

VolunteerMatch
Learning  Center

build staff
buy-in



Agenda

- Communication Is key
- Create a strong foundation
- Provide training and support
- Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate
- Working with unions
- Q&A

What's the problem?

- What does your library think, feel or “know” about volunteers?
 - Volunteers are great, but you can't give them important work because they might not show up.
 - Volunteers are great for support work, but we can't let them work with children, or at the circulation desk.
 - ~ liability issues
 - Volunteers don't have anything else going on. They live to come to the library. ~ lack of respect for time
 - Great – let's get tons of volunteers in here. Volunteers are free – right?

What's the problem?

- What do individuals in your library think about volunteers?
 - I'm already so busy. I don't have time to work with a volunteer ~ volunteers are more work than they're worth
 - I'd love to work with a volunteer, but what if my manager thinks I can't do my job?
 - Am I training my volunteer replacement?
 - What if a volunteer can't do the things she says she can do? ~ qualification concerns

Before you start talking to others

What do you want to say?

- Do you have goals for the volunteer engagement program?
- Do you have a personal or organizational philosophy for volunteer engagement?
- Is volunteer engagement part of your library's strategic plan or initiatives?

Communication is key

Communication with stakeholders

- Who in your library is invested in the volunteer engagement program?
 - Library leadership, program managers or directors, patrons, existing volunteers
- Communication with existing volunteers
 - Volunteers have ownership or control over programs
 - Hard to introduce new volunteers to shifts or teams
 - Attitudes hold the culture hostage
 - Intergenerational communication issues

Identify Stakeholders

- Assess where each stakeholder is on the engagement continuum
 - “I’m evaluating our volunteer engagement program. I’d love to get your ideas”
 - One on one conversations
 - Opportunity for you to learn – don’t defend or attempt to change minds
- Group stakeholders into champions, those seeking more information, and those opposed to expanding volunteer engagement.

What did stakeholders have to say?

- Are there themes or trends? If they want more information what kind of information are they looking for?
 - Case studies
 - Pilot programs
 - Feedback from existing volunteers
- Communicate about the process
 - What are you doing to ensure that you find the right volunteer for each position?

Keep the story going

Create ongoing communications to share information about the program

- Successes and challenges
- Ongoing work on pilot programs
- New processes or better screening and training plans
- New positions
- And – of course – recognition!

Build buy-in on a strong foundation

Engage supervisors or program managers in the process.

- What does a volunteer need to know, do or be to be the right volunteer?
- How will you ensure that you find the right volunteer?
 - Clear and comprehensive position descriptions
 - Interviews and screening process
 - Screen for culture and fit not just for skills and traits

Build buy-in on a strong foundation

- What does a volunteer need to know before they start?
 - Do they know it already? Skills based volunteers
 - Are you training them? Who, how, when?
- Involve others in the screening and training
- Do you have policies and procedures in place?
 - Does everyone know what they are? Where they are?
 - Living policies evolve to fit the program as it changes
 - Do they include conflict resolution procedures?

Provide training and support

Managing people is difficult, managing volunteers can be even harder

- Many staff members may have never managed anyone before!
 - Start with the basics – what are the expectations?
 - Don't assume that rudimentary skills exist. Role play and situational training.
- Include information on theory and philosophy
 - Your philosophy, the library's philosophy, books, articles, blogs on volunteer management and engagement

Provide training and support

What do you know but take for granted?

- How do you communicate goals and expectations to a volunteer?
- Can you tell a volunteer that the work isn't right or up to your standards? How?
- Create in-house trainings for staff. Informal support groups.

Provide training and support

- Staff new to working with volunteers and those that are working with volunteers
 - I know you know this, but I wanted to include you in this refresher.
 - Model the type of interactions you want others to engage in with volunteers.
- Don't abandon them after initial trainings
 - Daily interactions can cause confusion or conflicts.
 - Ongoing check-ins with staff or meetings with staff and individual volunteers. Ensure that the process is smooth.

Evaluate!

Things rarely work well the first time.

- Build on regular check-ins.
- Share questions or information across staff members.
- What could we be doing differently? What's working? What isn't? Solicit feedback from the volunteers too!
- This is good information for your communication channels.

Working with unions

Build on foundation processes and clear procedures to create a use-case for unions

- Clear and comprehensive position descriptions for paid and volunteer staff
 - Is there a separate word for a volunteer position description? Be aware of terminology issues.
- Identify discrete tasks or auxiliary positions
- Work or skills outside of position descriptions.

Thanks for attending!

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