board.
4. Display the board in a high visibility position preferably at eye level.

How does it work?

- Asking specifically for the skills, knowledge or experience that you need *increases* the number of enquiries you generate. Generic

appeals for volunteers leave too many questions unanswered. Potential volunteers can be lost as they are unwilling to enquire about an opportunity because they don't have enough information to decide whether the role will be suitable for them.

- Similarly, a clear indication of the time commitment involved will help to generate enquiries and applications. It is natural to assume that giving times will deter volunteers but, in practice, it is very helpful to people who are interested to know the approximate timing required by the nature of the role. They will need to know whether they can fit the role in with their life.
- It is important to avoid jargon in your role descriptions. Terms that are commonly used in your sector may be misleading or meaningless to prospective volunteers and, if they cannot understand the role, they will not feel confident about enquiring.

The result may look unprofessional and lacking in design but it does work in attracting enquiries from potential volunteers, however...

Generating enquiries is only the beginning of being magnetic

- Make sure everyone knows. Every person in your organisation, who may deal with potential volunteers, should be briefed about the volunteering opportunities you have available and the procedure to deal with enquiries.
- First impressions are important. The welcome that enquirers receive can make a real difference.
- Start the selection process.
- Either talk to people when they make their enquiry or arrange for them to come in for a chat about their suitability for the role.
- Arrange a "taster session". Organise an hour or two for the

volunteer to try out the role before making a decision. This will also allow you to see the volunteer in the role and help you decide whether a particular person is the right volunteer for the job.

- Be selective. Remember that no volunteer, for the moment, can be better than the wrong volunteer.
- Appointing a volunteer. When you have chosen the right volunteer for the role, begin your induction / orientation process. You then have to move on to train, develop and retain your new volunteer, but that really is another story...

Steve Gee is Volunteer Development Manager at Cancer Research UK and a director of the Association of Volunteer Managers. He has developed recruitment strategies that have attracted several thousand new volunteers in the last 3 years as part of his role looking after volunteering within the charity's large retail chain.

The Magnetic Properties Of The ACT State Emergency Service

Jan Dachs

What makes the ACT² State Emergency Service (ACTSES) a magnet for volunteers? In my opinion it's the enthusiasm and professionalism displayed by volunteers and staff. In a little over 2 years we have boosted the morale of our volunteers and enabled them to feel a sense of pride in what they do.

I was lucky enough to land the best job I could have imagined, recruiting and supporting volunteers with my only experience being a volunteer myself. I work with a wonderful bunch of staff who have also been volunteers and with the most amazing, selfless people you could ever wish to meet – the men and women who get out there during and after a storm to help a community in need. The work sounds glamorous and heroic but in reality it's hard work, conditions are extremely cold and wet; or hot and smoky, sometimes boring but always rewarding.

² Australian Capital Territory

How do we ensure that the ACTSES maintains its magnetic properties? We have what we think is a quite unique recruiting process. We hold information evenings, which are run by staff and volunteers. Our volunteers talk about their experiences, answer questions and have a coffee and chat with prospective volunteers. The feedback from both the volunteers and the public is extremely positive.

Getting them in the door is not where it stops. Each group of new volunteers attends a one-day induction program that provides them with an overview of the organisation and covers some of the units of competency required to complete a Certificate II in Public Safety. Volunteers also participate at Induction so they feel they have ownership. Our new volunteers then proceed to 'Introductory Skills Training' which lasts for 7 weeks and is conducted by volunteers.

They then proceed to the unit of their choice to commence probation. After approximately 2 months, I phone each new member to check on their progress and after another 2 months I write to them thanking them for their contribution to date.

All staff members are accessible to our volunteers, attend and arrange training, exercises and meetings. We invite the volunteers to sit on committees, contribute to various aspects of our business and we consult and obtain feedback on issues that affect them.

Staying in contact with volunteers and checking on their wellbeing is a way of showing appreciation for them. Involving them in the development of day-to-day aspects of the business shows that you have confidence in their abilities and value their input. Giving volunteers a sense of worth makes them more content and what better way to attract other volunteers.

We have an Honours and Awards program that acknowledges length of service, diligent and meritorious service, employers and other agencies or companies that deserve recognition. Providing recognition and incentives contributes in making an organisation a magnet.

If organisations look after their volunteers from start to finish then they can remove the magnetic force field that repels volunteers from wanting to join.

Jan Dachs is the Community & Volunteer Relations Officer for the ACT State Emergency Service and a former RFS, St John Ambulance and helicopter rescue service volunteer.

Turn Your Volunteers Into Magnets To Recruit More Volunteers

Diane Ernst

Most volunteers willingly tell their friends a little bit about their volunteer work. However, with a little help from you, in providing expectations, information and tools, they can become powerful magnets to attract new volunteers.

First, set up the expectation that all volunteers will help spread the word about your recruitment needs. From your initial contact with them through the intake process and beyond, explain in a matter-of-fact manner, your need for volunteers, the impact volunteers have and how volunteers are assisting you in recruiting others. Then reinforce that expectation in all your documentation, newsletters, emails etc.

Periodically advise everyone how many new volunteers have been referred. I personally thank the volunteers who refer volunteers but I do not publish their names as it is not a contest and I don't want to put undue pressure on them.

Provide your volunteers with needed information. While their passion will be evident to others, they still need concrete information. Provide it in multiple formats so they can choose what suits them – heart-warming stories, trivia facts, statistics, behind-the-scenes facts, etc. Provide suggestions as to who to talk to beyond the usual family and friends.

Now that your volunteers have the expectation and the information, provide them with the tools. Over the years I have found the following tools to be the very effective.

Flyers designed for specific target groups are very effective. Encourage a teen with graphic skills to design flyers targeted to teens, a retiree to design a flyer for other retirees.

Photos really are worth a thousand words. Recruit a volunteer to take photos of your volunteers and use current photos in your recruitment messages. People in the community will recognize photos of their friends and be encouraged to volunteer.

Promotional items for volunteers to pass along to friends can often be created in-house by skilled volunteers. Try giving out blank business cards (so they can add their name), magnets, colorful bookmarks, postcards, discount admissions or free admission passes. Think beyond the usual groups. If one of your volunteers meets regularly with a group for coffee, give them coffee cups or coasters with your logo on them. Out of ideas? Have a volunteer research promotional items for you and then create your own.

Newsletters. Print extra copies so volunteers can pass them along.

Emails that are fun and informative will be shared with friends especially if you are providing useful community information. Send

volunteers photos of themselves at their volunteer jobs or being recognized and they, in turn, can share them with others.

Gift items. Choose gift items that identify and represent your organization so that volunteers will be proud to use them in the community such as a water bottle, car sticker or a license plate holder.

The more you can help your volunteers be magnets for your organizations the more exposure you'll achieve for your recruitment message.

Diane Ernst has been a coordinator of volunteer programs for 23 years in Canada and in the USA and is currently the volunteer coordinator at the DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville, IL. USA

Aren't Volunteers Brilliant?

How to get your volunteers to recruit themselves

Alan Murray

As well as attracting things to itself, a magnet will also hold onto them. That is something we also want to do with our volunteers. After all, it's a lot harder to recruit new volunteers than it is to hang on to the ones you've got.

When people begin volunteering with an organisation they will be wary of writing a blank cheque with their time. They want to see what it will be like to volunteer with the organisation, how well it will look after them and whether volunteering is fun and enjoyable. Once familiar and committed to volunteering, there may be some who could do a little more for you, yet how often do we ask existing volunteers what more they could do? There is, I believe, a vast untapped 'gift of time' sitting within our existing volunteer programmes.

One way we can tap this – and also thank and recognise our volunteers – is through *Aren't Volunteers Brilliant Events*. It doesn't

really matter what the event is as long as it is something that will appeal to a wide range of your volunteers.

These events are a thank you for your volunteers – but with a twist. Structure the day in such a way that a volunteer undertaking a particular role for which you need more help has five minutes to share their volunteering experience with the group. You can brief the volunteer on the type of things they might like to cover:

- How they got involved?
- What it involves?
- What they get out of it?
- Why they enjoy it?
- What difference it makes to your organisation?
- How other people can get involved?

You could get several volunteers to do this throughout the day if you have a number of areas requiring additional support.

You'll be surprised what happens. In many instances, volunteers involved in one type of activity will decide they can find a little more spare time and quite fancy getting involved in the volunteering role that they have just heard spoken about. How great is that, volunteers recruiting each other to volunteer for you – what could be better and easier?

If you do decide to run an *Aren't Volunteers Brilliant Event* here are a few top tips:

- Run the event three or four times on different days and at different times to attract as wide a variety of your volunteers as possible.

- Invite all your volunteers to all the events and let them choose which one they want to attend.
- Include in the invitation a flyer advertising the activities you need more volunteers for.
- Allow plenty of time for volunteers to chat to one another and share their volunteering experience – providing food and refreshments is a great way of doing this.
- Draw up role cards for each of the activities you need volunteers for. Use the following headings, and put each role card up on a display that volunteers can look at throughout the day:
 - i. Role Title
 - ii. When is it?
 - iii. Where is it?
 - iv. What commitment is required?
 - v. Why we want you
 - vi. What's in it for you?
 - vii. What skills you need to have?
 - viii. Who to contact to find out more?
- Make sure you capture the names and addresses of people who are interested in other volunteer roles and follow these up *promptly*.

Alan Murray is Head of Volunteering Development at the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds). The Aren't Volunteers Brilliant Events model has been developed by the RSPB's team of Volunteering Development Officers over the last few years.

Be Your Own PR Officer

Jenny Edlington

How much easier your job would be if you had your own PR officer? They could attract new volunteers! They could gain recognition for the existing ones! They could *turn your organisation into a volunteer magnet!*

They could. But so could you.

All you need is a compelling story, a little bit of creativity and some strong persuasive skills.

An event to reward a volunteer who's given 1,000 hours to her community, the First Aider who saved his brother's life or the gap year student who's just got back from tracking apes in Borneo could all result in news stories to attract the attention of potential volunteers, donors or local MPs.

Once you've identified your story you'll need a press release. Keep it simple: avoid jargon; include all of the salient facts (what, where, when, how, why, who); and add a telephone number at the end so that journalists can call you for more information. You could look at other organisations' websites for examples (e.g. the BBC's is www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/)

However, PR isn't just press releases. When St. John Ambulance wanted to promote its volunteers' presence at Live8, we did more than a traditional press release. We sent one of our most articulate volunteers to ten leading radio stations dressed in her uniform and armed with some sound bites and a 'concert survival kit'. She was soon talking to Sir Terry Wogan and other presenters about the sterling work of St. John volunteers.

You could try: writing to the local newspaper's letters page; drafting an opinion article; putting posters and flyers in local libraries, coffee shops and citizens advice bureaux; calling radio station phone ins; or posting on internet sites.

Local newspapers and radio stations are your obvious targets, but also consider alerting local government magazines, 'what's on' websites and even some national publications such as those produced by governing bodies, consumer groups, fan clubs, etc. Your local library will have a copy of the *Writers and Artists' Yearbook* which lists hundreds of media titles.

The best way to 'sell in' your story is to phone the newsdesk and give a brief overview of your news, then offer to email further information. Timing is crucial. Try to work out when the newsdesk will be at its quietest. For daily morning newspapers this will be around 9am, for evening dailies it will be after the day's edition has gone to press (say,

4pm) and for weeklies it will normally be the day after publication. If your story is event based, try to call at least two weeks before the event to maximise your chances of generating coverage.

Finally, remember to say thank you. A quick email to a journalist who has run your story or the case study who did the interview will take you seconds, but will guarantee you a 'contact' for next time.

Good luck!

Jenny Edlington is former Senior PR Officer at St. John Ambulance in the UK.

III. Supporting and Retaining Volunteers

Staying Magnetic

Building Staff Capacity

Rick Lynch

In today's larger charities, volunteers are supervised by various members of staff rather than by a single volunteer coordinator or Director of Volunteer Services. One of the keys to making volunteering attractive therefore, is to ensure that members of staff have knowledge of at least the basic principles of volunteer management. Following are seven principles all staff should be able to put into practice.

Make sure the volunteer has something to do.

Volunteering is done in a person's discretionary time. Increasingly, our discretionary time is quite precious to us. If volunteers arrive at the organisation's doors and find that staff do not have anything for them to do, they will feel that their time is not respected by members of staff. As a consequence, they may decide to do something else with their discretionary time.

Losing a volunteer because a staff person did not have anything for

him or her to do is tragic. But the worst thing is that the volunteer will tend to tell others of their experience, discouraging others to volunteer there.

Thank them for doing it.

By far the most common management mistake is the failure to express appreciation to people for the work they do. This mistake is particularly critical when it comes to volunteers. If they sense that others do not appreciate their gift of time, they will take it elsewhere.

A simple “thank you” (preferably with a smile) when the volunteer leaves can do wonders to keep them coming back. In addition, you might consider suggesting that all staff who work with volunteers keep these other easy methods of recognition in mind:

- Smiling when you see them.
- Thanking them for coming in.
- Writing them a note.
- Telling them they did a good job (but only if they did).
- Forwarding any positive feedback about them from the people the charity serves.

Have a plan B.

Sometimes volunteers will finish their work early or volunteers will not be able to do what was originally planned. In order for volunteers to have a sense that you value their time, you should have back-up activities for them to perform.

Be prepared when volunteers arrive.

When volunteers have to wait for staff to get ready for them, they again feel that members of staff don't value their time. Being there when they show up for work, having their work ready for them to do,

and making sure that the right equipment is available will give volunteers the sense that you respect them.

Have a place for them to work.

Similarly, volunteers feel that they and their role isn't valued if there is no proper place for them to do the things they have volunteered for the organisation.

Call them by name.

Although it can be difficult to remember the names of all the volunteers the charity involves, it will help volunteers feel included. When volunteers sense that members of staff don't know their names, they tend to feel that staff members don't value them.

Ask for their ideas.

Volunteers may agree to do some pretty routine, uncomplicated tasks, but this doesn't mean they don't have ideas that can profit the organisation. Ask them if they see opportunities for improving the way things are done. You might be surprised at the good ideas they have been keeping to themselves.

Rick Lynch is the co-author of Essential Volunteer Management, and runs workshops on the subject in USA, UK and Canada. www.ricklynchassociates.com.

It's All About Relationships

Kim Sanecki

One thing I have found in building a Volunteer Program and retaining volunteers is that it's all about relationships.

I'm not just talking about those treasured relationships with the volunteers themselves. I'm talking about building and nurturing relationships with volunteers, staff who supervise volunteers, upper management and possibly – dare I say – politicians who support your program (or even those that don't).

If you take the time to get to know these key people and work on building and nurturing those relationships you will reap amazing benefits, plus its fun and you may even make a few good friends in the process.

Volunteers need to be valued, and by valuing the person that they are and recognizing that each and every one of them has something to give, you validate their existence in your organization. I have an

inquisitive nature which is quite helpful as I naturally want to learn about people, their families, how they got to this part of the country and what they have a passion for. We send out birthday cards, call if they're under the weather and *always* make contact with them if there is a death in the family. It only takes a few minutes to make a phone call or drop a card in the mail.

Now for the others... Check in with staff and find out if this partnership with a new or seasoned volunteer is working – thank them for being a great supervisor of those volunteers assigned to them, but be honest. Thank them only if they genuinely are a great supervisor of the volunteers. If they need help in a pinch, give it to them...go out of your way to help them out...why not? It feels good and makes the program look good. Have you made friends or enemies with upper management? It's much easier to get what you need to do the job if you have nurtured relationships with the managers in your organization. They (hopefully) want what is best for the organization and want to look good, so the volunteer program will be a reflection on them and the organization. Politicians...it may be a 'no-no' in your situation, but I think it's important to back the champions who support your program...be careful in this area – enough said.

In his book *The Spontaneous Fulfillment of Desire*, Deepak Chopra writes, "Nurturing relationships is the most important activity in my life." Make it the most important activity in *your* life!

Kim Sanecki has worked in volunteer management for 14 years. She is Volunteer Services Coordinator for the City of Coral Springs, Florida, where she manages a volunteer program for 150,000 residents – including putting lots of volunteers to work after the hurricane with clean up efforts.

Making Friends With Volunteers

Donna Amos

Can a volunteer member of your team also become your friend? Or, by doing so, do they cross a boundary into an area where volunteers have not traditionally been permitted to enter?

I believe volunteers should be as included as paid staff. As with any team member, if a friendship develops it will develop of its own accord regardless of whether or not the people in question are paid or unpaid. Therefore I had no qualms about hearing how one volunteer working in the critical unit team of an acute care hospital had become very friendly with the rest of the team.

For several months this committed volunteer worked alongside the nursing, medical, clerical and allied health staff assigned to the unit. He became a team player. He remembered their birthdays. He was invited to out of work functions. They rang him at home if he missed a shift due to illness. He even joined in on the Footy Pools at the unit's

insistence. All the ‘niceties’ were fulfilled and as a Volunteer Program Manager I couldn’t have been happier.

So why did I get a call from the Unit Manager one day saying that the volunteer had overstepped the boundary between volunteer and staff? Oddly enough, I didn’t know there was a boundary. So what was his crime? He had dared to ask a salaried staff member out for dinner – something any team player might do from time to time, colleague to colleague. Why, then, was he told he was “only a volunteer” and needed to remember his place?

I was soon to learn that the staff and Unit Manager had never worked so closely with a volunteer in such an intense environment. They believed it was important to make the volunteer feel at one with the team so that he would continue to work with them; but they also believed he understood where the boundary between volunteer and friend was. In spite of all the niceties, the staff perceived a natural progression into friendship as the volunteer slowly seeping across the boundary line.

So it seems being a good Volunteer Manager is not only about training your volunteer staff in all matters of best practice but to also inform the salaried staff about the need to truly include volunteers in their teams and not to create boundaries where there need not be any.

So where are they now? The volunteer became disillusioned with the whole idea of volunteering and the unit decided volunteers were more trouble than they were worth. Thanks to many hours spent convincing this volunteer of the benefits of volunteering, he still works with the organization to this day and is dedicated, sincere and focussed on making his role an important one.

The unit, meanwhile, are as busy as ever and still searching for ways to help ease their heavy workload without volunteer help.

Donna Amos is currently the Director of Volunteer Services for the Lyell McEwin Regional Volunteer Association in Adelaide, South Australia. For the past 4 years Donna has also held the positions of President and Secretary of the Australasian Association of Volunteer Administrators (AAVA) and currently holds the position of Secretary/Treasurer.

Building The Volunteer Relationship

Kath Snell

Being fairly new to the world of volunteer management, I came to Volunteer Task Force in August 2006 with a wealth of ideas and energy based on my marketing background. Most of the plans I came with are now in place and while I feel the new leaflets, promo items, posters, marketing material and clear brand image work very well and have successfully attracted new volunteers to us, I believe it is the building of relationships that keep our volunteers loyal to us.

I use the term 'building of relationships' as an umbrella covering a multitude of partnerships within the internal and external volunteer community. This includes volunteer friendships; mutual respect between staff and volunteers; empathy between staff, volunteers and clients; and partnerships in the community which allow us to 'reward' our volunteers in terms of events and gifts. I would even go so far as to say that the chat in the office about the weekend with our office volunteers, while considered 'wasting time' in other industries

is one of the most important parts of making volunteers feel part of a team.

Having researched our volunteers and their drive to volunteer, we have found that social interaction, the feeling of 'giving something back,' and being part of a team come high on the list. With this in mind we have introduced regular social occasions, and encourage 'chatting', getting together and simply understanding each other as part of the organisation culture – simple steps to make us more magnetic to our volunteers.

Staff members are encouraged to spend a day gardening with our volunteers and volunteers are invited to bring friends in to see what they do, and swap volunteer jobs if they wish to.

People are loyal to people. Most people enjoy social interaction, want to be recognized for what they do, not always with a certificate or award (although that works too), but often with something as 'little' as a smile, a thank you, a sit down and a chat, a "how's your daughter" or a "what do you think?"

Volunteer Management is no different from any other relationship, the more thought, communication and effort you put in, the more you get out, and we all know the advantages of a happy team.

Kath Snell is Volunteer and Business Development Manager for Volunteer Task Force, Perth WA.

Getting Close And Personal

Ilhame Okda

Volunteers vary according to age, ethnicity, reason for volunteering and many other factors. Regardless of this, the majority of volunteers will provide the same answers to the following questions: What is really important to volunteers? What do volunteers remember?

We concentrate our energy writing policies, procedures and standards, which we feel are essential tools in ensuring the good management of volunteers. However, the technical side of managing volunteers may make us forget what truly is appreciated, such as feeling valued, listened to and respected. We put so much effort into setting high standards, but isn't it more important to concentrate on connecting with your volunteer through a rewarding and mutually respectful relationship?

We need to remember that volunteers are offering their skills, expertise, support and knowledge gratuitously, so we need to ensure that we do our utmost to offer our appreciation and respect in return.

Such signs of recognition are remembered by volunteers, and always referred to at the time of leaving the voluntary programme.

We all appreciate being listened to, so why not apply the same principals regarding volunteers. It is vital to find out specifically what a volunteer wants to achieve out of their volunteer experience, as this will vary depending on the individual. Indeed, when this is discussed and established between yourself and your volunteer, it will leave the volunteer feeling more satisfied and respected.

Volunteers need to feel integrated within their surroundings as it is easy for them to feel inferior to other members of staff. A lot can be done to minimize this, such as involving them in meetings, social events and even something as small as copying them into group emails. This is all part of making the volunteer feel like they are part of the organisation and that they are seen as an equal.

Try and compensate for any financial loss that volunteers accept, and make them feel special in other ways. For example, providing volunteers with discounts for internal events, or organising volunteer events can help to make them feel as if their efforts have been recognised and valued. Recognition of volunteers' efforts, contributions and commitments is an important part of valuing them, and this can be as little as saying thank you at the end of their day.

Ilhame Okda is Volunteers Coordinator at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, based in London.

The Magnetism of Values

Liz Scarfe

“We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly.” Aristotle

Volunteer programs often exist within a larger organisation and cannot escape the influences and dynamics inherent throughout. Therefore, when we seek to make improvements in these programs, we need to consider not only the program, but also the organisation as whole.

Anecdotal evidence in our organisation resonates strongly with much of the research on volunteer motivations; the majority of our volunteers identify as being motivated to volunteer by the desire to express their values i.e. giving back to the community, helping those less fortunate etc.

It makes sense then, that this group of volunteers are most likely to be attracted not only to organisations whose values are deeply rooted in

concepts of community but, more importantly, to organisations who congruently align themselves with their stated values. Put simply, organisations that genuinely strive to walk their talk are highly magnetic, not only to potential volunteers but also staff, donors and funding bodies.

As much as one organisation is different to another, strategies to 'live the values' will also differ. While there is no one tried and true formula that will work for all organisations, I would like to share ours because its been so powerful for us.

Essentially, our organisation creates spaces for conversation. Spaces for people to explore and deepen their understanding of values. Spaces for people to reflect on their work such that personal transformation and deeper learning can be reached. Spaces for staff and volunteers to dialogue across difference and commonality. Our organisation works with the hearts and souls of others, so our conversations about how to do this work, must be had at the same level.

Every new staff member is required, and all volunteers invited, to attend a two and a half day Values Induction Program (VIP). Participants are invited to explore the values of the organisation, their own values and how the two intersect. Making this space invites people to start their new roles feeling highly valued by the organisation, deeply grounded in its values, and most importantly, with an understanding of how essential it is for them to bring their heart to work, not just their head and hands.

Another space for transformational conversations are our Leadership Forums, held every two months. Each forum has a different theme but they are essentially a tool to start conversations; to deepen our

exploration and understanding of what it means to each of us to work in this organisation and to further its mission, in line with its values.

Spirit at Work is another space created for conversations and reflection of how we bring spirit to our work, how our work nurtures our spirit, how to nurture ourselves so we can continue to do such spirit-centred work.

We don't get it right all the time, but that isn't the point; demonstrating values isn't a destination; it's an ongoing journey of reflection, action and evaluation.

It is our commitment to this journey that seems to make us so magnetic to volunteers.

Liz Scarfe manages the volunteering resources at a large aged and disability organisation and loves lively philosophical conversations about almost anything.

The Magnetic Volunteer Manager

John Ramsey

Just recently I worked with a group of Russian NGOs. A geographically disparate group of organisations, they had two things in common; they all involved volunteers and none of them had heard of 'volunteer management.' Yet, as we discussed how they 'managed' their volunteers it was clear that they had naturally adopted what we know as 'best practice.'

Their experiences reminded me of my first job managing volunteers, in the days before I'd heard of 'volunteer management.' I managed groups of international volunteers on an environmental project in Tanzania.

Camped in the middle of a tropical forest three months at a time, living and working alongside each other 24/7, it was not an easy

experience for any of us. Particularly considering the basic food, the malaria and the army ants.

Organisationally, there was never any talk of managing the volunteers. We never sat a volunteer down and formally evaluated their progress, but I would have relaxed conversations with them whilst on cooking duty, or out in the forest collecting data, or chilling in the evening with a beer, to listen to what the volunteer had to say. Through these chats I got to understand how the volunteer was feeling and dealt with any problems before they became too serious.

For me, volunteer management is not about policies and frameworks. If used properly and flexibly, they are useful tools in guiding our work and have a role to play in developing sustainable volunteering strategies but they are not what make a person volunteer, day-in day-out, for an organisation.

A person invariably continues to volunteer because of what their volunteer manager delivers for them. The good volunteer manager listens to their volunteers, understands their needs and is honest with them, and because of this the volunteers respect the volunteer manager and recognise the volunteer manager respects them.

A magnet does what it does. You can put anything you want in front of it but if it isn't magnetic, the magnet won't attract it no matter what you try.

Similarly, you can put in place countless volunteering policies and guidelines, but if the volunteer manager doesn't have those qualities of respect, understanding and honesty then you will not have a successful volunteering programme, regardless of what you do.

In volunteering, the manager should always direct the management, rather than the management directing the manager.

John Ramsey is National Volunteer Development Manager of Age Concern England and Chair of the Association of Volunteer Managers (England).

Maintaining The Motivation

Martin J Cowling

I arrived at the hospital early for my meeting and encountered one of their volunteers. He was welcoming, helpful and passionate about the hospital and his work. I spent less than two minutes with that volunteer but the encounter left me feeling very positive about that hospital. He was clearly motivated to do their welcoming job as effectively as they could.

Universally, volunteers who are positively motivated will:

- provide more time
- give freely of their knowledge and ideas
- stay longer
- speak highly of the organisation

When we engage our volunteers, we want to ensure that we are building and maintaining motivation. Three keys to ensuring this are:

1. Matching
2. Support
3. Gratitude

Good matching

Some organisations still indiscriminately place volunteers into roles. This approach means that the organisation and the volunteer can miss out on a potentially dynamic relationship.

When matching organisational volunteer needs with volunteer roles, we need to know:

- Why do they want to volunteer with us?
- What of their skills can we utilise?
- What are they actually interested in doing?

Our application processes need to identify these three things. If we do not believe that we can offer a volunteer a role or an opportunity that matches their needs, then do not engage them.

Under no circumstances should organisations employ the ‘bait and switch’ approach – attracting volunteers with the promise of a fun or glamorous role when the reality is they are doing a more mundane or even dull job.

Many organisations are excellent at performing this initial match. However, we also need to make sure we continue to match their needs as people change over time.

Clear support

Volunteers need three types of support:

1. The volunteer knows what their job is. Volunteers who understand their role are three times more motivated than those who don't.³
2. They have someone who is there to show them what to do when they need it.
3. When something goes wrong, they have access to support. One organisation I was involved with had a free counsellor available to volunteers.

Showing gratitude

Fundamentally we all like to think that what we have done in the world has been noticed. How this occurs will differ from person to person, culture to culture. The two things that do not vary are that recognition must occur and secondly, it must be appropriate to the volunteer and their context.

My experience of my visit to that hospital would have been very different had that welcoming volunteer not been matched, supported and thanked well. Getting this right will ensure you meet your goals, give volunteers a good experience – and act as a magnet for more volunteers.

Martin J Cowling, CEO of People First – Total Solutions, a leading consultant on volunteer management, works regularly with individuals and organisations on areas connected with not for profit management. www.pfts.com.au.

³ From Research conducted by Hinds Workforce Research and AFS Intercultural programs in 2000.

Five steps for success

Sue Kobar

First impressions count, so I work hard to ensure a new volunteer feels welcome, accepted and ready to volunteer. Therefore, I like to think my magnet connects at the intake process.

1. **Mutual interview:** The word ‘interview’ can be very daunting and while we all know this is what’s happening it doesn’t need to be intimidating for the applicant. When I ask someone to come in for an interview, I soften the formality by saying, “This is a chance for me to share about our volunteer program and also to learn what type of volunteer position you are looking for.” I recall a lady who had been out of the workforce for a long time and she was very nervous. At the end of our chat she said, “I was so nervous about today and I didn’t need to be. This was great.”
2. **Orientation:** Every volunteer who comes into our organisation receives an orientation; no exceptions. In addition to learning about the organisation’s formalities, this is a great chance to get to

know each other better. Orientation is scheduled at the volunteer's convenience and although I prefer small groups, I will readily do one-to-one if needed. Orientation should be done as soon as possible so the applicant doesn't lose interest.

3. **Buddy sessions:** I've found that new volunteers have really enjoyed being linked with 'seasoned' volunteers. This provides an opportunity to observe (not do) the assignment being considered to see if the work is appealing; especially for clinical areas. After attending orientation a volunteer is linked with a buddy on different days and times. This doesn't replace training, it merely provides an opportunity for the new volunteer to observe the assignment and feel welcome to say if they would prefer something else.
4. **Training:** Training to the task is essential – regardless of what the assignment involves or how qualified the volunteer. This is an opportunity for volunteers to ask questions and staff to share their expectations. Training doesn't always need to be lengthy and volunteers receive a written position description that clearly delineates the tasks and contact person.
5. **First day:** It doesn't matter what day or time I always greet a new volunteer and introduce them to staff. By contacting staff prior the volunteer receives a warm welcome to their new assignment and I can be sure that everyone is connected and happy. If they aren't, then I'm there to fix it!

In closing, the above is all about communication. If we are effective listeners and develop opportunities for new volunteers to share their thoughts then I believe retention is increased. Some volunteers find their niche right away while others may try several different

assignments. If I can create an atmosphere that is warm, welcoming and professional then hopefully my magnet will connect and the new volunteer will become an ambassador for the volunteer program and organisation. Sometimes it doesn't work out and if that happens at least I know all the communication doors were open.

Sue is the Coordinator of Volunteers with the Nurse Maude Association in Christchurch New Zealand.

Now You've Got 'Em, How Do You Keep 'Em?

Adaire Palmer

Working with a vast number of volunteers across a huge geographic spread in South Australia's emergency services sector, one common theme continues to arise.

New recruits are waiting...

- ...waiting for their criminal records check clearance
- ...waiting for their basic training
- ...waiting to get onto a fire truck
- ...waiting to be included in what everyone else does
- ...waiting to feel like their contributions are valued by others
- ...waiting to feel like they are fully-functioning team members

When a potential recruit walks into your organisation, what do you do? How fast do you get them involved in meaningful tasks and

feeling like a member of your team?

An article by Paul G Landreville in a recent emergency services magazine highlights some interesting points.

“To some firefighters, adding new recruits means more hands to help wash trucks, repack hoses and to clean the station bathrooms. To others, it’s another opportunity to take willing men and women and transform them into firefighters.”

While Paul's comments refer directly to volunteer firefighters, the applications are universal in any volunteer program. If you keep new recruits out of the action and 'cleaning bathrooms' for any length of time (*particularly without pitching in yourself*), you are unlikely to keep them for very long.

Landreville suggests that a mentoring program would assist in overcoming some of the issues that a new recruit faces. I don't disagree. There are also other things an organisation *can* do to make sure their new recruits fit into the scheme of things as quickly and as neatly as possible.

Here are some hints on keeping your new recruits:

- Make sure you process their paperwork as soon as its filled out.
- Make sure you have training organised as soon as practicable following the return of their approval letter to join your organisation.
- Make sure *all* volunteers share in the jobs that are not seen as all that important (such as cleaning the bathroom, sweeping the floor etc).

- Once trained, make sure every person has an equal opportunity to be involved in the more important and cutting edge work – even the ‘newbies’ need to gain experience somehow!
- Make sure new recruits are included in any communications and information sharing that goes to the rest of the group.
- Ensure the contributions of new recruits are recognised and valued by each member of the organisation. This means listening to their suggestions and ideas, despite the fact they haven’t been around for 15 years!
- Make sure your new members are included in every aspect of their area of volunteering - even new recruits bring life-skills, experience and knowledge that can be valuable if recognised and harnessed.

By addressing the way new recruits are brought into your volunteer agency, you'll reduce their waiting and increase their attraction to you and your organisation.

Adaire Palmer is a Volunteer Management Consultant with the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Commission.

Engaging Volunteers

Gillian Hughes

If your organisation is short on volunteers and you are continually trying to attract new ones, the answer may be right in front of your eyes!

You may want to consider the possibility that volunteers may be feeling restrained by their current role. Restraint means being held back – not able to meet one’s full potential. *Engaged* volunteers on the other hand are fully integrated and willing to offer even more than they presently do, by sharing additional skills, talents and knowledge.

Unfortunately volunteer job descriptions may not always allow for this expansion, or an organisation’s management isn’t always amenable to fresh ideas. However, your organisation’s success relies on *you* to ensure that volunteers are *engaged* in your agency and not just going through the motions brought on by restraint.

By allowing volunteers choices and opportunities to share their expertise and knowledge more broadly in your agency, you will not only get the most out of your volunteer resources, you will also encourage a stronger bond between them and your organisation. Be open to allowing the scope of a volunteer's role to develop and expand around them or create a whole new role based on the specific skills and knowledge they bring.

An *engaged* volunteer will become a dedicated team member who, to use a magnet analogy, is enthused by and drawn to their work. What's more, they will willingly recommend your organisation to the greater community, making your agency a more magnetic choice! *Engaged* volunteers are driven by the idea that they can control the amount of effort they contribute for the good of the organisation, and rather than focusing on external rewards they are motivated by intrinsic and altruistic factors such as satisfaction, accomplishment and the desire of 'giving back' to the community.

Your organisation can create an environment conducive to generating volunteer engagement by:

- Encouraging volunteers to come forward with proposals, ideas or projects.
- Providing the support and guidance to enable volunteers to put their ideas into action.
- Assigning volunteers to tasks that align with their strengths.
- Encouraging effective skill development and volunteer confidence.
- Helping to create a balance between volunteer's abilities and challenges.

- Targeting volunteers who ‘think outside the square.’
- Constructively listening to suggestions and criticism.

Allow volunteers the opportunity to:

- Initiate change by letting them identify areas and strategies for improvement.
- Dominate their role, not vice versa. Let them control the amount of additional effort they contribute to a task.
- Develop their ideas into tangible results.
- Become involved in planning, decision making and evaluation.
- Highlight what they perceive as good practices.
- Make choices – after all it is *their* time.
- Undertake tasks meaningful to themselves.
- Define their own goals and expectations in line with their skills and abilities.
- Take responsibility and credit for the outcomes.

Investing in an *engaged* volunteer is a win-win situation for all involved.

*Gillian Hughes is the Program Coordinator of Northern Respite Care Services, auspiced by the Lyell McEwin Regional Volunteers Association, and has also been an active volunteer in various capacities since the age of 18.
www.lyellmcewinvolunteers.org.au.*

Recipe For Retention

Diane Ernst

It isn't easy but a volunteer program can retain volunteers despite a limited budget, limited staff resources and competition from other organizations offering more perks.

I have found that one of the keys to retention is effective personal communication and recognition. You do not need the expensive 3Ps - pins, plaques and parties. Volunteers who feel a strong personal connection to your organization will stay.

They want communication – so tell them what is going on, what they can do to help and how their help impacts your organization. They want to be recognized – so do so in a personalized way.

It is most often the thought that counts not the expensive party. Determine what motivates them and find a personal way to recognize them. I have found the following *recipe* for retention to be effective.

Help in your 'kitchen'

Do you often get stuck at your desk when you'd rather be out talking to your volunteers? Well, you need help in your 'kitchen.' Recruit a team of volunteers with good communication and people skills and then delegate, delegate, delegate.

Involve this team in your daily tasks as well as helping with communications. Let your volunteers know that the team is helping you because of your limited budget and time. Engage everyone in the solution. Use your imagination and find face-to-face ways to communicate and recognize your volunteers. This will meet their needs and distinguish you from most other organizations. Be creative when working with your team to:

- Follow up with new volunteers to see how they are doing and if they have questions.
- Personally thank and follow up with volunteers especially at Valentines' Day and Thanksgiving.
- Send thank-you messages, a fun bookmark, a photo of the volunteer, etc.
- Most importantly, *give back* to your volunteers. Give them general interest and useful information, community information, etc. Don't always approach them with your hand out asking them to do something or to volunteer for you. Give them something and in return they'll feel a more personal connection to you.

Ingredients

Use the 'ingredients' or resources you already have such as:

- Your volunteers who have the greatest resource – their time.

- Your volunteers' skills like graphic design, communication skills, ideas, etc.
- Use technology (email, webpage, post your newsletter online, etc).
- Use inexpensive bulletin boards, posters, flyers, handouts, etc.
- Involve your community partners in providing perks and in-kind donations.

'Mis en place' - have everything in place

I have found that one of the most common reasons for volunteers leaving is that they don't have the information they need and don't know where to get answers.

Ensure that whatever your volunteers need can be easily accessed by them. Ask them what they need and do your best to provide it. It could be as simple as a chair to sit down, a cup of coffee, a friendly welcome, etc. Provide communication tools on-site where they check in (ideally someone to meet them but also bulletin/ message boards, volunteer handbook, newsletters, schedules, etc).

Then add a dash of humor, mix it up and you are well on your way to a successful recipe for volunteer retention.

Diane Ernst has been a coordinator of volunteer programs for 23 years in Canada and in USA and is currently the volunteer coordinator at the DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville, IL.

IV. Attracting Diverse Volunteers

Targeting Your Pulling Power

Inclusive Volunteering

Kate Power

Disabled people have as much to give and gain from volunteering as anybody else, but sometimes face barriers that can make volunteering very unattractive for them.

For example, disabled people may need adjustments or assistance to enable them to volunteer – including specially adapted equipment – and buildings need to be physically accessible and conveniently located near appropriate public transport routes.

But it's not just the physical obstacles that discourage disabled people from volunteering. Organisations sometimes send out messages that put potential volunteers off, such as images of volunteering that show disabled people as passive beneficiaries rather than active volunteers

with skills to offer. And encountering the negative beliefs and stereotypes about the ability of disabled people to volunteer can be a real turn-off.

Scope's London Volunteer Network (LVN) is fully inclusive and we involve volunteers from the whole community. Most of our volunteers are disabled people so we asked them what makes our project so magnetic. They came up with the following points:

We pay for *all* out of pocket volunteer expenses (including taxis, lunch, costs of carers or assistants, equipment, interpreters etc).

Our building is accessible *and* we make ongoing improvements at the suggestion of volunteers. For example we installed colour-coded signs, which not only makes a practical difference but also encourages volunteers when they can see they have been listened to and their ideas implemented.

Volunteers feel safe: this is particularly important for vulnerable people who are not used to voluntary work. Our volunteers are often involved in carrying out risk assessment, which promotes an understanding of health and safety issues and helps people feel more secure.

Our service users and volunteers are involved in every level of the volunteer programme – from coming up with ideas and chairing meetings, to setting up a working group to help with the planning and delivery of the project.

When we have meetings our venues provide appropriate support, such as cups with handles, drinking straws, and people to write for you. We avoid voting by show of hands, and make time to listen to people with speech impairments. Minutes of meetings are pictorial so

they include as many people as possible, including those with learning difficulties.

We also do what we can to actively aid and simplify communication. We use plain English and provide interpreters where needed (including sign language). Information is given in a choice of formats, including email, letters and telephone. Letters of invitation use large print, and reply cards are printed in black on yellow to make them easier to read – they are already addressed and stamped, so that disabled people don't have the hassle and expense of getting envelopes and stamps nor have to queue up in the Post Office.

Working with a very diverse range of people can be hard – don't be afraid to ask for guidance and support, and share your successes with others!

Kate Power is former National Volunteer Coordinator for Scope (www.scope.org.uk), the charity for people with cerebral palsy based in the UK.

Attracting The Differently Abled

Peter Heyworth

Does your organizational 'magnet' attract or repel people with a disability?

Here in Australia, more than one in every six people have a significant disability of some description. Unfortunately, we all too often label people with disabilities unfairly. I am reminded of an advertising campaign written several years ago that included the title *"Don't judge what I can do by what you think I can't."*

How could this statement challenge us to investigate better ways to attract people with disabilities into our programs? Firstly, let's explore some of the barriers facing disabled persons wishing to volunteer.

Statistics. We sometimes forget that each 'statistic' is actually a living, breathing person. It is important to understand that each person is

unique – for instance, just because two people are deemed to be ‘legally blind’ does *not* mean that they have the same level or degree of functional sight.

Views of people with a disability. Focusing only on the perceived difficulties a disabled volunteer may bring, rather than the reality and positives of each involvement, will only ever succeed in setting a new volunteer up for failure.

People with a disability are often seen to be more appropriate as service recipients. The ability of people with disabilities to provide services is often completely overlooked. It is important to ensure that everyone on your team sees the involvement of disabled volunteers positively.

Perceived difficulties (such as the cost of changing physical environments to suit disabled persons). Stating that a vision-impaired person is unable to be involved in administrative work forgets that there is a wide range of vision aids, software programs and hardware readily available.

Despite disability discrimination legislation, there are still many barriers to people with disabilities being involved in the wider community. So what can we do to better tap into this significant resource?

Role outlines are still important. Look at the role required and the potential volunteer and create an appropriate ‘fit’ between with the person and their abilities. You might even like to look at your current volunteer roles and imagine how they would suit a person with a disability.

Treat each person as an individual and determine realistically

whether they can do the job.

Don't underestimate a person with a disability. They might exhibit a higher level of commitment and dedication than someone without a recognized disability. Face your own 'fears'. Be honest with yourself, and try to admit preconceived ideas or 'black spots' in your thinking which may restrict your placement of a person with a disability.

It may be appropriate to do some preparation with other staff and volunteers before introducing a person with a disability into their new role. Also consider the value of having another volunteer mentor the person with a disability when they first get started.

Make good use of organizations and colleagues who already work with people who have disabilities. They will have skills and depth of knowledge which you may not be able to access normally, and may also be able to offer you training, disability awareness sessions, support staff or even provide adaptive equipment or assistance in other areas.

Making your program more attractive to people with disabilities not only has the potential to provide a rewarding experience – it will also ensure your program is more closely representative of the community in which you work.

Peter Heyworth manages Lifeworks Community Care (Lifeworks), a not for profit organisation based in Adelaide, South Australia who provide a range of services and programs to disadvantaged and other people in need in the local community.

Get Inclusive: Not Expensive

Kathryn Skillings

It's already recognised that volunteering benefits both individuals and organisations. When it comes to disabled volunteers, it is important to note that they can gain and offer as much as non-disabled volunteers. However, disabled people are hugely underrepresented in volunteering with only 6% of volunteers in the UK being disabled [*'Time to get equal in volunteering: tackling disablism'* Scope, 2005].

The simple truth is that disabled people still face barriers to volunteering. These barriers are not always visible or physical; often the biggest barriers are attitudes – underestimating skills and making assumptions about interests and needs is really frustrating. Treating each disabled volunteer individually, asking them about interests and support needed will make them feel valued and empowered, something which is often lacking.

A frequent concern of organisations when increasing inclusivity is

money. While some reasonable adjustments can seem expensive, it's vital to ask volunteers what's needed; there are often creative ways around obstacles. Below are some quick, cheap tips to think about when recruiting disabled volunteers or, once you have disabled volunteers, to show you value them and their individual needs.

- Ask the volunteer what they need!
- Use 12-14 point font size and a clear font type, e.g. Arial.
- Use strong colour contrast and an uncluttered layout.
- Keep application/interviews short & simple.
- Allow space/time for answers, do not rush the volunteer or finish their sentences.
- Publicise availability of support to complete paperwork.
- Have paperwork in multiple formats – some volunteers find typing easier than handwriting.
- For interviews, state that an enabler/supporter/friend can accompany the volunteer.
- Find an accessible interview location. This doesn't have to be your office, the local community centre/café may be good.
- Explain support available.
- Ensure role descriptions state expectations clearly but also that you are flexible and adaptations are possible.
- Name web links clearly, "Here's our Application Form" is better than "click here."
- Use symbols/images to complement written information.
- A bell on the inside of doors ensures visually impaired volunteers know when someone enters the room and stops any surprises!

- If there's not a lift or ramp, can the volunteer be located on the ground floor. It might mean sitting with another department but it could be positive with the volunteer meeting colleagues and learning more about the organisation. If the ground floor's not possible would they be happy to volunteer remotely, perhaps from home? (NB consider how would you ensure those links with the wider organisation are kept in these circumstances).
- Make heavy or pull doors easier for people who might find opening them difficult by using door stops.
- Keeping items off the floor will greatly improve physical access.
- Sticky dots on telephone buttons can improve their accessibility for visually impaired volunteers.
- Dog bowls make premises welcoming to volunteers with assistance dogs. (Remember - you'll need a different bowl for each dog!).
- Wrapping thick elastic bands around pens can make it much easier to grip them.
- Have cups with handles and straws available.

Traditionally, many images still show disabled people as passive beneficiaries of volunteering, not as individuals contributing equally. These images often imply that disabled volunteers' abilities will be underestimated and they will be treated negatively. Taking simple actions like those mentioned above can help challenge these stereotypes and give disabled people positive and attractive volunteering experiences.

Kathryn Skillings is Scope's Inclusive Volunteer Manager and is responsible for establishing, promoting and developing Inclusive Volunteering within Scope and externally across Greater London.

Volunteering For All

Nikki Squelch

Disablism – the prejudice and ignorance which faces disabled people.

Most volunteer-involving organisations have an equal opportunity or diversity document, or at least a volunteer policy that includes a statement about these issues. These policies outline a commitment for the agency to treat *all* people equally, with respect and dignity. Some volunteer policies even state that “volunteering is for all” and that no volunteer will be turned away.

Despite the good intentions of such policies, disabled people continue to be under-represented in volunteering with negative attitudes and stereotypical assumptions about disabled people persisting.

Gladly many organisations have gotten better at ensuring disabled people can volunteer equally alongside non-disabled people through the provision of ‘adjustments’. For example, help with the cost of travel, purchasing special equipment, having a volunteer ‘buddy’,

accessing interpreters and providing materials and resources in accessible formats.

Addressing these physical barriers can sometimes seem easier than addressing the psychological barriers – our own fears and the fear of others, prejudices and anxieties. We don't like to get it wrong or offend anyone do we? While an obvious response is to provide disability equality training to staff, volunteers and service users, changing these attitudes can take longer and sometimes be more difficult

So what can managers of volunteers do to prove that they are able to work within policy to truly provide a magnetic environment where *volunteering is for all*?

- Use your organisation's equal opportunities, diversity and volunteer policies to challenge management to include or argue for a larger budget to include more disabled people.
- Remind management of relevant legislation related to combating discrimination in volunteering.
- Don't feel like you have to be a 'disability expert' to engage a volunteer – disabled people are the ones who know what they need the most, so ask *them* as you would any volunteer (e.g. "what do you need to do this role to the best of the ability?").
- Collect evidence about the value of setting up a special fund to cover the costs of reasonable adjustments for the inclusion of disabled volunteers.
- Contact a disability organisation in your area and ask how they may be able to support you – you may be surprised!

- Become a champion for engaging disabled people in what you do and lead by example.
- Collect evidence on how engaging disabled people adds value to your organisation.
- Involve disabled people in the process of recruiting other people with disabilities.
- Read and put in to practice Kate Power's article in this publication on how to turn your organisation into a volunteer magnet.

Finally, don't be afraid, it can be daunting, but the rewards are worth it when you see how you can make a real difference to individuals and your organisation!

Nikki Squelch is the Head of Volunteering Strategy for Scope (www.scope.org.uk) the national charity that is for cerebral palsy and about disability, based in the UK and voluntary Director of the Association of Volunteer Managers (England) www.volunteermanagers.org.uk.

Attracting Volunteers With Mental Illness

Rosanna Tarsiero

“Normal is just a setting on the dryer.” Adair Lara

People with mental illness number 200,000 million worldwide (WHO, 2005). Although different mental illnesses are conceptualized according to culture, the very idea of ‘mental illness’ is cross-cultural. Volunteers with mental illness tend to serve in organizations associated with mental health, advocacy, and peer support yet they still need to overcome several barriers before serving.

Why should volunteer managers care?

- People with mental illness are so numerous that chances are, you already manage some.
- They can be outstanding volunteers.
- If you work for a mental health organization, attracting volunteers with mental illness is an essential skill.

What attracts them?

- The chance to be productive community members.
- The possibility of ending their social isolation.
- A safe, fun and honest environment where they can regroup and recover through the help and support of fellow human beings.

How should you do it?

- Educate yourself! If you don't know how to navigate the various perspectives on mental illness, ask your volunteer to point you to his/her favorite leaflet. In so doing, you will be pointed to the perspective that particular volunteer espouses. People with mental illness don't necessarily share the same beliefs on the origin and cause of their illness. Therefore it's not advisable to apply the same framework to two volunteers just because they share the same illness. Respect the right for any person to self-determine and decide what they should be called and how they should be treated and helped as long as such perspective keeps your volunteer fulfilled and productive.
- Many 'difficult' behaviors might in fact be due to mental illness. Offer accommodations before firing any volunteer, even when no mental illness is or has been disclosed. Do not assume underperforming and/or no-show volunteers to be lazy, non-committal, vicious or stupid. Always ask for explanations before forming any opinion.
- Explain to your volunteers that the more they are honest about the nature, state and degree of their disability/impairment, the more you will give them supportive supervision and accommodations.
- Implement accommodation policies and circulate procedures on

how to obtain them. Do not forget to boast and brag about how progressive your association and program are.

- Just the way being 'normal' is all you've known in your life, having a mental illness might be all they've known in their life. What is 'common sense' to you does not necessarily overlap to what 'common sense' is to them. Learn to be tolerant of diversity.
- Reward your volunteers in a non-competitive fashion, and prize them for their team play.

What happens to your program if you include such volunteers?

- Behaviors considered to be 'pathological' are also present in 'normal' people. Therefore, skills in managing these volunteers are helpful in managing *all* volunteers.
- In a program focusing on the mental health of its volunteers people are cherished and helped. As a result of it, they are fulfilled and more productive.
- Involving diverse people makes your program more flexible and ultimately more magnetic!

A certified volunteer manager, a mental health consumer and a prolific writer, Rosanna Tarsiero combines a solid background in medical science and 7 years of experience in moderating and facilitating online communities. She can be reached at rosanna@gionnethics.com

Attracting Retired Professionals

Mac Benoy

The retired professional (RePro) baby boomer is a resource of great potential for the not-for-profit sector and those who appeal to their needs may gain the value of an expensive consultant at no cost!

A useful way to understand the needs of retired professionals is to refer to an age-old management theory called the *Hierarchy of Needs* defined by Abraham Maslow.⁴

Typically, retired professionals are people who have enjoyed their working experience but have made a decision that their 'hygiene' (safety) needs are secure – they have unplugged from earning money because their investments, pension and superannuation are adequate into the future. But the day the RePro walks out of their job, many experience a dramatic loss of their motivators. Through their careers,

⁴ see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

daily attendance at work was a source of friendship, self-esteem, achievement, respect by/for others, creativity and problem solving.

You can gear off this loss by configuring volunteer positions that will directly replenish the RePros motivator needs:

- Offer jobs that are interesting, creative and challenging. Your organisation has a great opportunity to benefit from their deep wells of experience and skill.
- Give them jobs that are social – imbed them physically within the paid workforce and/or configure teamwork as part of the experience.
- Offer jobs that appeal to their skills and wisdom but don't be worried if it doesn't directly reflect their CV experience (see following point).
- Many will respond well to opportunities to grow professionally by applying their skills in a different field or business. For example, I'm working with a former accountant who's setting up a sales plan for a publication, a botanist who is managing a large database, an I.T. lecturer who is completing an H.R. project, and a scientist who's part of an oral history team.

RePros spent most of their working life operating autonomously:

- Brief them on what you want done, allow them to suggest the best way of doing the job and then negotiate a satisfactory outcome.
- Involve them in decisions that will affect their environment.
- If they work within a group of volunteers, allow them to be self-managing by choosing their own team-members and leaders. For your comfort, apply indirect management techniques such as a

steering committee, weekly/monthly catch-up's, sign-off at critical project points, etc.

RePros expect to be treated as professionals:

- “We treat our volunteers like employees, only they are on a different pay rate” – don’t just say it; *practice it*, especially with these people.
- Allow RePros to work closely with the management of your organisation.
- Don’t hold back on providing essential resources such as desk space, I.T. access, stationery, etc.

RePros want time flexibility to schedule-in their other interests:

- Configure project-style (episodic) work that is flexible, short-term and time defined.
- Avoid placing them in process-style work.
- Consider including opportunities for virtual volunteering.

Mac Benoy has 3 years RePro experience, and is an ex I.T. lecturer and civil servant. Currently volunteering at the Red Cross and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Magnets For Young Volunteers

Kerrie Spinks

As the Manager of a Volunteer Resource Centre my job is to resource and support volunteer involving organisations over a large region. A constant refrain I hear is, “Young people don't volunteer.” My answer is always, “Yes they do – just not necessarily in the traditional ways.”

During 2001 I was on an advisory committee with a young woman who said, “Don't expect the young people to be enthusiastic volunteers if they are treated without respect and are constantly told what to do, how to do it and when to do it, without having any input into the decision making processes within the organisation.”

The question I would pose is *how many of us are really brave enough to involve young volunteers in decision making within our organisation?*

In many cases the reality is that older volunteers are not involved in decision making, so the young people are certainly not going to be. In most cases young people have had enough of being told what to do

during their years at school – why would they return to that situation in their leisure time? We keep hearing that young people are our future and the leaders of tomorrow; well why not start tomorrow early and let them do some leading now?

Each organisation could consider these issues:

- What is the average age of your committee/board members?
- Has anyone ever approached a young person to be on the committee/board?
- Have you analyzed the volunteer tasks to make them more attractive to young people?
- Have you considered breaking your volunteer tasks down in to small *chunks* that can be completed in a short time frame (thus giving opportunities for short term volunteering)?
- Have you considered the existing skills of your current team and then looked for skills gaps (i.e. web page development, brochure development) that could be appealing areas for young people?
- Have you looked for intergenerational opportunities for skill sharing amongst your volunteers (such as matching a technologically-challenged older person who has excellent organisational skills with a young person who has the technological skills – both individuals learn during the process!)
- Have you ever asked young people why they have never considered volunteering at your organisation?

It will take time and energy to make changes in your organisation, but if you don't the organisation may meet the same fate as the dodo. Instead of becoming extinct why not be inspired by the multitude of

creatures that have managed to adapt to their ever changing environment and found a niche for themselves? By listening to your volunteers and to their recommendations you can join the many other projects whose success lies in ensuring that each volunteer gets as much out of volunteering as they give.

Kerrie Spinks has worked in the volunteer sector for more than 9 years in consultancy, training and research.

Volunteering With Young People

Steve Williams

The Egypt Centre is a small museum on a university campus in Swansea, South Wales, UK. We have around 90 volunteers working for us and without them the museum simply wouldn't be able to function.

In 2000, a volunteer programme for young people between the ages of ten and sixteen was started. The number of young people volunteering on Saturdays and school holidays has now risen to over thirty, while our waiting list for places has over twenty names on it and opportunities to volunteer have become very difficult to get.

Whilst at the museum they work on our hands-on activities, demonstrating to visitors how mummification was performed or how the weighing of the heart ceremony had to be undertaken by all dead ancient Egyptians. They also give visitors guided tours. They are encouraged to interpret the collection themselves and give visitors a

unique museum experience. Some visitors come to the museum to see the volunteers, not the collection!

Why is volunteering at the museum so popular and what benefits do the young people get from volunteering?

Firstly most young people are fascinated by Egypt and Egyptology and the chance to learn more about it is one that young people don't often get until they study the subject at 'A' level or in university. The young people at the museum are trained by other young volunteers who 'know the ropes' and have been volunteering for some time. They are also trained by Egyptology undergraduates at the university who want to expand their CV's to show that they have written and taught modules.

The young people also get accreditation for their volunteering through the Children's University, Swansea. For each hour they volunteer they receive one credit. The Children's University hold an award ceremony every June where the young volunteers receive bronze, silver or gold awards, depending on how many hours they have volunteered. Our young people will be among the first in Swansea to gain gold awards. This is an incentive to all young people to take part.

Perhaps a more important reason why the museum is such a magnetic choice are some of the other small incentives we give the youngsters. We have a Christmas party every year which the children help organise themselves. They dress up as Egyptians or any other characters they like. They have pizza delivered to the museum and we have a travelling zoo visit with Tristan the parrot and Bindi a Wallaby with one eye! All volunteers get birthday cards on their

birthdays and their mums bring cakes in on the weekend after their birthday.

The children come from all social backgrounds and some of them have disabilities. Many travel over forty miles on a Saturday morning to get to us. They all support each other in their volunteering and the older young people are encouraged to help the younger or newer volunteers. It is without doubt the friendliness of the volunteers and the camaraderie here that makes the museum such a magnet for young people. The pizza helps as well!

Stuart Williams was a volunteer at the museum from September 1997 until February 2000 when he was employed as the volunteer manager.

Creating Internships

Ilhame Okda

Gaining experience and putting into practice the theoretic approach to a subject has now become an entire part of universities' requisites. This practical approach is being concretised through the regular involvement of students in the professional arena, where they will often seek a placement by applying for one of the many options that the university suggests (often called apprenticeship, training course, stage, 'Praktikum' etc).

Many students interested in working in the Human Rights field or general NGO sector will contact the organization of their choice and apply for a placement. These candidates will often be referred to the existing voluntary or internship program, but these may not always correspond to the students' expectations or university requirements.

Although the concept of volunteerism has been poorly explored by the education system in Europe, more and more students are considering volunteerism as a way to gain practical experience while

assisting the organization of their choice. Consequently, it becomes imperative for the receiving organization to offer a more challenging role to the students. The university's requirements might dictate length of stay, support expected by the organization, type of work provided etc. This emphasises that the student should be provided with consistent, challenging tasks as well as regular monitoring to ensure their integration into a welcoming professional environment.

It is interesting to note that with this new approach to volunteerism, the status of the volunteer can change as well as the future needs of the organization. The creation of a new role type, which might carry the title of *Intern*, can transform the expectations of the team in the future. As they become more dependent on the intern's contribution they will expect a similar candidate to be recruited to work on the project or tasks that were newly created for the previous student.

This enhances the perceived value of the volunteer intern, who becomes regarded as a long term, professional and regular assistant to the team. And students regard such internship programs as a professional volunteerism experience and, although they are not paid, such placements are highly regarded and attract a wider pool of applicants. As such, well-structured internship programs become a volunteer magnet.

Ilhame Okda is Volunteers Coordinator at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, based in London.

When Opposites Attract

Getting non-profit and corporate organizations to work together effectively

Bronwen Buck

At one time, a predominant sentiment was that corporates and conservation-based nonprofits would never find common ground. In fact, it was thought their mandates were such polar opposites that developing shared objectives would be out of the question.

Nevertheless, opposites can attract. Corporates and nonprofits are transcending differences and developing partnership models that strive for mutual *and* multiple benefits (i.e. benefits that extend into the broader community). Today, many corporate initiatives extend beyond pure sponsorship to utilize employee volunteerism as a highly valued partnership tool.

My research focuses on how conservation stewardship can be fostered through employee volunteerism, and how by working together, the sectors might achieve something greater than they could alone. The

following, **MAGNETIC** success factors arise from conversations with nonprofit managers and corporate representatives who mobilize corporate employees through hands-on fieldwork. These factors are presented here in a way that is intended to be broadly applicable to a wide range of nonprofit organizations that make use of corporate volunteer teams through one-day events.

Maintain momentum by distributing educational materials beforehand, keeping introductions and tours brief, providing hands-on training and periodically switching tasks.

Appreciate what it means for employees to participate, rather than focusing on an event solely as a means to seek future financial support. Equity in a relationship works both ways. In the words of one VPM, there is a need for nonprofits to “Develop an enhanced appreciation for what it means for an individual to give up a work day to come out.”

Go for goals because corporate teams are often described as enthusiastic, loving to take pride in their work and achieving beyond expectation. Rally the troops by introducing friendly competition over straightforward tasks to build team dynamics. However, be aware hands-on activities may be strenuous, so tailor events to fit skills and abilities.

Natural Fit: Relationships can be enriched and strengthened if employees become engaged in activities that naturally align with the core missions of both sectors. Additionally, nonprofits may be able to strategically foster broader partnerships if they can develop a corporate partnership that represents a unique niche aspect of engagement (i.e. the corporate group is set apart from competitors who are involved in similar causes).

Evaluate: Whether carried out formally or informally, evaluation is an element of partnership that can often be overlooked; however, it can contribute greatly to the iterative development of a positive relationship.

Target transferable skills: As one corporate executive puts it, “Our best and most valuable resource is that we can provide the volunteer time of our skilled associates. We want to reflect the causes where their skills have the most impact.” Determining how employees can use their skills to assist your mission adds value to corporate volunteering.

Instill meaning: View time with corporate volunteers as a unique opportunity to share your passion with a new audience. Meaning can be instilled by providing take home messages, letting volunteers know the global significance of their local contributions and reporting measurable results to bolster a sense of achievement, ownership and pride.

Communicate: As with any good relationship, communication is key. Keep lines of communication open through regular updates and development of manageable timelines.

Bronwen Buck, formerly a volunteer manager with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, is currently completing a Master's focusing on cross-sectoral partnerships and employee volunteerism at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada.

V. Creativity Is Attractive

Being Magnetically Imaginative

Volunteer Management Is An Art, Not A Science

Patrick Daniels

Apparently Vincent Van Gogh completed every one of his paintings in less than 24 hours.

This may be apocryphal but it's an illustration of fostering creativity with speed. The point here is not that we should be speed demons – it's that volunteer management is a fundamentally creative pursuit. The more the creativity shines the greater the volunteer programme's magnetism.

They say a scientist knows how to avoid accidents, but an artist knows how to use them. I think the latter is true of volunteer management. Not only are we creatively working with constraints that others would let get the better of them, we're experts in taking advantage of unplanned events (that's an accident in anyone else's book). In the years I've managed volunteers, many a project has not developed as planned. Reflecting back it sounds quite cool to describe these moments as artistic inspiration, even though at the time I

certainly didn't really see it that way!

Then a couple of years ago, we started recruiting online peer advisors in a voluntary capacity for the question and answer service on *TheSite.org* – an information and advice website for 16-25 year olds. I found it really hard to settle on a role description that would allow volunteers to progress within the role.

The aim was to build a role where volunteers could play a direct part in responding to our users' relationship issues which could vary from a tough break up through to an abusive partner. The central challenge was to give volunteers a taste of the action where they could make a difference as soon as was feasible, without throwing them in the deep end and leaving them to sink or swim.

Now, having worked with over 100 volunteers who have come through the project, I've got a much better idea of what it is that draws our volunteers to us.

Two points are key:

Firstly, it's been a case of stepping back and letting go. We've become less prescriptive which has allowed each volunteer to bring more of their own amazing creativity to it. The fruit of this has been enabling them to better answer our users' questions with their own individually distinctive written 'voice'.

Secondly, it's been equally about stepping forward when it comes to supporting our volunteers in making the jump to writing their very own answers. We've achieved this largely by assigning volunteers with mentors to help each one with constructive feedback and tips on every piece of work they do.

We now have a more magnetic role that leaves our volunteers with an opportunity to be creative and take responsibility for their work, while at the same time giving clearly defined boundaries and lines of support. The trick is to think not just about what you'd like your volunteers to do when you draft your role description, but to think about what your volunteers would like to do once in the role. Volunteer role descriptions it seems, unlike post-impressionist masterpieces, are not built in a day.

Patrick Daniels is Online Volunteering Development Manager with YouthNet and manages the website for the Association of Volunteer Managers in England.

Bollocks To The Admin: Go Change The World!

The role of empowerment and risk in volunteer management

Graham Allcott

There was an old advertisement for Apple Computers that said, “The very people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

I spent nine years as a student and then professional working within student volunteering and I can certainly relate to this. Students are often ‘crazy’ enough to think they can change the world.

In fact, empowering volunteers to take risks and develop their own leadership potential is something we often overlook in volunteer management: we’re too busy pigeon-holing people into the volunteer roles we give them, when they can probably – with encouragement – achieve much, much more.

Presuming you work in an organisation or community with limitless needs (and most of us do!) then why not put trust in volunteers to take some risks of their own, creating new ways to volunteer that fall

outside the remit of the roles you currently advertise, but that meet those community needs, head on, and engage far more new volunteers in doing so than your one pair of hands can humanly cope with. Sounds risky, doesn't it? Well, it is. But that doesn't mean we should never try. Risks are there to be managed and minimised, not avoided altogether.

An example of this happened at Birmingham University, but it started when I visited an HIV/AIDS programme in Uganda. I suddenly realised there was an untapped resource, 4000 miles away that could really help mobilise community education around HIV/AIDS in Uganda – the students of Birmingham University.

Back in Birmingham, we advertised overseas volunteering opportunities by putting posters all over campus, and we had over a hundred students turn up for a talk, expecting to be given information about costs, dates, visas, flights, insurance and so on. But we hadn't got any of that to show them. We hadn't organised anything at all. As volunteer managers, we didn't have time to – precisely because we were too busy trying to keep up with the demand for volunteer roles in Birmingham already, let alone think about Uganda. But we knew that there would be enough people in that room with the willingness and skills to set it up and see it through, if we could just provide a little guidance, and importantly, convince them it was possible for them to do it themselves.

In fact, half the people in that room did set up a programme, inspired by the huge need we'd identified. They named it *Intervol* and it's still running 5 years later, having expanded to work in about a dozen countries each summer. The students who set it up had no idea they had the capability to do this, but they found out they could because

we created the chance for them to try. There are millions of unmet 'needs' in the world. And it's comforting to know that a few posters, some calculated risk-taking and some brave, pioneering volunteers sat in a room are all it takes to starting meeting some of those needs. Not so 'crazy' at all, when you think about it.

Graham Allcott is a freelance consultant and trainer, and in his spare time, Chair of READ International, a student-led international volunteering charity.

The Best Way Is Through The Stomach...

Nikki Squelch

Successful volunteer programmes can build on their strengths by constantly being open to new opportunities. I want to illustrate this through a story of a small, but popular, charity that works to improve the lives of older people.

The charity had a strong membership base of people aged 60 years and over, covering a small geographic area. The members ranged from very active to very frail, and all the services reflected these varying needs. There was also a strong youth volunteering project, attracting 16-24 year olds. Attracting younger volunteers had become easy.

As an organisation we assessed ourselves as being good at all aspects of volunteer management and service delivery. However, we always had the feeling that we could do more and that there were people we were missing. Although we collected monitoring data on demographic issues we never got around to analyzing it. Just as we

were thinking about doing this something special happened.

One day I walked passed a community centre and saw a whole bunch of older people leaving that I had never seen before. I greeted them, took a mental note of the day and walked on. Next week at the same time I walked by again, and there they were leaving the community centre. This time I introduced myself and had a couple of information leaflets to pass on. There was a little communication problem as I found out they were new migrants from Eritrea.

I walked into the office one morning to have a daughter of one of the Eritrean people waiting for me. She told me her family's story and asked how we could help her father. We talked and listened to each other and I gave her information about our organisation. The next day she phoned and invited me to join the group of 'Eritrean Elders' for lunch. Fantastic! I'll do a presentation and recruit them all as members and won't our monitoring statistics look fantastic and won't the funders love us! But, something happened around this cultural feast... they didn't want me to talk, they didn't want my leaflets, guide book or membership forms. What they wanted was to host me as their guest, to enjoy their food and stories of their homeland – and then they wanted to talk some more! Feed me, they did (yum!). Eat and laugh, we did. Listen, I did!

Adjusting to life with their families in London had been difficult due to language barriers. Some went to English lessons, but felt guilty because they were taking a place from a younger person, or felt unable to partake fully in the class as they were less confident students.

Our younger volunteers (who were awaiting placement), were interested in being language support volunteers. We did a little

planning, fund-raising, training and then introduced the volunteers to the older migrants. The learning partnerships were a great success.

Something else was an unexpected outcome. The adult children of the Eritrean Elders wanted to know how they could help. Our 'harder to fill' roles of driver and befriender were soon filled.

Lessons learnt?

- Building relationships through sharing food truly does work.
- In the time it took me to eat three meals, eight new volunteer opportunities were created and five new volunteers had been recruited.
- Volunteer recruitment is ongoing with more than one approach, so seize opportunities to ask people to help.

It seems eating with new 'friends' pays off – even if it does affect the waistline.

Nikki Squelch wrote the above when she worked for Age Concern England. She is now Head of Volunteering Strategy for Scope, and voluntary Director of the Association of Volunteer Managers (England).

They're Attracted - Now What?

Margaret Robertson

One of the great traps in recruiting volunteers is to be solely focused on the role that we need to fill *now*. So we advertise, someone applies and they have the right skills. Terrific!

But is it necessarily the right role for that person? Do they have other skills and abilities they would like to use, and that could be of huge benefit for us, if we think further than our immediate needs?

A case study: A branch office wanted a volunteer to type up, format and distribute their quarterly newsletter. We advertised on the internet (an especially good recruitment source for any role that needs computer skills) and Matthew applied.

At the interview, I found he certainly had the skills for the role – and more. He was a graphic artist who no longer worked full time, and would produce an excellent newsletter. But when I asked the standard question, “What would you like to gain from your

volunteering? What is it that will make you say *I'm so glad I did this?*" his response broadened my focus immediately.

Matthew said, "I need to be creative and involved in worthwhile projects. I want the satisfaction of contributing in a way that's similar to when I was working, but different."

Matthew went on to design new brochures for various programs we operate, producing professional products that we could print in-house for small numbers, or send to printers for large runs. They could be up-dated by the program when required, they looked fantastic and they fitted the *brand image* of our organisation. (Thank you, Matthew!)

As Volunteer Program Managers, the more we know about our organisation and the more we talk with staff from other departments, the better. If we are aware of what is happening where, what challenges people are facing, what they would like to do "if only there was time" we can help to meet those needs and provide satisfying placements for our volunteers.

We all know that programs work best when we have the right people in the right places. Don't be afraid to expand your volunteer placement opportunities when someone with different skills and interests arrives. Can you create a role for them that matches their skills and interests with something useful for your organisation? It does mean some extra work: you will need to plan the role, do the risk analysis and risk management, write a new role description, create or revise procedures if required etc.

But the rewards for you, your organisation and the volunteer are worth it. You get the kudos for recruiting the volunteer and initiating

the project, the organisation receives a significant contribution – and the volunteer enjoys the role and stays.

PS The newsletter? Well, Matthew would have done it but someone else turned up for whom that was the ideal role. Unfortunately for us, she then got a job, so I'm back to the recruiting stage. Umm, Matthew, would you have some free time next month...?

Margaret Robertson manages a constantly expanding state-wide volunteer program that is an integral part of Spiritus, a member of Anglicare Australia which provides community health, residential aged care and a wide variety of social services in Queensland, Australia: www.spiritus.org.au.

Knitting Magnets

Kerrie Spinks

A fundamental of volunteer management is to remember that volunteers often want to receive as well as give. Once the motivations and the requirements of the individual volunteers are met the achievements can be significant. It often appears as though when planning a project, the organisation only considers their needs and not the needs of the potential volunteers and then wonders why no one applies to volunteer.

Some years ago our Centre was approached by a community member saying her elderly mother was socially isolated and it would be good if a group could be organised to knit items which could then be donated to charities. She felt this would actually motivate her mother to re-engage with the community. This simple concept has had an amazing impact throughout our community, and continues to grow bigger each year.

We now have a coalition of knitting groups spread throughout the town. The groups of older women meet at our community centre, at

nursing homes, at the local library, at the home of a knitter, who is also a carer, and are creating squares for a 'Wrapped in Love' blanket project, knit tops and caps for AIDS babies in Africa and knit 'Trauma Teddies' for Red Cross etc. Some of these women now meet socially between knitting meetings.

We have had wool donated from people far and wide who are finding it in the bottom of a drawer or the back of the cupboard. People who had probably had no reason in the past to visit our Centre now call in to donate wool or if they are a knitter to collect wool for their next project. We have plastic crates full of wool stacked up in a corner these days.

As this momentum grew we were approached by a school teacher who had a group of fifteen students who wanted to do something for the community but did not know where to start. We suggested knitting as an option – this was embraced with enthusiasm. The teacher taught that group of students to knit, a skill none of them initially had. Those students have moved on but a new group is now learning to be dedicated knitters. The original group of students happily knit in public, including the playground, proud of the skill they have learnt.

The schools grapevine must have worked effectively as now there is a government school group who has started knitting. The initial group of school students was from a non-government school. Word is spreading and the number of knitters, from all age groups, continues to grow.

The core lesson is that the volunteers are getting as much as they are giving so years later the enthusiasm and dedication continues. Volunteers often want to get involved in activities to meet new people

and to develop or maintain skills. Knitting groups have provided these outcomes for the participants and as an added bonus there are lots of hand-knitted items completed to pass on to the charities who can then donate them as needed.

Kerrie Spinks has been working in the volunteer sector for more than 9 years in the areas of consultancy, training and research.

About the Editors

Andy Fryar

Andy Fryar is the founder and Director of *OzVPM* (Australasian Volunteer Program Management) – an international consultancy, training and resource company specialising in volunteerism (www.ozvpm.com).

He has contributed significantly to the Australian volunteerism community and his achievements include serving as President of both *Volunteering Australia* and *Volunteering South Australia*. In 1998, Andy convened the working party that later evolved into AAVA - the *Australasian Association for Volunteer Administrators*.

He is a co-author of *Volunteer Management: an essential guide* – Australia's premier guidebook to volunteering, and currently serves on the editorial committee of the *Australian Journal of Volunteering*. He is also a member of the editorial team for *e-volunteerism*, an electronic journal of volunteerism (www.e-volunteerism.com) based in Philadelphia.

Andy travels extensively and has conducted volunteer management training in 10 countries throughout North America, Asia and the UK, where he is a faculty member with CSV's Institute of Advanced Volunteer Management. He is also a co-founder of the annual Australasian Retreat for Advanced Volunteer Management.

More recently he has taken on the role of Chairperson on the international committee overseeing the promotion of International Volunteer Manager Appreciation Day, celebrated on November 1 each year.

In 2003, Andy was awarded a Centenary Medal by the Australian government in recognition of his services to the volunteering movement in Australia. Andy can be contacted at andy@ozvpm.com

Rob Jackson

Rob Jackson has worked in the Volunteering sector since July 1994. During that time he has managed volunteers and volunteer programmes in education, advice, fundraising and children's services settings at local, regional and national levels.

Between 1999 and 2005 Rob led the development of volunteer fundraising at the *Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)*. During this time Rob chaired the *Institute of Fundraising* working party that developed the UK's first code of good practice on volunteer fundraising. Rob also spent nine months running the Fundraising (Strategy) Department at RNIB, with responsibility for volunteering development, fundraising development, training & development, strategy & planning and business & market development research.

In April 2005 Rob joined *Volunteering England* as Regional Volunteering Development Manager, a role he held for over a year until he was appointed Director of Volunteering Development & Grant Making (www.volunteering.org.uk).

Rob has also previously run his own training company providing volunteer management training for, amongst others, the Directory of Social Change, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, The Imperial War Museum North, NCH, the Metropolitan Police, Volunteer Bureaux and The Samaritans.

Rob writes, speaks and trains on volunteer programme management internationally and is active in a variety of ways within the UK volunteering sector, including serving as a volunteer governor at his sons' school and as a member of the editorial team for www.e-volunteerism.com.

Rob also pioneers the use of the Internet as a means of networking amongst managers of volunteers and volunteer programmes in the UK through UKVPMs (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/UKVPMs>), the first email networking resource for UK based Volunteer Programme Managers.

Fraser Dyer

Fraser Dyer has worked in the UK voluntary sector for 25 years, and previously managed volunteer programmes for Traidcraft and Greenpeace. As a consultant and trainer specialising in volunteer management, he has run workshops and courses for many different clients in the UK, Europe, Australia, SE Asia and USA. He is co-author (with Ursula Jost) of a number of volunteer management

articles and publications including the book *Recruiting Volunteers: Attracting The People You Need*, Directory of Social Change, 2002.

Now focusing mainly on writing and work consultancy Fraser is preoccupied with what gives our work a sense of meaning and purpose. His latest book *Why Do I Do This Every Day? Finding meaning in your work* (Lion, 2005) explores why many of today's workers feel disaffected with their careers yet at a loss over what to do about it, and looks at ways they can recover a sense of vocation.

His website is at www.myworkinglife.com, where you can subscribe to his e-newsletter or download back issues on topics such as *Managing Your Boss*, *Coping With Difficult Colleagues* and *Tips For Managing Stress*.

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