

Leadership and Volunteer Workshop

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What sort of problems is your LMSC experiencing with regard to volunteers?

Lack of warm bodies	No new blood
Not reliable	Lack of confidence
Lack of interest in running for offices	Too busy
Involvement on other levels	Only want to swim
Lack of support from above	Can't delegate
Can't recruit enough people	Incompetent volunteers
People have their own agenda	Lack of teamwork
Poor volunteer environment	"What's in it for me" attitude
Backbiting politics	Criticism of volunteers
Transportation	Finances
No opportunities due to people holding on to positions	

What are characteristics of good volunteers?

Friendly	Ability to build consensus
Responsible	Competence
Volunteered	Timely
Real worker	Passionate
Accountable	Team player
Self-starter	

What are characteristics of good leaders?

Good self image	Vision
Knowledgeable	Not egocentric
Creative	Does not micromanage
Initiative	Delegates
Focused	Innovative
Encourages	Mentors
Confident	Not afraid to make decisions
Listens	Builds succession
Inclusive	Respectful
Communication	Competent
Humble	Plans ahead
Inspires	
Priorities	

Note that the characteristics of good volunteers are not the same as the characteristics of good leaders! You may have someone who is an excellent volunteer, but may not be appropriate in a leadership role for the organization.

This was stated very well in the most recent Harry Potter book. It has come out that Dumbledore has had some problems wielding power appropriately in his past, and Harry is complaining to him about the responsibilities that have been put on him. Here is Dumbledore's reply: "I had proven, as a very young man, that power was my weakness and my temptation. It is a curious thing, Harry, but perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it. Those who, like you, have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well."

What motivates volunteers?

Helps others
 Passion for swimming
 Reinforcement
 Recognition
 Wants to change something
 Sense that they are making a difference
 They are making a contribution

Sense of accomplishment
 Belief in organization
 Camaraderie
 To force something to happen
 Sees the need
 Involvement
 Give back to the organization
 Personal satisfaction

Categories of volunteer motivation:

Achievement: These volunteers looking for tangible evidence of short-term project completed (written reports, project documentation, names checked off a list, supply room reorganized, etc.). These volunteers need feedback, work well alone, seek responsibility, like to problem solve, see problems as challenges, stick to tasks until completed, need a specific goal to work toward, and need specific parameters set to measure success.

Affiliation: These volunteers want a feeling of association or belonging to a group or organization. These volunteers need to be liked, need personal interaction, see socialization opportunities, like to get involved with group projects, work most easily with people they know, and like to have a personal relationship with their supervisor.

Power: These volunteers want to cause a change in the thought, character or action of someone else or a program; they want an impact. These volunteers seek/accept positions of authority and responsibility, keep an eye on overall goals of the organization, can respond to needs of people or programs, need to have an impact and have an effect on others, can work alone or with a group, is persuasive, is self-starting, and enjoys teaching others.

Recruiting Volunteers

Identify the need – Be specific
 Make sure the task is needed
 Broad solicitation
 Web page/newsletter advertising
 One-on—one invitation
 Take risks with new people

Willingness to hold their hand
 Meet and greet opportunities
 Check box on registration form
 Recurring column in newsletter with tasks that need volunteers
 Break tasks into manageable pieces

Supervising and Evaluating Volunteers

Why? We want to set them up to succeed; make sure the job is done correctly, make sure there is a coordinated effort of tasks

When? Always!

Who? Supervisor/Recruiter; Chair; Co-workers; Customers (swimmers)

How? Communication between supervisor and evaluator; self-evaluation; use the phone rather than email; be tactful!

Feedback from the volunteer to the supervisor is important as well as from the supervisor to the volunteer.

Remediation: It is preferable in all cases that any problems be identified early, and that steps be taken to fix the problem before it grows any larger.

Recognizing Volunteers

Formal

Nominating for awards
Years of service

Informal

Email thanks
Thank timers at meets
Public thanks in newsletter, on web
Small gifts
Keep the volunteer informed about what's going on

Personal thanks
Birthday cards
Announcements at meet or meetings
Hearing from 3rd party
Letter to editor of local paper

Retaining Volunteers

Why do they leave?

Burnout
Move/change of life circumstances
Lack of use of their skills
Lack of direction
Felt unappreciated
Don't agree with direction of organization
Politics
Results of efforts were criticized
Quit swimming
Lack of time

A recent study by the UPS Foundation revealed that two-fifths of volunteers have stopped volunteering at some time because of one or more poor volunteer managements practices. Reasons included the organization not making good use of a volunteer's time or good use of their talents, or that volunteer tasks were not clearly defined. The study warned: "Poor volunteer management practices result in more lost volunteers than people losing interest because of changing personal or family needs."

Volunteer Career Development

Everyone should be aware of career development in volunteer organizations, just as you do in your career where you earn your living. If a volunteer career is a dead end it becomes boring and you will very likely lose the volunteer quickly. Examples of career development paths in our organization might include:

Swimmer → Team Registrar/Officer → Treasurer → President of Club → Representative to LMSC → LMSC Officer → USMS Delegate → USMS Committee Member → Committee Chair → USMS Board of Directors → USMS President

Swimmer → Coach → Club Representative on LMSC → LSMC Coaches Chair → USMS Delegate, and continues as the previous example.

Dealing with conflict

Predict it: it is better to anticipate problems rather than deal with problems that have blown out of proportion

Intervene by prevention

Don't deal with conflict by email

Proof read your emails before they are sent

LISTEN/Communication

Empathy

Reassign tasks to minimize conflict

Get outside assistance to resolve conflicts

Venting to a trusted 3rd party is OK!