

COMMON VOLUNTEER CHALLENGES

TIME

Time is the largest barrier faced by most volunteers. As people become more time poor it is imperative that we take this into consideration when retaining volunteers. Below are some steps to ensure this barrier is minimised;

1. Time bound activities. When asking for support it is best to put a timeframe around how long the work is likely to take. Whether this is ongoing (an hour a week) or a one off (2 hours next Tuesday). Wherever possible, don't leave this open ended, an unknown timeframe is likely to scare volunteers off.
2. Lead up time. When asking for support, give as much notice as possible. If you have regular volunteer requirements based around either events or standardised times (coring), then try and calendar that ahead of time so that volunteers are aware.

SKILL

Many volunteers are concerned about not having the required skills to complete any complex tasks and so won't put up their hand. Use these steps to minimized barriers;

1. Provide Training. Where possible, provide training for your volunteers until they are comfortable doing the job required. This allows more advanced volunteers to pass on knowledge, one of the key drivers of volunteering, and provides a great sense of comradery between volunteers.
2. Provide Mentors. If you don't have the capacity, or official training is unsuitable, then ensure you can link newer volunteers to people that have done the work before. They can show the volunteers how the work needs to be done and provide direction, once those volunteers are comfortable the mentors can move on.

LACK OF STRUCTURE

Volunteers can become frustrated when there is a lack of structure or process around the work they do, particularly when volunteering is regular (weekly/monthly) within a similar role. There is a balance between providing structure and needlessly administrating a role to the extent of an employed staff member. Below are some steps to ensure this barrier is minimised;

1. Written Guidance. Where possible provide short written job descriptions that outlines the expectations of the role and how this role adds value to the club – what it will achieve.
2. Provide Feedback Loops. Have an official feedback process for what was good and what needs improving. Even if this is completed verbally, ensure the volunteers know there is a structure around this and you that you take their feedback in to account.

MOTIVATION

Often volunteers have the time and the skill, and your club has the quality structure, and you still struggle to get people volunteering. This is likely to reflect the volunteer culture. To ensure you minimise the barriers here take an active approach to generating a healthy volunteer culture.

1. Create a brand. Work with your volunteers to create a brand for the group, allowing you to build a sense of community and belonging. Keep it fun and light.
2. Communicate regularly. Ensure you communicate with your volunteers outside of the request to do work.
3. Regular events. If possible, have regular fun events for your volunteers.
4. Feedback. Get and respond to as much feedback as you can on your volunteer programme.