

*SUCCESS*  
*WITH*  
*VOLUNTEERS:*

*STEPS*  
*IN*  
*MANAGEMENT*

*By*  
*Pauline Wagner Rippel*

Susan,  
As great to be a  
partner in volunteer  
consulting. Best wishes  
in all you do.  
Pauline Rippel

# **SUCCESS WITH VOLUNTEERS: STEPS IN MANAGEMENT**

BY

PAULINE WAGNER RIPPEL

*(You could read this Preface now or read it at the end. If you read it at the end, you'll know why I begin with the word "obviously".)*

## **PREFACE**

Obviously, this brief manual could be extended to many pages. Books and even college degrees are now dealing with the wide and exciting field of volunteer management. Each step is a topic deserving a great deal of study and reflection.

I have rarely even attempted to give a rationale for some of the actions I have suggested here. Some are all too obvious. Others are the result of long years of watching the human response to work and working with others.

This is simply an attempt to spell out in very straight-forward fashion the steps I have found successful. I have saved my rationales and victory stories for another day. By then, you will have your own. That is my hope. For working with volunteers is one of the most beautiful experiences anyone could have!



## **STEP 1. ASSESS YOUR NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEER HELP**

- A. Brainstorm with the agency's volunteers (if you have them):
- a) all they have done for your agency;
  - b) all they are willing to do.
- Put on newsprint.
- B. Brainstorm with clients what they would like the agency to do. Put on newsprint.
- C. Brainstorm with paid staff:
- a) every task they have done on the job in the past three working days;
  - b) everything they wish they could do on the job.
- Have each person star the items he would be willing to let someone else do. List all starred items on newsprint.
- D. With all three pages of data (from volunteers, clients, and staff) eliminate any jobs which:
- 1) would be against laws, union rules, or agency guidelines for volunteers to do;
  - 2) are not agreed upon by staff as appropriate for volunteers;
  - 3) are not meaningful and rewarding jobs for a person with skills to do them.
- (These 4 steps are part of the Needs Overlap Analysis designed by Ivan Scheier).
- E. Cluster all the remaining items into meaningful jobs. Consider using the time frame for the job as 3-4 hours per week.
- F. Name each job cluster. e.g. public relations, club leader, office assistance.

## **STEP 2. WRITE JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

- A. For each cluster, write a job description including:
- 1) title;
  - 2) supervisor ( a title, not the name of a person);
  - 3) duties ( a clear, precise statement of what the volunteer is to do);
  - 4) qualifications (personal traits required for this job);
  - 5) time commitment (length of commitment and hours per week);
  - 6) training the agency will provide.
- B. Be extremely specific and thorough. The staff person closest to the job should help write the job description.

## **STEP 3. BUILD THE RECRUITMENT PLAN**

Fill in the form:

- A. In Column A, list the titles of all the jobs for which you have

ONE-YEAR ON-GOING VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT PLAN

(A) JOB TITLES	(B) PERSONS OR ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT				(C) METHOD OF CONTACTING				(D) PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THE CONTACT			
(E) TIMELINE FOR CONTACTING, INTERVIEW- ING, AND TRAINING	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.

job descriptions.

- B. In Column B, list people and organizations you know who have the skills required for the job. Brainstorm with paid staff, clients, current volunteers. Consider all sectors of the community — business, government, clubs, associations, friends, the Volunteer Action Center. Be specific. Use actual names.
- C. In Column C, state how you would best contact the person or group listed in Column B. e.g. personal visit, phone.
- D. In Column D, decide who should contact the person listed in Column B. e.g. paid staff, Board member who knows the person, etc.
- E. In Column E, after deciding which jobs you need most urgently, plot when you will contact, when you will interview, and when you will train for each job. Be aware that each of these three steps takes time and one step must follow the other.

#### **STEP 4. RECRUIT**

- A. Contact the person(s) for whom you are responsible.
- B. Tell them the need your agency has for a person with their skills. Outline the job description briefly and ask if they would be willing to discuss it in more detail.
- C. Arrange time, place, and person who will interview them, (if the interviewer is someone other than yourself).
- D. Tell the interviewer the name of the person coming, the date and location.

#### **STEP 5. INTERVIEW**

- A. Greet the person by name in a warm and friendly manner. Help him become comfortable. Room arrangement, place for coat, etc. are important.
- B. Ask the person to fill out a data form. Explain that you want a brief record of his visit, i.e. name, address, phone, previous volunteer and/or paid work experience, skills, interests, time available.
- C. Begin the interview by:
  - 1) explaining the purpose of the interview, i.e. to share information about the needs of the agency and the skills and interests of the person being interviewed.
  - 2) stressing that the agency wants to make the best possible match of needs and interests.



- D. Explain briefly the agency's work and volunteer program. Tell about the job for which the person was invited to the interview.
- E. Ask the person to talk about his personal interests, special knowledge or experience, previous volunteer and paid work experience.
- F. Discuss the person's interest in and qualifications for the job, availability, questions, concerns.
- G. Thank the person for coming and tell him that by a specific date you will contact him to let him know if he is the person whose skills and interests best match the needs of the job description.
- H. Thank him for realizing that you are anxious to make the best possible placement. Volunteer work is a very important facet of your agency's service and of the volunteer's sense of worth and contribution.
- I. At the end of all your interviews, contact each person. Thank those you do not hire, rehearse the value of their skills, make a recommendation, if you can, to another agency where their skills are needed or to the Volunteer Action Center. Invite those you do hire to come for an orientation meeting on a specific date in the very near future.

## **STEP 6. ORIENT AND TRAIN**

- A. A training program contains three dimensions. See chart below. With the paid staff and possibly some veteran volunteers, brainstorm content to fill Columns A and B. Generally, the new volunteers with paid staff can brainstorm topics they need and want for on-going training and job enrichment (Column C).
- B. Always clarify what you want them to know and what you want them to feel (or experience) before creating any training program. Then design the content, the methods of presentation, and the timeline to actualize your objectives.
- C. On-going training can be effectively provided at each regular staff meeting. In 20-30 minutes a topic of concern can be opened up for discussion, an audio-visual can be shown, or a guest from within or outside the agency can speak on a topic related to the volunteers' work.
- D. Periodically, provide a longer period of training
  - a) for all volunteers, e.g. a special session on understanding youth;
  - b) for volunteers with special needs or interests, e.g.

send to conference or workshop.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS			
3 ASPECTS OF TRAINING:	A. ORIENTATION TO THE AGENCY	B. INITIAL TRAINING FOR THE JOB	C. ON-GOING TRAINING
WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO KNOW			
WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO FEEL			
CONTENT TO BE COVERED (WHAT)			
METHODS FOR COMMUNICATING CONTENT (HOW)			
INSTRUCTOR(S) TIME LOCATION			

## STEP 7. SUSTAIN MOTIVATION

- A. Work with paid staff to ensure that friendliness and collegial relationships with volunteers are recognized as critically important factors in sustaining volunteer involvement.
- B. Have regular staff meetings — at least once a month — with volunteers. Participation in regular staff meetings should be part of the volunteer's job description. These meetings, when conducted appropriately, are a key factor in sustaining motivation because:
  - 1) regular meetings give the volunteers a chance to share successes;
  - 2) regular meetings give the volunteers a chance to share problems (before they become overwhelming);
  - 3) regular meetings give volunteers a chance to keep



the broad goals of the agency in mind. (Tunnel-vision is deadening)!

- 4) regular meetings give the volunteers a chance to participate in planning the events and projects they will or could implement. Everybody knows we humans work harder and longer on things we help plan than on things someone else plans and tells us to do!
  - 5) regular meetings give the volunteers a chance to receive on-going training and professional growth experiences;
  - 6) regular meetings give the volunteers a chance to be reminded of the very important services they are helping make possible in their communities. And since no one wants to do insignificant tasks, it is important that volunteers be reminded of the value of what they are doing.
- C. With staff and veteran volunteers, carefully plan the ways you will, as an agency, recognize and reward volunteers. Brainstorm all the possibilities, then choose the ones which best suit your agency and volunteers.
- D. Plan ways to vary the job responsibilities of volunteers who have performed well and would like new challenges.
- E. Read Maslow and Herzberg on motivation. Become sensitive to the various factors which motivate and demotivate people at work.

## **STEP 8. EVALUATE**

- A. Evaluate individual volunteers. Once a year, ask them to fill out a questionnaire, then set up an appointment to discuss their responses. A 15-20 minute session can rebuild their readiness to carry on for another year or give you insights as to how to use their skills more effectively. The questionnaire might have 5-10 simple questions such as:
- 1) what are some of the main satisfactions you derive from your volunteer work? main frustrations?
  - 2) what are the strengths of our program as you see them? what are its weaknesses?
  - 3) how effectively do you feel your skills are being used? what changes would you like to see?
  - 4) do you feel you have ample opportunity to have input into the operation of our program?
  - 5) what would you like to learn or do in our program that

you are not presently learning or doing?

6) in what ways could cooperation between administration, staff and volunteers be improved?

- B. Evaluate the volunteer program. As you see, the above questions give the volunteer a chance to evaluate the program. You will want the paid staff as well to respond:
- 1) what are the strengths and weaknesses;
  - 2) what changes need to be made;
  - 3) who will do what;
  - 4) when will it be done.
- C. Annually assess your agency's needs for volunteers. No agency — hopefully — remains the same from year to year. New programs, new staff, new emphases necessitate annual assessment of the agency's need for volunteers.
- D. Evaluate your own growth in knowledge and appreciation of the field of volunteerism. What readings, workshops, discussions with other professionals have you participated in? What do you need to include in the coming year?

There you are! You've come full circle! All in the effort to give more people the opportunity to work with you in extending the services of your organization to those in need. It never ends. It's never exactly the same! And it's more than worth the effort!

## METHODS

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