**RETAINING YOUR VOLUNTEERS**

Retaining volunteers is similar to retaining paid staff. Think about what you would look for in your ideal job. Make a list. You can start with the below and add to it.

1. Working Conditions
   1. Is it safe?
   2. Is it clean?
   3. Does it have good facilities (kitchen, toilet etc)?
   4. Opportunities for relevant training?
2. The work itself
   1. Is it interesting and meaningful?
   2. Does it have a clearly defined area of responsibility?
   3. Does the work match the volunteer’s abilities?
   4. Is the volunteer involved in planning and organising their own work?
3. Management procedures
   1. Does the supervisor take time to discuss the work with the volunteer?
   2. Is there a process for highlighting grievances?
   3. Is there a clear contract with terms and conditions?
4. Relationships with colleagues
   1. Is there a spirit of co-operation?
   2. Are there opportunities to socialise with colleagues or other volunteers?

**Volunteer Induction**

Orientating new volunteers is essential in providing a sense of belonging. The first priority for a new volunteer is to provide a full induction as soon as possible, or even before she/he commences work. Information could be provided as part of an induction pack or volunteer handbook. However many volunteers tend to skim written materials, it is best to talk about the key points face to face.

Once you have completed the Volunteer Induction pack, you will need to plan:

1. Who will be conducting the induction?
   1. The Volunteer Supervisor generally takes the responsibility. There may be other staff or volunteers who should also be involved in explaining the role.
2. When and where the induction will be?
   1. Sometimes it is not a good idea to try to get all the information through in one meeting. You don’t want to overwhelm the volunteer before she/he has even started. Prioritise the information and spread it out over a few days or weeks.
3. How will the information be conveyed?
   1. Try to vary the ways in which the information will be presented over time. Some details may need to be agreed with each individual, but most of it can probably be covered with a group.

**Training**

Depending on the person and the role, most volunteers expect some training, either before they start, or on the job. Initial and on-going training will help volunteers build skills and confidence in the role. It will also give volunteers the opportunity to ask questions, express their needs or worries, help them to grow on the job and get a clear appreciation of what is expected of them and how their role contributes to the success of the organisation.

**Ongoing Feedback**

Feedback works both ways

1. Feedback from volunteers
2. Talk to volunteers about their concerns and suggestions. Tell them what you will do with the information and report back on any changes you make as a result. Incorporating their feedback into decision making demonstrates their views are respected and their ideas are valued.
3. You can also gather feedback from a Volunteer Survey. The Volunteer Survey can be anonymous. Some volunteers may be more comfortable voicing their opinions/concerns when it is anonymous.
4. Feedback to volunteers
   1. Volunteers are part of the organisation, just like a paid staff. A review process is an opportunity for supervisors to receive feedback and also to provide feedback to volunteers.
   2. Overtime, take note of how volunteers are performing in their roles. Highlight what they are doing well and offer constructive feedback for them to improve and do their best.

**Motivation**

While the image of volunteering can be that of a totally selfless act, all volunteers want something from the experience.

The ongoing feedback process is a great opportunity to find out what your volunteers’ motivations are – from wanting to meet new people, gain confidence, gain work experience or just wanting to give back.

Remember, these may change over time and will be different for each volunteer, so a one-size-fits-all approach for motivating your volunteers is unlikely to work.

Some ways that you can help to motivate volunteers include:

* Being enthusiastic yourself and encouraging achievement;
* Ensuring volunteers know the job and why it’s important to the organisation and its mission;
* Accepting the individual’s potential and limitations;
* Providing a thorough orientation to the organisation;
* Providing training to do the task, and ongoing education to learn new skills and stay challenged;
* Providing a sense of progress or impact to the volunteer, so they can see what has been achieved through their work.
* Acknowledging your volunteers regularly, either formally or informally, is also crucial to keeping people motivated. No matter how humble volunteers are, everyone wants to know they are doing a good job.

*References:*

1. *VolunteerNow Publications – As Good As They Give Workbook 3 – Managing and Motivating Volunteers.*