

How to Match

Volunteer Motivation

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WHAT MAKES A VOLUNTEER'S job satisfying? Volunteers want to feel like they belong to something worthwhile and need ways to express their own creativity. Volunteers want to help themselves by satisfying their own needs while helping others. Whether a volunteer drops out or continues to volunteer may depend on a number of factors: Does the job give satisfaction? Is it a "good" work situation? Are others being helped? Why does one volunteer stay and function happily while another drops out?

Each person who continues to volunteer does so because of certain motives. People are unique; what may motivate one person to continue as a volunteer may be exactly what causes another to discontinue! The key is being able to match a volunteer's motives with the kind of job that will satisfy those motives. How can this match be made? Successful matching depends upon analyzing volunteers and volunteer jobs in terms of motivation. Assumptions that can be made at the beginning of this matching process are:

- Volunteers wish to do a good job.
- Volunteers have skills to handle all kinds of jobs.
- Each volunteer has specific reasons (conscious and/or unconscious) for vol-

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unteering for a particular job.

- Basic human motives differ greatly in strength; each person has some of each motive and the strength of each motive varies from time to time.
- The situation within which the person is working may cause motives to be stronger or weaker.
- Volunteer situations (jobs or tasks) place motivational demands on those who volunteer.

With these assumptions in mind, a volunteer administrator should analyze a volunteer's motives at the beginning of the matching process. Three basic motives—affiliation, achievement and power—affect work-related behaviors. Understanding these basic motives and how each affects a person's ability to perform a job is the clue to successful job placement.

The need for *achievement* is defined as the need to excel in a competitive situation or as compared to internalized standards. This achievement-motivated volunteer is concerned with attaining success in a situation requiring improved performance and will stick to a task until it is completed. This person works well alone, sets moderate goals and takes carefully calculated risks. Feedback and tangible rewards are especially important to the achiever. A sense of teamwork satisfies this person.

The need for *affiliation* is defined as the need for warm, friendly relationships. This volunteer is concerned with being liked by others, enjoys working with groups, and is sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. The affiliation-motivated person likes to participate in

friendly situations and may enjoy having a personal relationship with his/her supervisor. A sense of group unity satisfies this volunteer.

The need for *power* is defined as the need to have power or control over others. This volunteer has strong feelings about status and prestige, is often talkative and may be viewed by others as forceful or argumentative. The power-oriented person works well either alone or with a group and is most concerned with having impact on or influence over others. A position of leadership is especially important to this person. Situations requiring routine, repetitive work and a more straight-line organization fill this volunteer's need for power. A structured work climate and a formal line of authority are satisfying to this individual.

When interviewing a prospective volunteer, specific questions may be asked to pinpoint the motivating force of the individual. These questions may be asked verbally or the volunteer may be asked to respond to written statements. The volunteer administrator should determine the easiest, most time-efficient method to get the information.

"Yes" responses to these questions would indicate a strong achievement motive:

- Can you pace yourself well to meet a goal?
- Are you one who likes to solve problems on your own?
- Do you work best alone rather than with a group?
- Do you prefer to create your own methods/plans of action rather than follow someone else's guide?

with

Job Demands

The italicized responses to the following questions would help identify a strong affiliation motive:

- Do you prefer to work on *group projects* or on individual projects?
- With whom do you work best? *People you know well?* Those you have just met?
- Which is most important to you? *How people feel?* Whether the job is accomplished?
- Are personal relationships on the job important to you? (*Yes, no*).

Questions that would affirm a power motivation are:

- Do you handle conflict in a democratic or an *authoritarian* manner?
- Do you *enjoy an argument* or maintain peace at any cost?
- If you see a situation getting out of hand, would you *take charge* or allow others to assume leadership?
- Do you prefer to *run a meeting* or let someone else do so?

Observation of behavior also gives valuable clues as to what motivates a volunteer. The interview and/or orientation period is a good time to observe a new volunteer's behavior. The *achiever* often will show signs of strong organizational ability, a willingness to complete a job without further supervision and a desire for feedback on job performance. The *affiliator* will exhibit an open, friendly manner, deep concern for people as individuals and a need to work within a group. A real need to have personal relationships with other workers and the supervisor also characterizes this volunteer. The *power-motivated individual* will lean toward structures that are quite organized, have a rather carefully

spelled out organizational power structure and a high regard for status and prestige within the organization. This person is likely to be assertive (if not aggressive) in behavior and will try to gain power through leadership and/or persuasive tactics.

The other consideration in successfully matching volunteers is the kind of job in which the volunteer might be placed.

Putting volunteer jobs or tasks into categories can be helpful in analyzing volunteer motivational demands. For example, jobs that would satisfy the achievement-motivated volunteer are likely to

- allow a volunteer some freedom to set work methods and pace;
- allow the volunteer to enlist the aid of others;
- provide feedback and reward for performance; and
- challenge the volunteer's skills.

Such jobs may be found in the following categories: connector/linker, cause volunteer-change agent, fundraiser and researcher.

Characteristics of jobs that would meet the needs of an affiliator are ones that

- require interaction with co-workers;
- provide proximity to co-workers;
- depend on the cooperation of co-workers; and
- allow for personal interaction with a stable group membership.

The affiliation motive is likely to be met by several different categories of volunteer jobs: aide/assistant-direct helper, ancillary helper, connector/linker and fundraiser.

Job descriptions that identify the following features would appeal to the power-motivated volunteer:

- allow the volunteer to direct co-workers;
- provide opportunities to influence others through persuasion; and
- allow the volunteer control of policy and procedures.

Jobs that will meet the needs of a power-motivated volunteer are often encountered in these categories: decision-maker, cause volunteer-advocate, change agent and monitor.

For maximum volunteer motivation, the motivation demands of any volunteer job need to match the basic motives of the volunteer. When the number of jobs and the number of volunteers are sufficient, initial job placement or task assignment can reflect this matching. When numbers are not sufficient, or if volunteer personnel already have been placed and shifting is not practical, then the job description might well be altered to better match the motives of the volunteer.

Every individual can serve in an important role on your volunteer team. Take a look at the jobs that need to be done, the characteristics of the worker who can best do the job and make as near a perfect match as you can. This will save time, energy and valuable resources that are used each time you train a volunteer. If your match is a good one, you will have a satisfied, capable worker to do your job. If not, you may lose a valuable resource, as well as your time investment, and have to start the placement process over with a new volunteer.