

- THE HANDBOOK OF -

Recruiting & Retaining Volunteers

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**“Life’s most
persistent and
urgent question is,
what are you doing
for others?”**

**— Martin Luther
King, Jr.**

STAGE



Recruiting Volunteers

Identifying awesome volunteers

Choosing the right volunteers is important for an NFP to grow efficiently and strengthen their mission. One of the most effective ways to do this is by conducting an interview, or less formally, sitting down to chat with them. It is important to ask them about what they know so far, and the principles that guide them. If these align with your organisation's beliefs then this is a good start!

Be aware of your candidate's aspirations! There are different types of volunteers:

Formal: Looking for a high level of commitment and passion. Would like to grow the organisation and play a big role.

Casual: Looking for a lower level of commitment. Would like to grow as an individual and gain experience, whilst balancing other responsibilities.

Be sure to think about what you are looking for before conducting your interview.

Now let's take some time to reflect on the characteristics of potential volunteers. Here are some traits to look for:

Eager to collaborate

Most NFPs run on tight budgets. One benefit of this is that they are forced to collaborate. This means that people with varying skill sets are brought together to serve a common cause. Collaboration happens within organisations and also externally. Great volunteers value this mindset and are eager to contribute the skills they possess as well as leverage off the people they know.



Potential questions:

- Do you have any suggestions for individuals/organisations that we can work with to further our mission?
- How might your individual skills and hobbies contribute to our NFP?
- Are you open to collaborating with others to develop and expand your ideas?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work in a group/team. What difficulties did you encounter and how did you overcome them?

Passionate and hard working

Great individuals bring their best efforts to whichever tasks they are given. Whether it is paid work, or in this case, volunteering, seek those who take pride in your cause and are eager to help out.



Potential questions:

- Where does volunteering fit into your weekly schedule?
- How do you approach it in comparison to your other work commitments?
- Tell me about a situation where you had conflicting priorities. How did you decide your top priority?

Firm believers

Amazing volunteers are those who incorporate their mission into their everyday lives and truly believe in what they're doing. They understand the value of their cause and always seek ways to fulfill their objectives.



Potential questions:

- Why do you want to join our NFP?
- How did you find out about us?
- What does our mission mean to you?
- Give me an example of a time you inspired someone to do a good job. How did you do this?

Energetic

It's no secret- people with positive and energetic attitudes bring colour to an organisation. They are always eager to collaborate and learn, especially in a team setting. Volunteers like this are invaluable to an organisation.



Potential questions:

- What ideas would you like to bring to the table?
- If you were CEO of this organisation, what would you change?
- What are your ambitions for the future?
- Where do you see this organisation in the next 5 years?
- Tell us about a time you used initiative to improve your efficiency or output in the workplace?

[NOTE]

Sometimes, there is a mismatch between what the volunteer wants to contribute and what the organisation needs. On the other hand, a candidate may realise that volunteering with you is not suitable for them. These are both okay! In this case, you could suggest alternative organisations to the volunteer and wish them the best!

How to conduct an interview

Check the job description

Review the job description so you know what you are looking for in the candidate.

Look at their work history

Take time to look over their cover letter and resume. Decide which questions you'd like to ask about their past experience and expertise.

Plan your meeting

Create a general interview structure to ensure you have enough time to discuss everything. This will also ensure that you are respectful and professional about the candidate's time.

Prepare key interview questions

Write down the questions you'd like to ask. Include some questions about the candidate's background. Whilst it's helpful to glance at this list during the interview, make sure you keep eye contact with the interviewee. One way to ensure this is to memorise the key questions.

Find an appropriate location

Conduct the interview in a place that is private but comfortable. Make sure there are not too many distractions and remember to keep your phone on silent.



Volunteering Legalities

Screening

Conducting detailed checks on volunteers correctly for their role is very important, such as performing Working with Children Checks (WWC), police checks, reference and qualification checks where applicable. Some points to remember include: The WWC has different regime for each state and territory. It is important not to discriminate in this recruitment of volunteers when they are screened. Legal protections are provided to counter discrimination on the basis of characteristics such as sex, age and marital status.

Working with Children Check

Volunteers are needed in various roles which include working with children, seniors and disabled people. In these instances, a volunteer will need to undergo further screening such as a Working with Children Check and a criminal record check. The organisation needs to be clear with the volunteer that they cannot move forward with the application/ interview process until all required checks have been obtained.

Volunteer contract and role obligations

An important part of engaging a volunteer is a volunteer agreement. This helps the volunteer understand their role, rights and responsibilities.

Writing a volunteer's job description:

Your written job description should be clear, concise and in line with the organisation's policies. It should relay a description or a list of tasks which the volunteers will be expected to complete. In addition, it should include an explanation of the organisation's values and the work environment. It is also important to include what the role/organisation will offer volunteers in return. This could be networking opportunities, prospects of long term job or even skill development.

Information you can include in the role description:

- Location
- Work hours
- Necessary and desirable skills and qualifications
- Title of the role
- Role description
- Overview of tasks/expectations

Template available at: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/your-team/volunteers/recruiting/writing>

Visa requirements

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has encouraged organisations to hire people of different visas. Visa conditions may also effect the hiring of volunteers. The organisation plays an important and helpful role by understanding any visa terms and conditions encountered in the process of hiring volunteers. This provides equal opportunity to all candidates and helps them get involved in local communities to build connections and gather new skills.

Orienting Volunteers

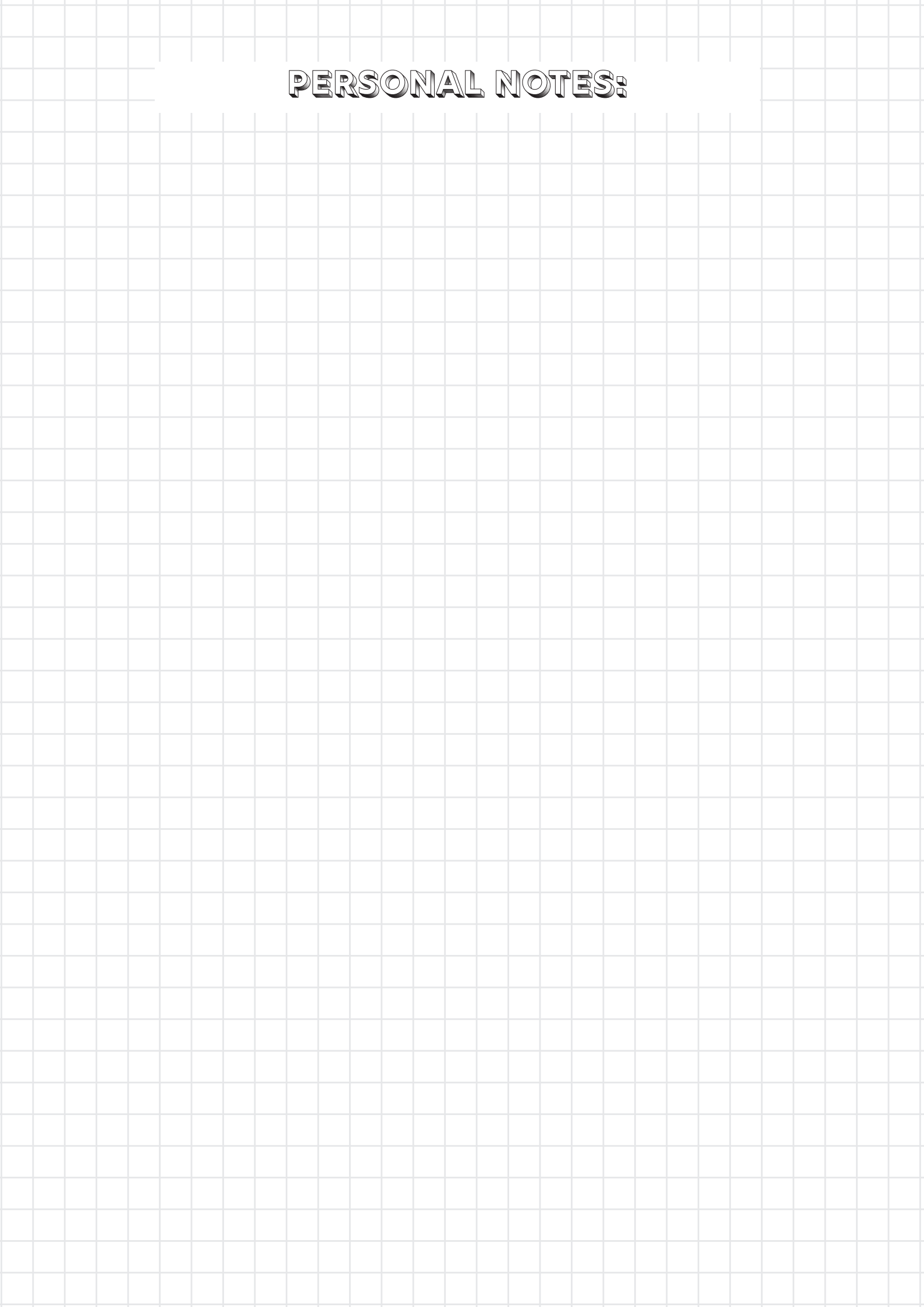
The last stage of the recruitment process after the candidate is selected is orientation, where all the newly joined members are warmly welcomed in the organisation. Here they are briefed about their position, duties, timings and are introduced to their team leaders and members of the organisations. Be sure to allow the new volunteers some time to familiarise themselves with the culture and environment of the workspace as well as to develop an understanding how their role contributes to the mission of the organisation (i.e. how it relates to the 'bigger' picture).

Here are some suggested things you can include as part of your induction program:

- 1) Explain the mission of the organisation and elaborate on the long term strategic vision.
- 2) Detail any legal or regulatory requirements.
- 3) Clearly list their roles and responsibilities.
- 4) If necessary, offer coaching/ mentoring programs.



PERSONAL NOTES:



**“A leader is one who
knows the way,
goes the way, and
shows the way.”**

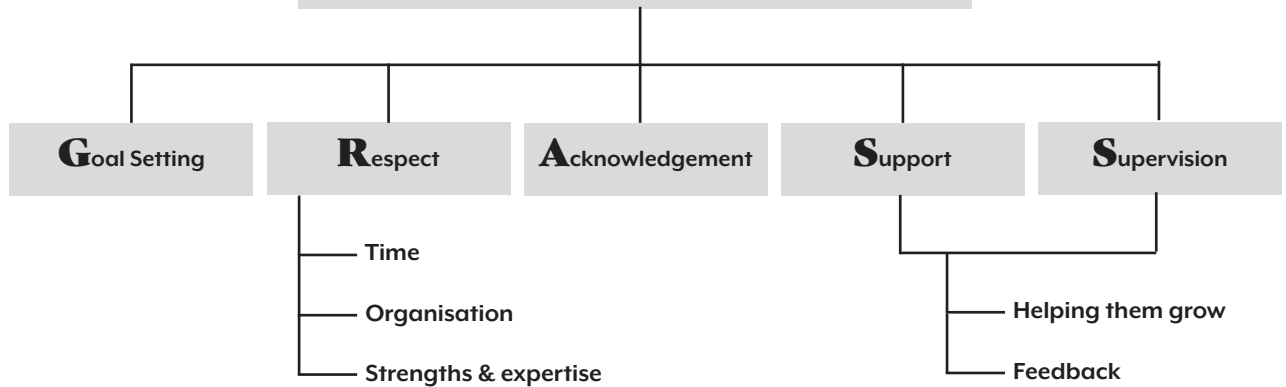
—John C. Maxwell

STAGE



Retaining Volunteers

Retention G.R.A.S.S.



Goal Setting

Goal Setting

Allowing volunteers to manage their goals and timeframes within the organisation optimises productivity and efficiency whilst maximising their sense of fulfilment.

As a team leader, your role is to understand the volunteer's drive and goals and ultimately find ways to align their individual's goals with that of the organisation. Setting both short term and long term goals is important. Volunteers need to have a clear idea of their ultimate goal as individuals and as a team goals within an organisation. Furthermore, leaders and supervisors need to ensure that necessary resources and tools are available for volunteers.

Goals need to be flexible and moderated if circumstances change. Understand that failing to reach a particular goal is part of the process and does not usually translate to the team's lack of accomplishment is important.

Tip:

Reflection is an important tool that can be used during the mentoring process. Reflect together as a team on both the progression and digression.

- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-give-constructive-criticism-6-helpful-tips-nishlan-pillay/>

Respect

What does respect mean to you? Why do you value it?

Respect is about treating others well and taking into consideration their emotions. It is a gesture extended to others to show kindness, understanding and trust. You need to respect the time of your volunteers and be organised in your delegation of tasks and deadlines.

Time

A very important part of recognising volunteers is respecting their time and ensuring that great value is shown towards it. A person's willingness to volunteer their time and dedication to your organisation shouldn't be taken advantage of or abused. Rather, to benefit the individual and ultimately the organisation, you must take into consideration each volunteer's situation and show flexibility and respect the time they have committed to meet the organisation's needs.

Scenario: Andrew is doing volunteer work with a company. During the commencement of his work, he was told it would be a 1hr commitment per week. However, after a while he found that he was having to stay back for longer or numerous days and was not given enough notice beforehand.

Organisation

PLAN! PLAN! AND...PLAN

In volunteer roles, setting specific tasks and providing deadlines helps individuals complete tasks more swiftly and with enough time. By providing them with all the resources, training and a clear, easy to follow guideline of the work that needs to be completed, this leaves no space for the volunteers to be left confused or wondering about what they'll be doing next. Rather it ensures that the time they're dedicating will be utilised well and has been managed accordingly.

Moreover, by involving volunteers in this process of planning projects and setting out important dates and events, it shows the individuals the value that their thoughts have, and the contributions they can make with new ideas and views.

Resources:

- Timetable
- Agenda
- Meetings
- Feedback

Utilising strengths & expertise

The more practice and understanding you have about a particular role, the more confident you are in executing it. Understanding the strengths and expertise of your volunteer is an important way to show them respect and value. By placing them in a role they're familiar with, liaising with them on such matters and showing them that their talents and strengths are recognised and valuable, volunteers will be able to see the esteem in which they are regarded and feel motivated to continue to do more.

Example: If a person is very confident and enjoys more hands on and interactive tasks, provide them with roles that utilise these strengths. i.e presentations, meeting with clients and hosting information sessions.

Acknowledgement

An important aspect of retaining volunteers is recognising and rewarding their efforts and contributions to the company. This not only motivates individuals, but also reflects the great work they're doing. This can be done in various forms depending on the setting as well as the achievement of the individual.

Recognition

How do you feel when you receive a compliment?

What are ways you can compliment a person on their work or efforts?

How can you recognise the efforts of a few without leaving others feeling left out?

Recognising the efforts of volunteers and expressing gratitude for their work shows them that they are valued. Positive feedback and compliments are a great way to show to volunteers the vital role they play and the impact it has. Whether it be for their time management, ability to complete a task quickly, working well, going above and beyond etc., saying thank you and giving praise will help the volunteer see that their work is being appreciated and recognised. Having different awards to recognise different achievements and merits is a good way to show volunteers your appreciation for the work they do and the impact it has.





A few examples include:

- Volunteer of the week/month- Having a “Volunteer of the week or month” can be used to not only recognise the efforts of those that are doing exceptional work but to also motivate others to try to excel and attain that award.
- Milestone Awards- Awards to celebrate milestones such as the time a person has been working with the organisation and to also highlight what they’ve achieved since then.
- Parties- Parties are a great way to have fun and celebrate. Having parties to celebrate successes, holidays and peers is a great way to bond and relax.
- Lunch- Taking volunteers to lunch after a job well done, to celebrate.
- Article- Publicly acknowledging a volunteer by writing a piece outlining and commending their work in the work magazine or newsletter.
- Letter- Writing letters of appreciation and thanks to volunteers.
- Responsibility - Giving badges with titles and increasing responsibility to reflect the growth of the volunteer.

Support & Supervision

Supervision is about constructing a relationship with volunteers that is based on mutual trust, respect and a recognition for a need of professionalism. Basically, it is about you providing the necessary support and guidance to help the volunteer to flourish in their role. This ensures optimal personal growth which, in turn, benefits the organisation's growth.

Why do volunteers need supervision/mentoring?

Unfortunately, a lot of non-profit organisations fail to outline a specific set of responsibilities and expectations for the volunteers to follow or abide by. In addition, unlike staff members, volunteers usually lack the professional training for that specific role. This makes the concept of supervision **VITAL** for the success of the volunteer and organisation. The guidance and support a supervisor provides is necessary to ensure the volunteer is aware of what the organisation expects of them in terms of commitments and work ethics. This is beneficial in the long run as it minimises conflicts and disputes.

Help them grow

Understand that volunteers want to help the organisation. They are dedicating their time and effort because they believe in the purpose and mission of the workplace. Help them grow and develop into the best empowered version of themselves so they can not only be fulfilled and satisfied with their role but can allow the workplace to flourish and succeed.

Now, you may be wondering that this concept sounds awesome but how do I do that?!

You need to dedicate time to understand the volunteer's personality traits, motives, strength and weaknesses. Your understanding of your volunteers will

develop further as you get to know them better but you need to start somewhere. Acknowledge their personal long/ short term goals and understand what they want to gain out of their volunteering experience. Based on this information, try to allocate their tasks accordingly. This will make their experience MUCH more enriching and fulfilling!


For instance, if they aim to improve their public speaking skills, provide them with opportunities to practise and develop such skill. Or, if they enjoy speaking with people but dislike doing admin/ office work then get them to work on projects that satisfy that preference.

Feedback – is it mean?

ALWAYS ensure you provide volunteers with feedback, whether it be good or 'bad'.


If they are doing a great job, then let them know! Acknowledge their achievements and their strengths. If you notice they have areas that require improvements, do NOT be afraid of letting them know. This constructive feedback will benefit them in the long run as it is fundamental to their personal growth and development journey. Choose the right tone, environment and time and have a debrief with them. Discuss the areas where they could improve on and provide ways and solutions that may help them.


[TIPS]

 Don't say "Michelle, you are really bad at marketing our events. You need to improve ASAP"

Instead, use the 'Sandwich' method to provide feedback:

1. Discuss their strengths. Mention their recent achievements and its value to the organisation.
2. Discuss their areas of improvement. Be specific!
3. Conclude with their strengths, suggest ways to help them improve and highlight the positive outcome that would consequently be achieved if the volunteer embraced the feedback and acted upon it.

 When providing feedback make sure it is centered around the situation not the person. For example, instead of saying "you are late" use "the report is late"!

 Always be proactive to ensure that any concerns or issues that a volunteer is facing are addressed and resolved. This makes volunteers feel valued, appreciated and most importantly safe and comfortable to share any concerns or issues they have encountered.

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Designed by: Farhana Ismail

All images from: unsplash.com

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Traits of Amazing Volunteers:

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Working with children check:

<http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/information-for-volunteers/volunteer-background-checks/working-with-children-checks>

Volunteer agreement and role description:

<https://www.nfplaw.org.au/volunteers>

Visa: <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/volunteers>

Induction and training: <http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/information-for-volunteers/volunteer-training>

Recruiting volunteers:

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Volunteer recruitment and selection checklist:

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Orienting volunteers:

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Orientation program checklist:

https://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0003/454233/factsheet_Recruiting_volunteers.doc

Inspire people, inspire change.

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