

Keep your Volunteers Happy!

1. Volunteers want you to be prepared for them.

Don't bring a volunteer in until you have everything worked out, from the [job description](#) to a place to work with proper equipment, to something to do immediately.

2. Volunteers want to feel welcomed.

Act as though your volunteer is a guest in your home. Show her around. Introduce him to your staff and other volunteers. Don't let your volunteer feel uncomfortable for a minute. Show that your organization is warm, friendly, helpful, and happy to see your volunteer.

3. Volunteers want good training.

Even if the task assigned is a simple one, take the time to explain it, demonstrate it, and mentor the volunteer through the first few hours. Provide a buddy, another volunteer who is experienced, to help the new one. When training a group of volunteers, be sure to use adult learning techniques such as group involvement. Volunteers don't want to be lectured to. They want to participate in the training. Include in your training clear expectations for your volunteers. Let them know what the job entails and the quality measures that you will use to evaluate their work.

4. Volunteers want to do interesting work.

Most volunteers are willing to roll their sleeves up and do physical labour as long as it is meaningful. Do not use volunteers to do the tasks your staff doesn't want to do. Envelope licking, wheelchair pushing, and mindless filing do not appeal to modern volunteers. Think of your volunteers as extra staff who are capable of performing complex tasks that take advantage of their experience and skills. Provide leadership opportunities to those volunteers who are willing and have the time to shoulder more responsibility.

5. Volunteers want to know up front how much time the job will take.

Everyone is busier than ever, and many volunteers may only have time for short term assignments. Project-oriented, rather than ongoing, assignments seem to work particularly well. Decide how much time your job will need and include that when you publicize your volunteer position. Will it take 6 hours a week that can be done over three days? Does it need to be done on a weekend? Do you need your volunteer for the summer, for a season? Does the volunteer need to be available from 2 to 4 p.m. during the week?

Provide lots of options so that you can appeal to a busy soccer mom as well as the retiree who has more time. Think about offering "alternative" opportunities, such as project-based [family volunteering](#) and even [virtual volunteering](#).

6. Volunteers want to be appreciated.

Tell your volunteers frequently that they are doing a good job. Although you will want to come up with some creative ways of formally saying thanks, don't overlook the power of a simple gesture such as taking them to lunch, providing a small gift, or sending a thank you card to their home.

7. Volunteers want to be communicated with.

Regular communication is motivating for volunteers, while the lack of it is one of the chief reasons volunteers become dissatisfied. Volunteers like to have a particular person who looks after them. If your organization does not have a volunteer coordinator, be sure to assign someone to be the point person for your volunteers.

Be ready to listen to volunteers and respond to concerns immediately. Don't just communicate via email with your volunteers. Telephone them, have meetings, invite them to stop by your office, mail them regular updates or a volunteer newsletter.

8. Volunteers want to know that they are helping to make the world a better place.

Let your volunteers know how they are making a difference. Share success stories about your clients and programs. Bring them up-to-date on progress toward your organization's goals. Let them see your work in action through tours, presentations on the issues by your experts, and by inviting them to provide suggestions about how your work can be done even better.

<http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/tp/whatvolunteerswant.htm>