

Raising the Profile of Volunteer Managers

Summary of Online Discussion – 30th July 2020

Qu 1 - What are the main barriers in the path of volunteer managers?

- General lack of understanding of the function of volunteering and volunteer management
- Not financially driven, so doesn't always resonate with the wider organisational drivers
- During COVID-19, volunteering has taken a back seat in many organisations
- Lack of professional recognition and qualifications or not considered as professional as other functions
- Generally, no mandated training in place for volunteer managers
- Role runs solo in many organisations, so volunteer managers often don't have the back up of a wider team
- The positive impact to the wider organisation is often not understood or communicated well
- Volunteering function is usually under resourced
- Volunteering is often left off an agenda or tagged onto the end
- Many volunteer managers are experienced in the programs, but are not experienced people managers
- Constant need to educate stakeholders and manage expectations about volunteers
- Lack of ability to report success back to the organisation – need the right tools in place to do that
- Need to get to know volunteers more holistically than paid workers – their motivations, passions, preferred level of recognition, showing interest in them
- Overcoming “I'm just a volunteer” – enforcing process and reaffirming their value
- Inadequate systems to support volunteer management and / or volunteers not sharing the systems that are in place because they are external to the organisation
- Volunteers are not hired based on specific skills for specific roles
- Gender barriers – outdated views of traditional roles for men / women
- Lack of attraction to younger volunteers who want more flexible arrangements, hours, locations
- Poor boundaries around volunteer management function, lack of work / life balance

Qu 2 - What difference would a higher profile make in terms of potential success in say, 5 years' time?

- Volunteer managers would be better supported
- Support needs would be better understood
- Strong structures would be in place – policies, procedures, code of conduct etc.
- Corporates would recognise the value of volunteering and volunteer management
- Volunteering would be on everyone's agenda
- Community would invest in volunteering
- Volunteer management would be understood and recognised as a profession
- We'd be paid more

Qu 3 - What are the 3 main strategies that will help Volunteer Managers raise their profiles?

1. Develop and share each other's knowledge – more peer to peer development
2. Dream big, capture the data, ask for what you need
3. Figure out how to capture your social impact and measure it so that it can be communicated to others

