

STAFF/VOLUNTEER RELATIONS COLLECTION

THREE GUIDEBOOKS BY
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**BUILDING WORK THAT SATISFIES, I:
VOLUNTEERS AND THE WINDOW OF WORK**

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All about volunteer motivation, job design,
placement, recruiting, and other kinds of good things.

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**BUILDING WORK THAT SATISFIES, II:
STAFF AS WELL AS VOLUNTEERS**

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How the Job Factor Process can lead to
staff ownership and support of volunteer programs.

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SO YOU STILL WANT TO WIN WITH STAFF

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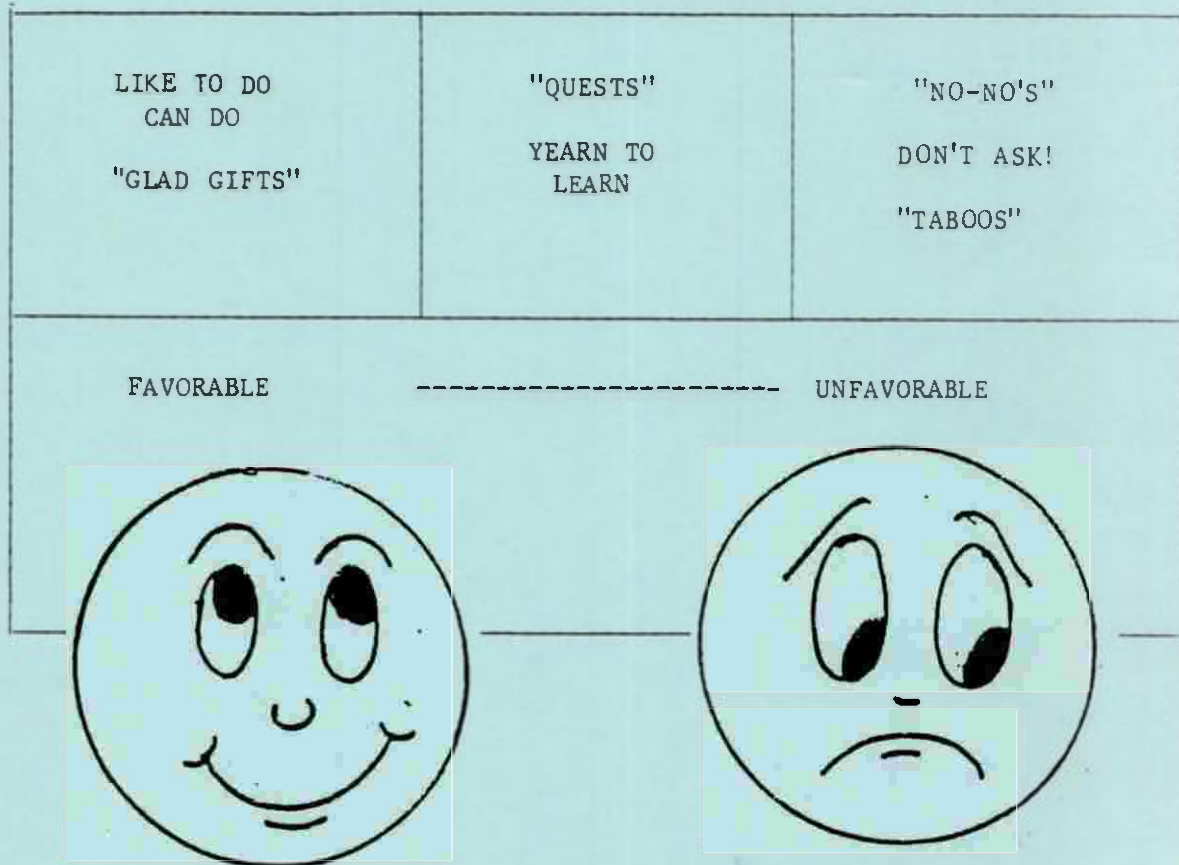
How to get solid staff support for your volunteer program.

BUILDING WORK THAT SATISFIES. I: VOLUNTEERS AND THE WINDOW OF WORK

All about volunteer motivation, job design, placement,
recruiting, and other kinds of good things

by

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Some Philosophy, First

How do we get people to work? When you think of it, there are only three ways:

We give them dollars,
We give them orders, or
We give them reasons.

Pay, pressure, or persuasion - some mix of these three is what prompts most people to work. The rare and exquisite handicap for volunteer leadership is that we have only the last one. This sometimes makes motivating volunteers seem like trying to run a four-minute mile under water.

So, scratch money and mandate as main incentives, and look hard at persuasion. Here, many volunteer leaders think first of rewards outside the work itself: pins, buttons, badges, certificates, gold watches, Mickey Mouse watches, etc. This can be nice but it's only the icing on the cake; the real substance of volunteer motivation is the work we offer people, the job itself. This is an intrinsic motivation.

We know this, first of all, from ancient wisdom, thus: "The wise leader knows that the reward for doing the work arises naturally out of the work." Current evidence further confirms this. A 1981 Gallup poll listed the main reasons Americans gave for volunteering. Of eight reasons given with significant frequency, the top three were:

- Like doing something useful, helping others
- Am interested in the activity
- Enjoy doing the work, feeling needed

Make no mistake about it, the work itself is by far the most powerful motivator of volunteers. That is the first surprise for some who assume that other, extrinsic incentives, are the key.

The second surprise is that the work-motivation a person brings to us is almost always sufficient to fill the needs of our organization. We don't have to reach down inside people and adjust their drive mechanisms. Actually "motivate" as a verb is somewhat disrespectful of the kinds of quality people who come to us as volunteers. To repeat, the notion that appropriate volunteer placement needs first to manipulate a person's motivation is usually fallacious and always arrogant. Instead, we can accept the motivation people bring with them; almost always this is good enough, in the sense that somewhere there is work we need that this motivation will power.

To summarize our two main assumptions at this point, hoping that what follows will persuade you of them:

- The work itself is the main motivator of volunteers
- In the adult human being we don't create motivation; we identify it, accept it, and then connect it creatively to organizational and community need.

Motivational Markers

The window of work process is based on these two assumptions. The procedure identifies the work which most motivates a volunteer and at the same time is useful to the host organization. The process is a simple, effective tool for use in connection with interviewing, placing, and matching volunteers. It provides a profile of existing motivation for work which is:

- Specific
- Anchored in visible behavior
- Comprehensive, and yet
- Practical, in terms of realistically available time for interviewing and placing volunteers.

Contrast this with current approaches to volunteer motivation. These tend to be pitched at a somewhat abstract general level. Let's say we determine that a person is high on achievement motivation. This is a good start, but we still need to know exactly what this person likes most to achieve. Thus, I am high on achievement motivation. But the person who would place me appropriately as a volunteer still needs to know specifically what I most want to and can achieve; for example, excellence in logical analysis, written communication, etc. At least by process of elimination, it is equally important to know what I am not interested in or capable of achieving, e.g., fix-it skills, mathematics, etc. Finally, the placement person must also be able to discriminate clearly between my present capabilities and things I only hope to get good at in the future.

The same points apply to other generalized descriptions of volunteer motivation. Thus, to say a person has a high affiliation drive, does not tell us specifically what kinds of people this person most prefers to associate with, and least prefers.

The window process assumes that much can be made of people accepted as they are. The process is respectful of people in another way, too. Once the relatively straightforward procedures are briefly explained and illustrated, people can largely proceed by themselves. That is, via the window, we can unravel relevant motivation for volunteering without deep-probing or subtly psyching people. We need just ask, them, and trust them to tell us what we need to know about their work-relevant motivations.

But we must ask about the right things in the right way. The key here is concentration on three kinds of motivational markers, defined below, with examples immediately following the explanations.

1) A Glad Gift is something fairly specific a person likes to do, can do pretty well, and which might be of use to other people. This is what a person is pre-motivated to do, has competence plus preference for. Clearly, glad gifts are basic building blocks in designing volunteer jobs.

2) A Quest or Yearn-to-Learn is something fairly specific a person would like to learn, an area in which a person wants to improve. Having such space to breathe and grow built into a volunteer job is a great way to prevent burnout and assure retention of volunteers.

The Quest-of-all-quests, of course, is someone caring enough to help you learn and grow. In catering to quests, the long term payoff for the organization

is freshened motivation and deeper loyalty on the part of the volunteer. The short term tradeoffs are (a) "loss" of some current volunteer contribution (since by definition a volunteer can't fully perform a quest now) and (b) the need for an organization to invest time or effort helping the volunteer learn. This means you don't teach a person to swim by throwing them in the pool and walking away. All too similarly, in response to my quest for learning to speak Spanish, one organization told me: "We'll put you with Spanish-speaking people." So? Am I supposed to learn Spanish by osmosis; or (better) will at least one of the Spanish-speaking people be asked specifically to help me learn.

3) A NO-NO or "Don't Ask" is just what it says. Too many volunteers are too nice to say "no" when asked to do the detestable, too nice to detail their aversions in the first place. And maybe you're too upbeat to ask. But do ask. If you don't, tragic scenes like this ensue. The quiet, seemingly unhappy woman who had been taking notes at the chair's request, later listed as her top aversion - guess what - taking notes at meetings.

About the second or third time a person is saddled with a no-no, absent special explanation or psychological compensation, you've probably lost them. No matter if the gaffe is inadvertent. Stepping on a person's No-No's, unintentionally or not, probably accounts for most of the otherwise mysterious volunteer burnouts we never seem to understand.

The irony is, once we know a volunteer's no-no's it is usually easy to avoid them. Otherwise, you can at least ease the pain by being clear you're asking something rare and special, and have no recourse but to do so.

There's much more on Glad Gifts, Quests and No-No's in THE NEW PEOPLE APPROACH HANDBOOK from Yellowfire Press, 1981. The booklet also covers two other kinds of motivational markers: "once-in-a-whiles" (= occasionally enjoy it) and "do-it-anyhow's" (Like, I'm driving to ____; want to carpool?).

There is also one other major motivational component, which has something to do with passion and bedrock values, basic life goals and dreams that never die. So far as I know, it can't be fully handled in anything like a formula fashion, though it's no less important for that reason. It has much to do with the fact that while writing is a glad gift of mine, I'd never do it for the Ku Klux Klan and I would do it for, say, a Women's Resource Center. Possibly, we could begin to get close to this value base by requesting completion of a sentence such as: "I think the world would be a better place if _____."

Whatever, personal purpose must not be forgotten.

My somewhat abstract grappling with this "fourth factor" was providentially interrupted by a communication from Kitty Gray Carlsen, Program Associate, Family Community Leadership, Cooperative Extension Service, State of Washington. Apparently sensing a similar kind of incompleteness with just the three motivational markers, she ". . . decided to add a section for volunteers to indicate why they chose to become involved in the organization. I have found that this helps volunteers clarify expectations of involvement and helps us to understand subsequent behaviors!" She calls these "Wise Whys" and thereby comes up with a format which has the additional advantage of looking like a window. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: Cooperative Extension Window

WISE WHYS	GLAD GIFTS
QUESTS	TABOOS
VOLUNTEER WINDOW OF WORK	

In the first pane of this window under "Wise Whys", write down why you decided to become a volunteer for this organization.

Under "Glad Gifts" list any talents, skills, interests, hobbies, etc., you do well and that you enjoy doing. If you do it and like it, list it!

The third pane is for listing your "Quests": those things you yearn to learn more about, or skills you would like to develop.

In the fourth pane list what you don't like or what you never want to be asked to do. We call these "Taboos."

