

10 KEYS TO VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION



- 1. Have a plan.** Develop a recruitment strategy to find the right people for the right job at the right time.
- 2. Clarify need.** Determine internally why you need volunteers (i.e., the reason), where you need them (i.e., what position/department), and who you need to recruit (i.e., volunteer characteristics and skills). Develop a volunteer profile based on the identified need.
- 3. Market the position.** Get the word out through a detailed recruitment ad clearly describing what knowledge, skills, and abilities you're looking for, as well as the benefits to potential volunteers. Be clear with expected roles and commitment so volunteers know what is expected of them. Market on websites such as [Charity Village](#).
- 4. Develop a selection process.** Follow [procedures](#) similar to hiring an employee, with both application and evaluation procedures. Screening can streamline volunteer selection by weeding out those who don't "fit" early on. Do keep in mind, though, that volunteer interviews are different than job interviews – regardless of the position you are currently hoping to fill, consider how potential volunteers could assist elsewhere in the organization. Also recognize that many volunteers don't want to replicate their work day – consider their purpose for volunteering and don't pigeon-hole people into roles that aren't of interest.
- 5. Set and evaluate goals.** Align individual and organizational goals, placing volunteers in positions where both sets of goals can be achieved. Conduct annual bi-directional performance evaluations to ensure that the volunteer placement has resulted in the individual's needs being met as well as the organization's mandate being accomplished. Identify what worked, what didn't, and what needs to change going forward.
- 6. Provide orientation.** Introduce volunteers to [organizational policies, procedures, purpose, and people](#). Discuss expectations, responsibilities, and where to turn for help. Orient volunteers to the organization, their role, and other staff/volunteers.
- 7. Offer sufficient training.** Devoting time early on to training volunteers to do their jobs well will maximize their contribution and minimize frustration at all levels. Avoid information overload – consider a staged approach to training that offers "just in time learning" as new tasks and responsibilities are introduced.
- 8. Buddy up.** Ensure volunteers have a designated contact to check in with daily, weekly, or monthly, as well as whenever questions or concerns arise.
- 9. Discipline fairly and promptly.** An organization's code of conduct extends to its volunteers, and volunteers need to be accountable just as employees do. If discipline is necessary, address it right away. Be clear about expectations for change and, when required, own your part of the problem. Ensure that the process is fair and transparent – many volunteers are counting on references for their work with you, so will want to know how the current problem will impact their reputation within the organization and beyond.
- 10. Conduct exit interviews.** When a volunteer decides to leave your organization, make time to find out why. Take this opportunity to get feedback about your organization and/or department, as well as to express your gratitude for the contributions the volunteer has made.



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604.856.2386
info@lifestrategies.ca
www.lifestrategies.ca