

[News and Hot Topics](#) » What Did You and Volunteers Do Well this Year?

What Did You and Volunteers Do Well this Year?

By [Susan J. Ellis](#)

December

2014

Seemingly at the speed of light, 2014 is rapidly coming to an end. Before you consider making any resolutions for the new year, use December as an opportunity to reflect on the past 12 months. Undoubtedly there were high and low points, unexpected happenings, changes beyond your control, and even a few things that went exactly as planned!

Below are some probing questions as a starting point for your walk down memory lane. I have tried to frame them to highlight all the things that went *right* this year! Identify what you accomplished and let yourself feel good about it! (And, if you do make New Year's resolutions, you'll get some new ideas for 2015 goals.)

If my questions do not seem to match your situation, or if you find yourself answering "no" more than "yes," articulate better questions that matter to *you*. If you are overwhelmed by the list, answer this big question for each of the three headings below:

What did I/we do in 2014 about which I am most proud?

As a Leader of Volunteers

- Did I have a strategic plan for the year? Was it something I followed and did it guide me to meet important goals?
- What are three accomplishments of which I am most proud this year?
- What are three crises or major obstacles that I handled well this year?
- Did I consistently seek volunteers to partner with me in my own work (modeling that I believe the right volunteer can be amazingly helpful)?
- Have I intentionally educated paid staff colleagues about teamwork with volunteers throughout the year at "teachable moments"?



- What new roles for volunteers did we introduce this year? Which no-longer-useful ones did we retire?
- Did I try new recruitment sources and techniques that gained new volunteers who diversified and expanded our talent pool?
- Have I dealt with volunteer performance issues honestly, maintaining high standards even if the conversations with faltering volunteers were a bit uncomfortable?
- Did I find opportunities to shine a spotlight on especially successful volunteer activities – as they occurred and not just at the volunteer recognition event?
- Did I obtain funding or permission to buy/do something I needed to be more effective in volunteer management? If I was initially turned down, did I try again with additional case points?
- Did I succeed in coordinating outreach efforts with the fundraising/development office and staff responsible for public relations, marketing, and publications?
- How often did I laugh each day? Make others laugh?

Our Volunteers

- Did we respond to every inquiry about volunteering within 48 hours? Was our application and screening process efficient and did the best applicants become volunteers?
- Were new volunteers welcomed into our organization consistently, with warmth and useful information?
- Have we encouraged volunteers to make suggestions about how they might do their assigned roles better and to take initiative in response to needs they see?
- Did we periodically “check in” with long-time volunteers to make sure they remain enthusiastic and/or to offer them a change in assignment to keep fresh?
- Can each volunteer identify something s/he did this year that made a difference to our organization, a client, a staff member, or our mission?
- Did we intentionally ask volunteers to be goodwill ambassadors in the community for us in any way this year?
- Did senior managers have any highly skilled volunteers directly assigned to help them in their own work?
- Were volunteers acknowledged in our organization’s annual report in a way that showed their involvement in many services? As “time donors” with value just as “money donors”?
- What unexpected thank-you’s did volunteers receive, from whom, and for what?

My Professional Development

- Did I schedule time each month solely to learn something new (read a volunteer management book, attend a training session, study useful Web sites)?
- Was I active in a professional network of other volunteer resources managers, if not locally then at least online?
- Have I kept up with some of the new technology that offers great tools for my work at no cost?

- Did I volunteer myself to participate on any management or planning team this year, both to advance my skills and to demonstrate the integration of volunteer engagement with other departments and units in our organization?
- Did I discuss potential career opportunities with my supervisor? With outside colleagues?
- Do I still love this work?

What other questions matter to you? What good things are you celebrating as 2014 ends?

Happy holidays, one and all!

Related Topics: [Evaluation](#) | [Program Assessment](#) | [Recognition](#) | [Volunteer Resources Manager, Role of](#)

Comments from Readers

Submitted on December 3rd, 2014

Sheryl Luebke, Volunteer Resources Supervisor, JFS, Richmond, VA

You're shaking me up, Susan! Thank you!!!

Submitted on December 8th, 2014

Susan Lebovitz, Volunteer Manager, SAFEHOME, Inc, Overland Park, KS, USA

Over the past 9 months I've noticed a decrease in numbers of volunteers responding to a request for an episodic project, i.e., painting, yard work, helping at an event. Is email (previously effective) an outdated way to communicate? My challenge is that I can't just have any "body" in our facility. There has to be some vetting.

Submitted on December 11th, 2014

Gerald Pannozzo, consultant and workshop facilitator, CVA, NY, NY, United States

Looks like we are on the right track. This Hot Topic re-enforces what NYAVA covers during the [Principles & Practices of Volunteer Program Management course](#) that I co-facilitate with Gloria Deucher. For example, here is some of what we do in each of your three categories:

Under "Leader of Volunteers," we:

- Refer to participants as the "internal experts" for their organizations and stress the importance of their professional development.
- Address difficult conversations such as poor performance issues and the importance of standards.

- Discuss day-to-day recognition in addition to an annual event, including “promotions” for volunteers.
- Model behavior by including opportunities for laughter!

Under “Our Volunteers,” we:

- Develop appropriate interview questions leading to the successful match.
- Address orientation and training for volunteers as well as educating paid staff.
- Discuss feedback from volunteers be it anecdotal, surveys, focus groups, etc.

For “Professional Development,” it is exciting to see colleagues registering for the course and supervisors supporting them. For some it is their first introduction to a professional association. Some become involved with [NYAVA](#) and eventually serve on the board of directors.

So, I’m keeping your list – checking it once for 2014 and checking it twice come 2015!

PRIVACY STATEMENT

Energize, a program of Adisa <https://adisagroup.com/>

Follow us   

Copyright © 1997-2025