

VOLUNTEER RETENTION

“A Return on Investment (ROI) Approach”

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WEBINAR
SERIES
FOR ARTS
PRESENTERS



ONTARIO
PRESENTS

Canada 

Reminders

- You can hear us, we cannot hear you!

Can't hear?

- Try turning up your volume
- Call in by phone or use your computer headphones

Have a question? Use the Q&A box, any time. Will have time at the end to address questions or email me later.

Downloads

- Webinar recording
- PPT Slide presentation
- American Soccer Association 30 Ideas for Retention
- Points of Light: How to Prevent Volunteer Burnout
- Volunteer Management in Arts Organizations: Case Study Theatre

AGENDA

1. Your Survey results (questions from the survey at the end)
2. Definition of RETENTION
3. What does it take to keep volunteers engaged? Key Concepts
4. Factors you control: Factors you don't
5. Short and long term retention
6. 4 Top Strategies

Your Survey Results: Good – Bad news

Length of stay for volunteers:

- Many of you indicated volunteers stay for 3 years + (in today's terms of longevity this is good although it may not stay this way).
- You may be seeing the tail end of what we believed was long-term.
- “Length of stay” HAS changedthis is a reality that organizations have to understand and adapt to.

Reasons for leaving:

- **73%** indicated that volunteers moved away or live busy lives and cannot commit more (these reasons you Cannot Control).
- Few indicated volunteer never showed up; did not come back; and 'burnout'...these are areas to be concerned about. (these reasons you Can Control).

We will look at the specific questions you listed on the survey at the end.

RETENTION



- Getting volunteers is one thing.....KEEPING them is another. Retention is the outcome we strive for with our recruitment plan.
- **Traditional Notion:** once volunteers signed on they stayed forever. There was an expectation that they would stay for long terms, many years.
- **Current Reality:** Volunteers are staying for shorter periods of time. There has been an increase in one day/one off events which volunteers have enjoyed. So instead of a 'fixed' commitment...there appears to be a redefining of retention to mean “ whatever time the volunteer has chosen to give us.”

- Let's look at some of the key concepts behind Retention to better understand what we need to do to respond to volunteers and support them for whatever time we have them for.
 - This is a new concept: **“Embrace volunteers for the time and efforts they give you no matter how long they stay.”** (here is one of those links back to recruitment: If volunteers stay for shorter times, you will be recruiting more often)
 - Remember when we rewarded long term volunteers with a recognition program based on pins/years of service? So if length of time is not our recognition...here is where it impacts on our recognition program as well. Remember I said in the first webinar
- “ There is a dynamic tension between these three elements!”

Retention Factors are only as good as the rest of the volunteer management system:

- Expectations
- Rules
- Systems
- People
- Communication
- Rewards
- Climate
- Setting
- Success/impact
- Individualism

Key Concepts

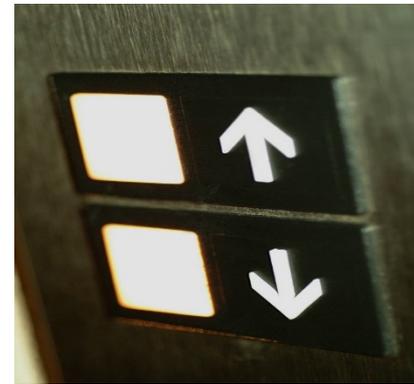
- Address motivational needs of volunteers
- Address sense of belonging
- Treat volunteers as equals
- Seek/promote opportunities for interaction
- Respect and utilize diversity
- Facilitate ownership
- Celebrate /recognize accomplishments

“Beyond your control?”



1. Volunteers leave...they do not stay forever
2. Volunteers leave if job change or moving
3. Predictable
 - Volunteer in your arts organization with spouse...illness ...they leave.
 - 40 hour community involvement – youth leave when commitment completed (if we haven't captured them into our cause)
4. Volunteers do NOT stay forever no matter what YOU do!
5. FACT: Volunteers are staying for shorter periods of time
6. Know the reasons you get (do an exit interview) and accept this as part of volunteer engagement.

“WITHIN YOUR CONTROL?”



1. Matching the right person with volunteer position
2. Being honest, not promising what you can't deliver
3. Meet expectations of volunteer
4. Providing the 'support' that volunteers need to do a good job
5. Responding to TRENDS – volunteers want shorter, time limited opportunities (episodic). (Come build one set and see if you like this)
6. Building a climate with other staff, members and volunteers that supports everyone!
7. FACT: If you can't provide attractive, short term opportunities you may NOT attract volunteers

Your Two Survey Issues

1: “Never showed up” OR “showed up once and did not return”

Let's do a quick online POLL

“What do you think might be the primary reason that volunteers do not show up after an interview/or don't come back after their first experience?”

THINGS TO TRY

1. FOLLOW UP: Call and find out why they did not come back (you demonstrate interest in them)
2. Ask them what support they need to be a volunteer with you.
3. If they did not come back after first time....do something about that. Was it how they were treated? Was it the time of the shift? Was it lack of organization/not ready when they came? Was no work when they arrived?
4. Ask them to consider another role (you demonstrate flexibility and creativity) or create something new together.
5. Thank them for taking an interest...sorry that there was not a good fit. Would they be interested in being on your mailing list?

2 Issue: “Burnout”

Let’s do a quick online POLL

“What can we do to help eliminate burnout/or volunteer fatigue?”
Select the ones in the list that you would try.

It is usually the keen volunteers who are willing to do more...take on more tasks...” the world is run by those who show up.”

Asked YOU

A. How long your volunteers stay?

6 months to a year = 2

1 year = 2

2 years = 8

3 years = 26

Often stay longer than role time = 5

Stayed to complete role then gone = 2

This begs the question: What does retention mean? If they stayed to complete the role then you retained them.

Our 'expectations' are getting in the way. We still expect volunteers to stay for a long time.

Retention Rate

- So from the survey results you indicated how long volunteers stay.
- Would someone you recruited a year ago be with you today?
- Is this different in different roles or programs?
- If you recruited someone for 6 months role did they fulfill it?

We need to think differently about retention so that we can understand any changes we need to make to improve. If a volunteer indicates they can help with one event and they do that...they stayed for the time committed. If they did not show up or did not complete the event fully...then retention would not occur.

Retention Considerations

- Volunteers stay for personal reasons. We need to meet their needs.
- Retention is both short and long term
- **Short term:** Keeping the volunteer engaged in the position they agreed to
- **Long Term:** How to keep them engaged so they stay longer than planned

SHORT TERM

What influences volunteers to stay in the short term?

- Work meets expectations. Good fit between position and volunteer.
- Volunteers feel supported.
- Feel/see the commitment of the organization.
- Volunteers receive support needed to do good work.



- Volunteers receive consistent, appropriate recognition.
- Volunteers feel part of a team dedicated to a worthwhile cause and see the impact they are making.



Short Term: Best Practices

1. Make sure “match” is right!!
2. Build a relationship
3. Make sure NEW volunteers feel welcome
4. Find ways to support them. Orient and train. Team with a mentor for the first month.
5. Connect regularly and say thank you informally
6. Have a space for volunteers, coffee etc.
7. R.O.I ...invest upfront and early

LONG TERM

- *What could we do to have volunteers stay longer?*

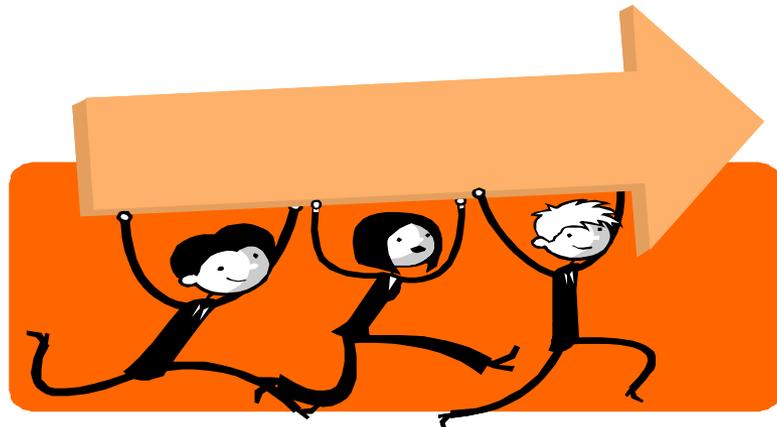
What does longer mean in today's climate?
Many of you have volunteers 3+ years!!



Ideas for Long Term

- You have to do a **great job in the short term!**
- **What motivated them initially may have changed.....**you need to know them to understand this.
- Keep the work **interesting and changing.**
- Build a **relationship** with each volunteer. Get to know them helps you understand when the time is right to suggest a change.
- Long term volunteers continue to need **support, training and recognition.**
- Long term volunteers have most likely connected to “your cause”. **Get their stories.**

- They want to see their work having **impact, results and tangible rewards**. How can you show them the impact?
- Volunteers continue to need **appreciation and feel honored to help**.



If you are having trouble retaining volunteers, ask them for feedback. Find out why they are leaving.

Then make the changes that are necessary to improve! Some things you have control over. The climate, how volunteers are treated the first time they come etc.

Volunteer profiles have changed. Volunteers today are not willing to do much of the work organizations still offer. Which if you can't recruit them there is no one to retain.

4 TOP RETENTION STRATEGIES

(as identified by Imagine Canada research)

- 1. Creating a quality volunteer experience**
- 2. Developing a 'true believer' in the cause**
- 3. Providing organizational support**
- 4. Ensuring the volunteer 'gets more than they give'**

1. Creating a quality volunteer experience

Let's do a quick POLL:

“Put yourself in the shoes of a Volunteer....you have volunteered to coordinate the next play; set up the stage for the next musical...or sell drinks during the intermission or greet the patrons as they arrive to the theatre.

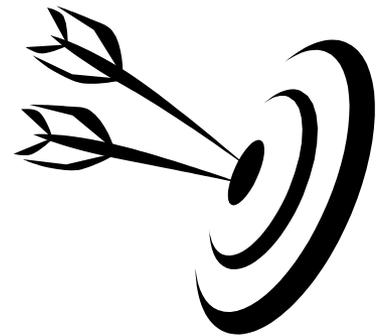
- What constitutes a ‘quality volunteer experience?’



Other retention strategies...

2. Developing a 'true believer'
3. Providing organizational support
4. Ensuring the volunteer 'gets more than they give'

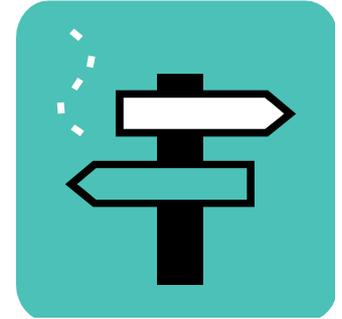
(I have provided the slides on the elements of these later on).



“Individuals who have volunteered in the past cite poor management of their time and talents by nonprofits as the primary reason they stop volunteering.”

A Sound Investment: The Value of Adding Volunteer Resources Management to your Philanthropic Portfolio, Volunteer Canada and UPS Study, 2004.

SUMMARY



- Working successfully with volunteers is relationship building.
- Retention is linked to “what we ask volunteers to do” and the match to what the volunteer wants to do and is motivated to do. Volunteer profiles have changed and volunteers want opportunities where they can use skills/experience and make an impact.
- **Take control of the things you can change!**
- Support volunteers for whatever length of time they are with you.

Best Practice

Think of volunteers as **“NON- RENEWABLE”**
Resources.

When you think about this ...these words come to mind: precious, scarce, unique, limited quantity....and if we frame volunteers in this way...YOU might just be recruiting less because you are retaining them longer.

Final Questions?

- Thank YOU for the opportunity to share my knowledge & experience with you!
- Additional resources and links provided for you ...slides outlining the key areas identified in the 4 retention strategies.
- Let's consider the questions that you posted in the survey and those on the webinar site.



Questions from the Survey

Youth Question: most of our volunteers are youth ...they are gone when the commitment is over (some are 40 hrs community service). How can we encourage them to stay on?

Ideas:

- What did you give them to do? Was it skill based? Great for resume building? Did you help them see the link to employment? Did you give them a reference letter? Did you make it fun? Do you support youth and have a youth-friendly culture? These things go a long way to encouraging youth to stay...but again, youth are busy and like short term opportunities.
- If they are off to school or work in another community, link them to an arts group where they are going.

Continued...

General Volunteer Issues: (Burnout & Commitment); making volunteering fun: volunteer incentives; how to make volunteers self-managed; how to stay connected between seasonal events.

Ideas:

- FUN – what can you do within the parameters of your work to make it fun? Build fun into planning meetings; do something with the group outside of the organization; attitude & atmosphere (lighten up).
- Volunteer Incentives: skill training; transferable skills; tickets to events; find employment; find out what volunteers need.
- Self-Managed volunteers: assess what volunteers need to be self-managed? Leadership training; expectations; given freedom to do the work their way?
- Stay Connected: send E-newsletter; invite to events; phone calls; invite to focus/planning group (have a virtual volunteer do these things?)

Questions posted today....or email me...



1. Creating a quality volunteer experience

- Meeting volunteer expectations
- Providing the right amount of supervision, support and recognition
- Making volunteers feel part of the team
- Giving volunteers respect and involving them in decision-making
- Providing meaningful work
- Ensuring their time is well spent
- Honoring Agreements

2. Developing a ‘true believer’ in the cause

- When volunteers see value in their contribution
- Volunteers see the impact of what they do and how it affects the community
- Volunteers find it hard to let go
- Volunteers develop a passion – it can increase their commitment
- When volunteers themselves have faced an illness, cared for someone with Alzheimer’s or gone hungry – know the impact. What is the impact you see when volunteers help in the arts sector?

3. Providing organizational support

- They know the organization is committed. Is management, staff and the corporation on board?
- Climate is good – is the culture and climate supportive. Volunteers feel this.
- Support systems and dedicated resources – orientation, training, reimbursement for out of pocket expenses...
- Feel part of a team – energy level increases when people work together. Momentum and camaraderie are important to overall experience.

4. Ensuring the volunteer 'gets more than they give'

- Volunteers will stay longer if training is enhanced and useful to them outside of the volunteer situation. This is “added” value.
- They build new skills, new friends, new networks, get a job via the network, reference letter that leads to an interview...out of isolation into meaningful work
- Volunteers see positive change has occurred
- Volunteers feel wonderful about their contribution

Resources

- www.energizeinc.com – Susan Ellis web site lots of topics, back articles on many topics. Books can be purchased online> Keeping Volunteers: A Guide to Retention by Rick Lynch and Steve McCurley
- CharityVillage: www.charityvillage.com – research section by topic. Here are three examples:
 - Ten Tips for Volunteer Retention: article by Andy Teller on Charity Village
[https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Top ten tips for volunteer management and retention&last=553#.VIHH0DHF9h4ips](https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=Top%20ten%20tips%20for%20volunteer%20management%20and%20retention&last=553#.VIHH0DHF9h4ips)
 - Understanding Volunteer Retention: Donna Lockhart for Charity Village
https://charityvillage.com/Content.aspx?topic=understanding_volunteer_retention&last=553#.VIHIWDHF9h4
 - Series of articles on Engaging Youth also posted on CharityVillage – by Donna Lockhart.

- www.nonprofitscan.ca – research section with many fact sheets by topic
- Graff, Linda: Best of All: The Quick Reference Guide to Effective Volunteer Involvement. www.lindagraff.ca
- Volunteer Canada: www.volunteer.ca. The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement and Screening Resources – Seven Steps.
- Volunteer Today Gazette: www.volunteertoday.com
- American Soccer Association: 30 Ideas for Retention (sent as attachment for participants).

Please share your feedback by completing the survey below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LYZMLKT>

If you have questions after the webinar is over, please contact me and I will try to help you!

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