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The Just-a-Volunteer Syndrome

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

February
1999

It happened again this morning. I was responding to a call-back message and the man who answered the phone said my party was not in. When I asked when my colleague would be available, I was told, "hang on." I then heard the individual yell across the room to someone else: "Do you know when X will be in?" Finally, I asked to leave a message. At that point, the man said: "Wait a minute. I need to find a pencil. I'm a volunteer, you see, and don't know all this stuff."

I had to restrain myself from jumping through the phone to throttle both the volunteer and the other staff member who obviously was nearby witnessing the transaction! The only bright spot was that I didn't hear the famous modifier "just"--as in, "I'm *just* a volunteer."

A few hours later I received a review copy of a new book about speakers bureaus. The author had contacted me in advance to ask if I would consider it for our catalog. Explaining Energize's specific focus, I pointed out that we only carry books that include substantial mention of volunteer-related issues. She assured me that, indeed, she had written the book for both paid and unpaid speakers. The book arrived and I scanned it quickly. I eliminated it on the spot because she spent two pages telling readers that, if absolutely necessary because of lack of funds, it might be okay to schedule volunteers as speakers, but one had to beware of inexperience in front of groups and lack of knowledge of the work of the organization! Guess it never occurred to her that once in a while a volunteer might be competent--or even the best person to represent a cause.

These two incidents have a common root: the self-fulfilling prophecy of expecting, and therefore tolerating, mediocre performance by volunteers. This is based on the assumption that, **by definition**, volunteers don't measure up to paid staff. The fact that it's possible to find employees who can't do their jobs well doesn't seem to matter. We are willing to assume skillful performance of paid workers (until proven otherwise), while assuming the opposite of volunteers. It is treated as a delightful bonus if freely-contributed help turns out to be excellent. Ironically, this attitude is shared by too many volunteers themselves.

Probably no one reading this will be surprised by either anecdote above. Actually, what may surprise you is that this still bothers me after 25+ years in the field and, conservatively, over 100 similar incidents. But bother me it does.

Ivan Scheier, of course, dealt with all of this at length and with humor in his book, [Building Staff Volunteer Relations](#). He had the fictional staff member, Frank Miller, say:

...you know the old saying: "You get what you pay for." Among other things, this means reasonable reliability. Remember, volunteering is--well--voluntary. Volunteers can come and go as they please, take vacations whenever. If they happen to feel like doing what you ask them to do, fine. But what if they don't? In short, it's practically their right to be unreliable.

These hot topics are meant to be a forum for airing volunteer-related issues, not necessarily for presenting solutions. The issue of pervasive and continuing low expectations for volunteer competency is, to me, the single biggest obstacle we face. And it is made even more difficult by the fact that we seem to fight this battle on all fronts: our executives, paid colleagues, the media, the public at large, and volunteers themselves.

Here's your chance to vent! (We'll all be like Lucy with "the doctor is in" sign open for business.) Share your experiences coming up against this brick wall. Also, what are your thoughts on:

- how this negative stuff began in the first place;
- why all the examples of glowing volunteer achievement are treated as aberrations (as in, they don't remember what we do right but never forget what we do wrong);
- what we can do about it.

Or, just vent a while. If nothing else, Energize will be sympathetic!

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Posted 3/28/00

Submitted by Joan Smith, Director of Volunteer Services, Catholic Charities of St. Louis, St. Louis, MO USA

How many times have you heard a person referred to as "Just a volunteer" as though "Justa" were a first name? How many times have you heard a financial contributor referred to as "just a donor?" Perhaps we should start calling our volunteers 'time donors!' We need financial donors and time donors, and there is a difference between them: the financial donors can get money to replace what they have given. The time donors have contributed the essence of life, a gift that once given cannot be replaced by more time.

Posted 2/28/00

Submitted by Don Rhodes, Advocate. Otago Southland Employers Assn Inc., Dunedin. New Zealand

In my experience, much of the "malaise" that accompanies volunteers and which may lead on to the syndrome discussed in the topic, comes back to lack of clear guidelines provided by the organisation. Most times, where people are given precise expectations they will respond with enthusiasm and dedication. And both those requirements need be spelt out. In other words, volunteers need the same preparation, training, development support as any other participant in an operation. My organisation runs training seminars for training the trainers, and we place major emphasis on identifying the tasks to be undertaken; and once the tasks are identified then for each task some very very specific performance standards. That way, everyone knows what is expected, they have targets to aim for, and most important of all, they have a target to surpass. I would be interested to hear what others feel about our approach.

Posted 2/10/00

Submitted by Leslie Ekre, AmeriCorps VISTA Member - Tressler Lutheran Services, Maryland, USA

The past 4 years, I have spent anywhere from 10-40 hours per week in volunteer activities (the most rewarding and valuable experiences I have had). It started in college, and I am now entering my second full-time volunteer position with a moderate stipend. For me, I have experienced both not enough recognition and responsibility and too much. So, I can see both sides of the issue. I agree that if given real responsibility and trust in a position, a volunteer will tend not to have the "I'm just a volunteer attitude". On the other hand, there is a balance that needs to be made. A volunteer should NOT be given as much responsibility as, say a salaried staff member. There has got to be a limit to what is expected. For example, right now my supervisor is out of the office and expects to be for quite a while, because of a health problem. So, myself and the other volunteer are taking on everything while she is gone. She knows we are capable and competent, which feels good. However, I am not sure we should be expected to do both her work load and ours (and she hasn't asked us to). After all, we are only volunteers.

Posted 2/99

Submitted by Christina, Supervisor/Coordinator Grant Medical Center, Ohio, United States

I supervise volunteers and have noticed that when the number of volunteers dropped, so did the expectations for quality volunteers. Basically, you're shorthanded and pressed to get the same amount of work done with fewer volunteers. So what happens is, organizations are tolerating more absences, unreliability, etc. because they think they can't do without the volunteer. I would rather go without than have a volunteer that is not dependable or unable to do the job. It takes change in the way we perceive volunteers. If staff show them that there are no consequences for their actions or that they can do whatever they want while volunteering, then that is how the volunteer is going to act.

In the past I had to deal with a director that wanted to control everything I did with the volunteers and they picked up on that and took advantage. If your director is willing to take anybody that walks through the door then there is no control over quality of the volunteers. This placed my physical well being in jeopardy more than once. Our organization now has a new director, who screens volunteers and focuses on what the potential volunteer is interested in, time allotment, appearance (cleanliness,

etc.) attitude, and requires personal and professional references. It is very close to being like an actual job interview. This shows the potential volunteer that we are proud of our program and want to keep it that way. There are still the occasional problems, but we do try to foresee these type of difficulties and are more aware of them.

Submitted by Marilyn Miller, 501 (c) (3) Monthly Letter

While there may be some volunteers who suffer from the "I am just a volunteer syndrome" and many nonprofit administrators who wittingly or unwittingly encourage this attitude, there are other volunteers who are taking a leadership role in effecting change in their respective communities. I have enclosed my February editorial entitled, "[Are the All-Volunteer Groups Taking Over?](#)".

Submitted by Millie Schumacher, Volunteer Program Manager, National Science Center's Fort Discovery, Augusta, Georgia

Having been both an active volunteer for many years and a professional volunteer manager, I have seen the "just a volunteer attitude" from both sides. Most common, I think, is the perception by paid staff that volunteers can not be counted on. I have seen this demonstrated in my organization where our 8-12 daily volunteers are not incorporated into the overall daily staffing plan.

Volunteers are considered the "gravy" and not part of the "meat" of our staff. Until management, from the highest level, regards an organization's volunteers as indispensable, the volunteers won't see themselves as such either, which will undermine their commitment. This is especially apparent in volunteer jobs that require weekly attendance. In response to Tanya Roberts' comment about changing volunteer's name tags to read "volunteer," I don't know if in her situation the new tags eliminated the individual's name. However, I implemented a change in our volunteers' name tags to include the label "volunteer" in addition to the volunteer's first name. I think this was a positive move for us for both volunteer recognition and recruitment purposes. In our organization, volunteers interact almost exclusively with the public. Wearing the label "volunteer" has resulted in lots of positive feedback from our customers directly to the volunteers and also a wealth of newly recruited volunteers as a fellow volunteer is more easily approached for information on the volunteer program. The change has worked for us!

Submitted by Samantha Sied, Mediation Service Coordinator, Community Outreach, Inc., Oregon

Like many of you, I also don't like to hear people say "just a volunteer". I have been fortunate to work with several nonprofit organizations that value volunteers--both as a volunteer and as a paid staff member. I coordinate a mediation program that uses a team of 23 dedicated volunteers to deliver services to our clients. Our volunteers are not "just volunteers". We expect professional quality work from them--and that is exactly what we get. Each volunteer completed a 35 hour training, an apprenticeship and continuing education activities. Here is an idea that may interest some of you. Every month our volunteers discuss an article that relates to our services and mission. Each month a different volunteer selects the article and leads the discussion. This has turned out to be a fun way to increase our volunteers' knowledge base and also a way for everyone to become better acquainted. I

think team building activities such as monthly discussions are one more way to combat "just a volunteer" syndrome.

Submitted by Jackie Norris, Executive Director, Metro Volunteers!,

I worked for many years at the American Red Cross. One day, tired of hearing volunteers say "I'm just a volunteer", one of our staff members put a sign on the front door: "Just a volunteer" not spoken here! That wasn't all she did to try to change volunteer and staff attitudes, but I thought it was a great message to deliver. The "just a volunteer" attitude unfortunately has found it's way into paid staff attitudes in the form of "I'm just a volunteer coordinator"....and that, I believe, is part of the problem we have wrestled with for years in terms of our own self esteem and that of our profession. Doing away with "Just a Volunteer" would have many, many positive results.

Submitted by Jackie Norris, Executive Director, Metro Volunteers!, Denver, CO/USA

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Submitted by Thom D. Freyer, Chief Operating Officer, HFMA, Illinois, USA

No one is "just" anything. I am not "just staff" (a label I particularly find offensive) and our volunteers are not "just volunteers". We are, simultaneously, all of the various roles and characters that we are in our lives. At some times we are volunteers - some times not. One issue seems to be responsibility and accountability. Can we hold a volunteer accountable - will they be responsible? Of course, we can and they will - a well selected, prepared and trained volunteer (or a well selected, prepared and trained staffer) can be relied upon. If they prove otherwise, they must be dealt with appropriately (feedback, etc.) - just like staff. Our responsibilities to each other have little to do with whether one of us (or both of us) are paid (for the work we do in this slice of our lives).

Submitted by Kathryn Oddis, Director, Volunteer Services, Cambridge, MD USA

Volunteers are informed during orientation to discuss concerns, observations, suggestions and/or criticisms with the Director of Volunteer Services & involved department heads. This is reiterated numerous times during annual training seminars. In 1996 we began an annual survey of all individual/organization volunteers to ascertain candid opinions on how we serve them. The volunteer program at this hospital began in 1950 so this survey was long overdue. Responses were very favorable. One suggestion from a volunteer was to offer increased training/department orientations for volunteers. In response to this suggestion, we coordinate with staff development dept to offer annual training on issues such as boundary awareness, cultural diversity, age sensitivity, etc. which have been identified by JACHO as training which needs to be offered not only to staff but volunteers. Additionally we provide an update by various depts on their function as well as update on priority

issues identified by the hospital administration. Current administration 100% supports the vol program which is so refreshing and creates a wonderful environment for the services offered by our volunteers.

Submitted by Ron van Walsem, Student Erasmus University Rotterdam, Holland

Well I am a student of business administration in Holland, I am specialising in the field of volunteer management. Lately I spent considerable time in researching volunteer management in sports. There is lately a lot of fuss about adding quality to the organizations, which is instantly translated into hiring paid staff. Professional help. I have a little trouble translating, but here the term professionalization is used. And somehow somewhere this term became synonymous to hiring paid staff. No mentioning about volunteers who may be equally or sometimes more qualified than paid staff. This notion seems to be settled deeply into the minds of the leaders (paid as well as volunteer) of the national sport organizations. A research of the umbrella(?) organization of sports in Holland at first defined professionalization as hiring paid staff, only after a lot of commotion this definition was dropped and a broader view was taken. Every time I see or hear about this notion I wonder what to do about such short sightedness, on the other hand it seems to be self perpetuating since the organizations grow bigger and take on more paid staff, who keep the notion living and so more paid staff get hired by the organization.

Submitted by Pamela D, Service Manager/ Sturdy Oak Service Unit GSUSA, Ohio

In my volunteer experience, I have never come across the "just a volunteer" syndrome. Being very selective in the groups I volunteer for has something to do with it, I'm sure. When I volunteered to help with the Flag Corp for the Pee Wee football team, I ran across literally the worst volunteer management I have ever seen. The football organization was trying to cover their backsides, the cheerleading organization was trying to cover theirs and the company we dealt with for uniforms was hustling and working both sides. The only people who got burned were the girls involved in the program and their parents. We were told we could not tell kids in the program not to throw temper tantrums, to be on time, to dress for the weather, or anything like that because they were "just volunteers". The football players, though, did not get paid and they were expected to be on time (they had to run a lap for every minute they were late), dress for the weather (or that's just too bad), and act with a certain amount of decorum. I think the "just a volunteer" syndrome may start as children were parents make excuses for the kids in their volunteer efforts, be they football, scouts or helping a neighbor. If you are taught you are not expected to follow through with or without pay, how would you know? My family was lucky enough to have a mother who made us follow through on anything we started. We did not have to do it again, but we had to give it our all while we were involved. I hope I am teaching my children the same kind of perseverance. I don't want them to be "just a volunteer".

Submitted by Sarah H. Elliston, Professional Development Associate, Cincinnati, OH

I have a mixed feeling when I read your article and the comments from your readers. I agree 100% with the sinking feeling we get when we hear "just a volunteer" - I have felt that too. And I like the new definition of "you get what you pay for" in terms of the training time and energy for quality

supervision or coaching or whatever by paid staff. But I am uncomfortable with the fighting stance that seems to result from our wanting to change people's minds.

I don't think minds get changed because of force. Force builds resistance. I guess the venting section has me thinking of ways to encourage changing attitudes by accepting the ones we don't like. Sound weird? I believe that everything about our work is about relationships and relationships start with acceptance. Each single relationship that demonstrates the opposite of 'just' a volunteer, is a building block to the major shift we're all looking for. To the woman whose volunteers have done too well for too long with too little funding, my response is to build relationships with the funders, real relationships. - Probably this is too long - hope it makes sense - it seems to be my theme song of late.

Submitted by Tanya Roberts, RCMP Victim Services, BC

I spent several years with victim services where they went to great lengths to instill in us that we were not "JUST" volunteers... only to have the Coordinator's supervisor issue name tags that read in huge letters "VOLUNTEER" as opposed to the name tags for staff members. It's the little things that prove whether or not the agency believes its workers are JUST volunteers - or actual caseworkers, etc.

Submitted by Lisa Larson, EMS Captain, Gaithersburg-Washington Grove Volunteer Fire Department, Maryland, USA

As a volunteer Paramedic for the past 6+ years, I have heard all of the "complaints" and arguments against volunteers. "They never stay," "they aren't as well trained," "They don't care," etc, etc. It is rare to hear "thanks for spending all of your spare time doing something for free," or "you do just as good of a job as the paid people." It is disheartening sometimes, and, unfortunately, some of the criticism against some of the volunteers is true.

So the question is, how do we change the "paid" person's opinion? Certifications? No, I am certified, and went through the same training and recertification (every 2 years) as the "Paid" personnel. A Union? Maybe, but I have had nothing but bad experiences with the "paid" union, and would not be real supportive of this measure. Better interaction with the "paid" people? Now you are getting warm. This would help, I am certain. However, I do not believe there is any "fix" for this problem. Some of the "paid" personnel will always believe that they can do the job better/faster/stronger than the volunteers. Some think that the volunteers should go away forever (what a horrible concept). Some believe that we are desperately needed, and thank us for coming in and helping. Is there a solution? Is one needed? Can we change other people's way of thinking? I think that we just need to keep "holding on" and plugging away as Volunteers, and, if we do our best job, then we shouldn't worry about the others. Let them think what they will. We know the truth.

Submitted by Bonita Carter-Cox, Referral Services Coordinator, Volunteer Exchange of SCC, CA/USA

I think volunteers who are not sufficiently trained or are not particularly fond of what they are doing at the moment, fall back on that phrase to cover any inadequacies they might feel. I have almost

eliminated the phrase "...just a volunteer ..." from our staff of Referral Specialists here at Volunteer Exchange of Santa Clara County. When I hear the phrase, I quickly remind the person that they are key to our organization's success and are the first point of contact for other people pursuing volunteer opportunities or general information. Volunteers are trained in procedures and have resources at their fingertips. A phrase that is allowable for new volunteers is "I'm new, so please be patient with me."

If you allow volunteers in your organization use the word "just" as a qualifier to what they do, you are, in essence, allowing them to make a negative statement about not only themselves, but also about the volunteer services department in general. It is my mission to instill a sense of pride in our volunteers - a positive attitude which sets an example for other volunteers and staff. This positive attitude will translate into excellent customer service which translates into "indispensable".

Submitted by Iona B. McDonald, DVS Scottsdale Healthcare, AZ, USA

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Submitted by Anne-marie Greathead, Community Events Co-ordinator, Student Community Involvement Program, Sydney, NSW, Australia

This is not a whine it's a WOW! I work with a program which has 60 volunteer speakers and one part time paid staff member. Last year these volunteer speakers spoke to 3900 students in High Schools. The entire program is reliant on volunteers and I very rarely experience the attitude of "I'm just a volunteer" with the people I work with. The volunteers I work with are reliable, take great pride in their work and are respected by teachers in schools.

In response to the question "What can we do about it?," I have a couple of suggestions which might seem obvious but I'll offer them anyway: Ensure clear information is given to prospective volunteers about the expectations of their involvement e.g. ask them to give at least 48 hours notice if they cannot attend, give written information re: goals of the program and the importance of their role, involve volunteers in policy development which is relevant to them, provide regular training and recognition events, give opportunities for skills development through feedback.

Those of us who have had positive experiences of volunteering and volunteers should take every opportunity to challenge the view of volunteers as being unreliable. Recently, prior to an event where I was a volunteer, the volunteer co-ordinator said she "did not know how many other volunteers would show up because you know what volunteers are like." Of course I couldn't resist letting her

know that the volunteers I work with are wonderfully reliable. Is it a Chinese proverb that says even the largest mountain can be conquered by small steps?

Submitted by Brian H. Myers, AIDS CARE Coordinator Volunteers and Community Outreach, Chicago, IL 60657

I just read your article on a volunteer not doing his job correctly, and a STAFF person standing right there. THAT is stupid and uncalled for. It takes all staff people to help train educate and work with the volunteers. Not only the volunteer management staff.

I work in an agency that it is everyone's business to work train and correct volunteers politely on the spot. We also make volunteers go through two orientation on reception before even being one themselves. It was stupid on the volunteer management staff's part not to make sure their people are trained. It is impossible for the volunteer management staff to be everywhere the volunteers are, and at times we have meetings out of the office, or are busy in other areas. It is a sure way to get me going when I hear "There your volunteers". The staff person who didn't help the volunteer should be put into the position of the volunteer. If they are not trained and spent time with, how on earth are they supposed to know what is needed? There is no excuse for people not knowing what's up even if they are new.

Submitted by Hector Barrera, Director, Volunteer & Guest Services, Texas/USA

The "Just a Volunteer" piece was enough to shake me into doing all that's possible to continue pounding away at the concept of "getting what you pay for," which was also mentioned in the article. Only payment does not always come in the form of salaries. For volunteer efforts, very often our investment is in the time and training we spend with volunteers to make certain that they have the proper tools, training, and yes, self-worth, before sending them out into battle.

Too often, however, in the real world, the volunteer merely becomes an office temp--and it is not unrealistic for a temp to say "I'm sorry, I'm just a temporary here in the office..." because taking a long time to train really may not be a good use of a manager's time. So there is a difference between "permanently assigned" volunteers and "temporary" volunteers--let's be careful about painting everyone with the same broad stroke. And, oh yes....is it really necessary to encourage volunteer managers to WHINE?? This is a simple point, but the difference between whine and vent is a large one. Somehow, this smacks right in the face of all we do to maintain our professionalism on a daily basis. Thanks for the forum!

{Comment from Susan: *You're right, "vent" sounds much better. I've replaced "whine" with "vent"!}*

Submitted by Sarah Oliver, Asst. Regional Director, Women in Community Service, Washington, USA

While I've certainly experienced the "just a volunteer" attitude from both volunteers and staff people over the years, here at WICS we seem to do an excellent job of empowering volunteers as true members of the WICS family. They know that they are the core of our operations, and don't take the

responsibility lightly. For us, a major problem seems to be that we have done too much too well for too little money over the years...now it's getting harder for us to get sufficient funding for the volunteer management activities that are necessary to run a quality volunteer program. I'm currently looking for statistical and/or published information that will back our requests for staff and resources to recruit, orient, train, support and recognize our volunteers. Any suggestions?

Submitted by Steve Barsky, President, Harrison Promotions, Inc, Pennsylvania, USA in response to Sarah Oliver: Treat volunteers as staff members for this exercise. Figure their jobs and what appropriate staff members would earn doing the same jobs. Make sure to include a number for benefits that the putative staffers would earn. Total the numbers and make your case! "Just a Volunteer:" Funny, I was talking with a Colorado Springs customer about this very topic last week before I checked out the hot topic. But I've been thinking about this since I exhibited at an ICVA in the early 90s--it's in my trade show notes! Training is the key. The reason temps get away with "I'm just a temp" is because 1) they aren't trained, 2) it's easier to fake lack of knowledge than to figure out a solution to a problem, and 3) because they aren't supervised. As usual, failures of employees (or quasi-employees, like volunteers) are failures of management: training and supervision. Sure, morale enters into it, but treating volunteers as valued employees, with status appropriate to their jobs and positions (internal and external to the organization), will pay off. "Just a gigolo..."

Submitted by Rick Devich, Director, Community Development, VOA/Senior Resources, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Susan, 'tis an accurate finger upon the pulse of those in similar endeavor. Whacky and not so whacky ideas: 1) Certify volunteers (put them through a training/orientation process which will result in a competence statement) and let agencies bid on them, with the volunteer choosing the lucky suitor 2) Organize a Volunteer Union. Probably ineffective re: higher wages but quite effective in changing working conditions through walk-outs. 3) Develop strategies/provide opportunities for volunteers to connect with other volunteers working on the same issues. Articulate volunteer needs/resources to achieve results and again, let agencies bid. 4) More broadly, continue to connect volunteerism, service learning, civic/citizen participation, community service, and all the other euphemisms that are basically the same to establish political/influence base to change unproductive attitudes regarding how Americans contribute to America (i.e. volunteerism).

Comments from Readers

*Submitted on October 12th, 2016
Marsha Gillis, Georgetown, Guyana*

I've been volunteering for 5 years now, but my issue is persons or rather paid staff within the organization referring to us as "just-a-volunteer". How do we deal with the, we're expected to do the job even and square and sometimes better than the paid staff. I'm not JUST A VOLUNTEER! That statement really upsets me.

Submitted on October 13th, 2016

Susan J Ellis, Energize, Inc., Philadelphia, PA, United States

Dear Marsha --

Sorry that you have experienced this problem -- which certainly is offensive but not unusual. Perhaps you could share this Hot Topic with the staff and start a conversation about it? Or show them this site in general with all the suggestions for how to work with volunteers? Is there anyone at your site "in charge" of volunteer involvement and have you discussed your problem with him or her?

Please know that your volunteer work is important no matter what uneducated people may say!

Best,

Susan

Submitted on May 3rd, 2017

Jenevive Salinas, 1984, San Antonio, United States

When you or I, anyone in authority actually begin to hold ourselves to a higher standard, meaning we set the tone, mood, standard for how we perceive, speak of and treat volunteers, employees, higher authority and customers or guests then and only then can a positive change of morale begin in any organization. It begins at the head. When you flood your organization with appreciation, encouragement and recognition from the very top to the very bottom, in front as well as behind their backs it's very difficult to speak ill, discourage or tear down someone knowing how highly they're acts are appreciated. And sets the tone for others to chase after similar recognition and notoriety.

When the highest person in ranks loves and respects ALL components of an organization, everyone performs at their highest ability. :-)

Submitted on December 9th, 2019

Anonymous, Milan Illinois, Usa

I have been volunteering at a mission-type organization for 2 months now. The Receptionist job is more complicated than I thought it would be. My trainer/supervisor doesn't appear to appreciate my efforts! I'm feeling unappreciated and unwelcome. Sad about this since I have supported prolife causes all my life. I feel like this lady treats me as if I'm a burden and she even batted my hand away from the mouse on the computer! This feels like a job I dread going

to and I'm not paid! I just thought I'd answer the phone and greet people not make appointments, fax reports, ask mini histories, and clean and file as well. I have difficulty with the client's accents over the phone. I'm thinking of walking out the next time Jamie (not real name) is short with me!

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