

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT TIPS

VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNICATION -

Wondering why your volunteers aren't quite doing what you need them to do? Do they arrive late or unprepared? The issue may not be a lack of enthusiasm or commitment – it may just be that they don't really know what you need. Better communication just might be the key to unlocking your volunteers' potential.

Key #1: Communicate early

Don't wait until the day before an event to ask someone to help. Make the request at least two weeks before you need them to do anything – including attending a volunteer training session or meeting.

Key #2: Communicate often

You don't need to bombard volunteers with emails and text messages every day. However, you do need to keep them informed and up-to-date.

A weekly email with special announcements, changes in your organization, or details on the next volunteer opportunity would be a great place to start.

Key #3: Consider your audience

It's easy to make assumptions, skim over details, and forget that we have a diverse audience. Some of your volunteers have been around for years and "get" what you're saying. However, the newer folks may be mystified and wonder what you're talking about. Don't use acronyms or "insider" language with volunteers. Reread your communications while asking yourself, "If I was brand-new to our organization, would I understand this message?"

Key #4: Use various communication tools

You have a plethora of tools at your disposal, many of which are free including email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, phone calls, and text messages. These are all tools you can use for various types of volunteer communication.

Try posting a request for volunteers on your Facebook page and Twitter account. Take pictures of volunteers serving and having fun, and then post that onto Instagram. Build a community online and leverage that community to keep in touch with your volunteers throughout the week.

Key #5: Use various communication methods

There are three main types of learning styles. Some learn best by hearing a lecture (auditory), others need to see the instructions (visual), while a third group needs to experience the lesson (tactile).

What does this look like in practice? First, invite your volunteers to a training session. Handout the instructions (visual), review them out loud (auditory) and ask if the group has any questions, then have your team walk through the event space (tactile). By hitting all three learning styles, you increase the chances of each volunteer understanding your instructions and being able to do a great job.

Remember: Communication isn't about you – it's about your audience. That means you need to listen to your audience. Ask your volunteers if they feel like they're receiving enough communication or information from you. Find out which method and frequency of communication they prefer. Try a few different methods and see what works best for your

organization. Effective communication makes your volunteers feel appreciated, informed and equipped to serve with excellence. That alone makes it worth the time and effort to get it right.