

**VOLUNTEERING QUEENSLAND
MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS NETWORK MEETING
FRIDAY 29 APRIL 2005
TOPIC: "Volunteer Recognition and Retention"**

NOTES FROM 'RECOGNITION & RETENTION' WORKSHOP FACILITATED BY VQ'S MARK CREYTON

PRACTICAL RECRUITING STRATEGIES THAT WORK FOR NETWORK MEMBERS:

- ? Retention strategies
- ? Changing nature of volunteer engagement
 - one event
 - time limits
 - project focus

Do you have a strategy for attracting and keeping volunteers?

Fiona (Roma Street Parklands) – given information and expectations, give big overview at the start, know the rules from the beginning – reduces loss, loss of communication skills and guiding, information is given, not much scope for short-term people - but needs a short-term orientation program

John (Qld Museums) – tiered system within training so they can see potential, some have been there for 15 years, some are very demanding and critical and they need options - let them take time off from main volunteer role to participate in special program eg excavating dinosaur bones.

- Focus on the volunteers he has and ways to enhance their role.
- Yearly feedback and evaluation from volunteer 'explainers' - he sees some people will now leave if he can't offer new challenges as they've achieved everything they want - review every 2 years?

Janet (Endeavour Foundation)

- has a lot of long term volunteers (been there ages) included in visioning of the organisation
- has a variety of recognitions eg certificates, gifts, (handcrafts) on Endeavour goods with logo eg coasters
- Easter eggs in hamper to take back to work (corporate volunteers)
- Not everyone likes a certificate, you need a choice
- Must say "Thank you" at the end of the day

Refugee Group

- 10 long term volunteers and 30 casual
- Volunteers meeting once a month (morning tea or lunch given):
 - Team building
 - Cultural day
 - Guest speaker
 - Talk through issues
- Free T-shirts for volunteers with organisational logo (sense of belonging)
- International Volunteers Day is celebrated (no certificates as no one wants) small gifts if possible
- Be accessible for confidential discussions
- Has anyone got ideas for training?

John (Mental Health Support group)

- Making the volunteer feel appreciated - go out and meet them

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- Debrief meeting once per month.
- Occasional outing

Community Organisation:

- Volunteers have dropped off because they feel isolated and not supported (due to nature of work)
- Revamped team meeting
- Coordinator rings every 2 weeks to let them know they're valued - any issues
- Every second team meeting has training – grief, loss etc.
- Involvement with planning, programs, fundraising etc.
- Respect (thanks on regular basis)
- Can ring volunteer manager – her mobile number is available

Janet (Logan City Council Libraries)

- Recognise December 5 every year - give a gift (last year they all got a Lion's Christmas cake) - buffet style breakfast for all Logan volunteers (upmarket!)
- They get interviewed for suitability, informed on all risk management issues
- Janet spending more and more time each year on volunteer management – last year her Library volunteers got First Aid Certificates.
- Training – information on dementia etc – seniors issues
- Be available
- Flexibility of time commitment.

Jade (HANDS)

- Regular warm fuzzies and gratitude
- Treat volunteers as staff – induction, job descriptions, respect

Karen (Starlight Children's Foundation)

- Return enquiries within 24 hrs
- Often people are recruited because Starlight is first organisation to get back to them
- Social club starting for their volunteers as many are approximately 33 years of age
- Agreement to make a (light-hearted) commitment to attend
- We book 3 shifts ahead - I also commit to these shifts

Special school

- Very honest about what it involves – scares off
- Blue card process:
 - Get a phone call
 - Get told what events are happening
 - Debrief
- Retention – if they leave they are normally doing relief somewhere else - they are well trained

Robin (Australian Red Cross – Retail)

- Champions of Change celebrated in June (retail has changed so much)
- Giving people responsibility – keeps people longer
- Training! Shops are more attractive now – someone does window-dressing, jewellery displaying (range of skills)

Theo (World Vision Australia Brisbane)

- Their people are program based (ask them what they want)

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- Field of Hope – testimonials given by people who've been helped to tell the volunteers.
- Teleconference with Presidents of the Clubs

Warwick (Royal Brisbane Hospital)

- Open door of the volunteer manager
- Be part of the volunteer's family and they are part of his
- We as the managers of the Service are the one constant – if the volunteers can tell you they are having problems and not valuing the volunteers and being available, they'll leave – all the 'perks' in the world won't help

Sue (Balmoral Uniting Community Care)

- Mingle regularly with the clients and volunteers
- Coffee Club regularly (every 5th Thursday) for 1 and ½ hours of cakes and coffee – informal, share happy events and raise complaints.
- News letters

Margaret (National Heart Foundation)

- All of the above
- The staff of Heart Foundation try to mentor, create family feeling
- Ownership of your job, feeling inept with whatever you do
- Recognise the needs of each one individual

Sue (Ipswich Care)

- Value their opinions - involve in decision making
- Morning tea every morning for all volunteers, morning tea once a month for larger group
- Both formal & informal methods are used
- Ensure they have ownership & responsibility
- Always return calls, have open door.

Community Centre

- Be available
- Be open to suggestions
- Ask them how they will implement

Sandra (Greening Australia)

- Certificates: watch that you don't leave someone out - others don't like being singled out too
- Looking at what ideas can we suggest for people who work occasionally, others who work constantly
- Don't miss the occasion – the bits you shouldn't miss, the important bits/events.
- Watch the Volunteer of Year awards - how do you assess who's given the most? (Mark – the volunteer who's the most public gets it) - same type of person tends to get it – volunteers nominate other volunteers – some get the services recipients to vote – most popular ones get it - what do you rate the criteria on eg look at special contributions someone has made - be careful about using an award recipient for media – you could choose the one who gives the best image (people sometimes leave then!)
- Starlight gives an Internet Award - how on earth do you judge
- Humorous awards eg Blue Tongue Awards – OK for smaller programs (make sure that it is funny to all, some people might not find it so funny)
- food, lunches

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- evaluated twice a year
- outings eg. Canoe trips
- rostering – swap rosters etc
- newsletter calendar of events
- birthday cards, e-cards
- certificates
- free 24 hour counselling line for volunteers
- anyone who wants to do local media is invited if they want to do it

Volunteering Queensland

- Volunteer Expo
- Sausage sizzle
- morning teas, lunch
- outings
- fun day at park
- volunteer breakfast
- dinner conference
- barbeques
- awards
- guest speakers
- certificates, recognition gifts, thank you cards
- pamper night
- team building
- regional events

VQ's Mark Creyton - literature shows:

- ? Notion of identity
 - volunteering is part of who you are
 - telling stories about effective programs
 - sharing values
 - people stay when they feel effective
 - share success stories
- ? These days people are more willing to walk. People leave when they cant see the outcomes, feel they are making the difference, not so much fidelity to an organisation - young people relate to the cause not the organisation
- ? Culture – how do I feel about being there, getting through my day – motivations, meaningful work etc
- ? Job descriptions, knowing the risk
- ? Young people relate to fun exciting programs
- ? People volunteer around values, vision statements, testimonials, success stories, volunteer input
- ? Teleconferencing important for younger groups, talk about new strategies etc
- ? Steve McCurley's work looks at life stages eg different things attract different ages
- ? Volunteer motivations – lots of research on this. Retention – identify the reason and motivation for volunteering and match it – they'll stay!
- ? Most respected volunteer organisations are those who nurture. You still need culture right and organisational procedures but time to spend with individuals is important.