

DOVIA Mississippi Presents

4 Typical Basic Motivators of Volunteers

The current thinking in volunteer management suggests treating your volunteers just like employees. The one essential difference is that they are “volunteer” employees instead of “paid” employees. So what motivates your volunteers? What makes them “come to work”? What makes them “tick”? Remember, this list is not an either/or. *Most volunteers have a primary motivator but may also have one or more secondary motivators.*

FOUR TYPICAL BASIC MOTIVATORS OF VOLUNTEERS

Praise

Volunteers motivated by praise enjoy recognition for their talents and accomplishments. They like being thanked, given gifts, singled out for achievements. They probably find situations where there is little, no or exclusively negative feedback very frustrating. They enjoy a volunteer program where the results of their effort are readily seen by others, especially a supervisor or the volunteer coordinator, and where some sort of yearly recognition event occurs. They might work best in a volunteer position where talents already possess can be used.

Affiliation

Affiliation volunteers like being part of an organization, a club or a team. They enjoy opportunities to get together with others with similar beliefs, backgrounds or goals, and being associated with a well-known cause or group. They probably would not find working alone or for an obscure organization very satisfying. An affiliation-motivated volunteer works best in a volunteer position where social opportunities are part of the program, where they work on group projects, represent the organization to the public, or wear a badge, uniform or T-shirt with the organization’s logo.

Accomplishment

Accomplishment-motivated people enjoy seeing concrete evidence of their work: piles of finished paperwork, names checked off on a list, dozens of cookies baked, perhaps bags filled with groceries at a food bank. It’s probably not a good idea to put these volunteers to work on a project where abstract goals are pursued or where achievements are very hard-won. Look for volunteer positions for them where they can either complete practical, tangible projects or at least receive some sort of certificate of completion of stages of the work.

Power/Influence

These volunteers like persuading people to see or do things their way. Even if one don’t always act

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as an official leader, he or she will enjoy showing people a better, easier way of accomplishing an objective. They probably don't want to be in a very insignificant position or to be the newcomer in an already close-knit or routine-bound group. Look for positions for these volunteers where they will help make decisions (such as a board position), teach or train people, help with rehabilitation or tutoring, or campaign or raise money for a person, cause or organization.

Motivator	What a volunteer might say...	How a volunteer might react...
Praise	<p>"I know I'm really helping someone." "My friend thinks what we're doing here is just great!" "Sometimes I feel like my boss/family doesn't appreciate me."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brighten at a thank you • Show off their handiwork • Look really frustrated when a project doesn't go well • Tell you stories about their kids, accomplishments, etc.
Affiliation	<p>"You seem like a great group of people!" "I tell all my friends/ co-workers I volunteer for you!" "I just moved here. I don't have any friends or family here yet." "What a great T-shirt!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a big deal about why they chose to volunteer here • Never seen without name badge/t-shirt • Seem to identify with staff even more than volunteers • Bring their friends in as volunteers • Look miserable working alone
Accomplishment	<p>"Wow! Look at all those [product]!" "I was able to get to 25 homes today!" "I don't know -- I realize this task is important, but I just don't feel like I'm getting anywhere." "I just love getting my hands dirty!" "How many/how much do you want done?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes "to do" lists and checks completed tasks off • Points out the difference in size of unfinished and finished work • May seem to work very happily alone • Frustrated when a project isn't finished • Likes to see finished work distributed or stored before he/she leaves • Frets about abstract results
Power (Control or Influence)	<p>"This is a great case. I want to get others on board!" "I have a lot of experience in this area." "I'll call So-and-so to get his ideas/help." "Such-and-such VIP is a friend of mine." "I'll get right on it!" "I was really impressed when I heard VIP volunteers here/is on your board." "I could run that committee better than So-and-so!" "No one listens to me."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes up the reins of a project readily • Always has a "better idea" • Is comfortable directing work of others • Frets when perceives competition • Seems unhappy as a "cog in the wheel" • Is bossy • Talks about situations where he/she led a successful team • Delegates effectively

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