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Bridging the Gap between Volunteers and Employees: Keys to an Effective Partnership

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Contents:

Building Volunteer and Staff Relationships

Sample Organizational Policies Related to the Volunteer Program

Further Reading and Resources

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Building Volunteer and Staff Relationships

Adapted from *Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, 3rd edition, to be released in 2010.

In a previous chapter we talked about how to handle unacceptable volunteer behavior, focusing on the ability or motivation of the volunteer. But usually, the source of "problem" volunteer behavior has more to do with the staff people that supervise them than with the volunteer. Good volunteer-staff relations are critical in all organizations, and of particular concern when you are introducing volunteering into the agency or a project.

Thinking about Volunteers from the Staff's Perspective

We will start with an analogy. Imagine for a moment that you are a staff person who has never before worked with a computer. At a staff meeting, the director of your agency announces that she believes that computerization is the only answer to the enormous workload that your agency faces, and that she intends to obtain as much computer equipment as she can for staff, none of whom at this point is computer literate. She announces that she has just hired a Director of Computer Operations to get the organization moving on this.

Shortly after this meeting, the new Director of Computer Operations walks into your office, deposits a computer on your desk, says "Here's your new computer, hope you enjoy it!," and walks out. There is no instructional manual, no training session, you have no knowledge about how to operate the machine, and little space in your office to accommodate it.

What would you do in this situation?

Bang at the keys until something happened?

Place the computer in the corner and use it as a plant stand?

How would you feel if you were the staff person, given a possible resource that you don't fully understand and may even resent for the changes it imposes on your work style?

It may sound strange to say, but volunteers and computers have a lot in common: each resource has suffered from haphazard attempts to implement its involvement within voluntary organizations. Each resource is complicated and multi-faceted. Each requires specific skills on the part of the staff who will be working with it. And each, to be most effective, needs to be customized for the particular usage, setting, and personalities involved.

Volunteers are more complicated resources, of course, because they are people. They are more complex (they can do a greater variety of things, if involved properly), and they are less forgiving than machines. A volunteer, for example, doesn't take well to being asked to stand in the corner and serve as a plant stand until needed.

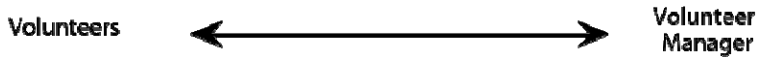
This analogy is a round-about way of explaining that staff difficulties in working with volunteers—whether those include active opposition, passive resistance, or simple inability to achieve creative usage—are probably not really the fault of any of the staff. For the most part, many staff that are being encouraged to involve volunteers are in an equivalent position to a person being given a computer and told: "Bang the keys until something happens." No matter how well meaning they are, they more are likely to become frustrated than to accomplish much. And they are very likely to damage the 'equipment.' This analogy also implies a new role for the Volunteer Program Manager.

Changes in Volunteer Involvement Patterns

Immense changes that have taken place in volunteer involvement patterns during the past few years. Thirty years ago most volunteer departments operated, for the most part, on their own. Usually a volunteer coordinator (either paid or unpaid) supervised the activities of volunteers engaged in a variety of projects or activities.

Most of the time, these volunteers were engaged in program activities that were somewhat separate from the other organizational operations. The Volunteer Program Manager was responsible for almost all recruitment, job development, and supervision of "her" volunteers.

Visually, one could represent the management relationships involved in this system as a simple, two-sided continuum:

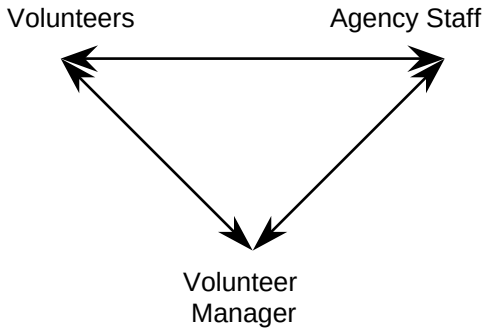


The Volunteer Program Manager was responsible for everything that related to the volunteers. In some cases this could result in rather strange management systems where one volunteer coordinator was supposed to be in charge of hundreds or even thousands of volunteers.

As volunteer involvement has become more sophisticated, this situation has changed considerably. Volunteers have 'diffused' throughout the structure of the agency, become a more integral part of it, and sometimes assumed tasks and responsibilities that had previously been done by paid staff. As new activities were undertaken by volunteers, they began to work more in partnership with staff, operating as 'aides' or members of teams, or simply as assigned workers to a staff department. They began to work regularly 'with' and 'for' other members of staff than the Volunteer Program Manager. In some cases they have been totally assigned to other staff.

This new system of volunteers working more directly with individual staff has changed the dynamics of effective volunteer management within the agency.

This new system can be represented visually as:



This three-sided relationship is much more complex than the two-sided continuum.

There are two major differences that this new system creates:

- A requirement that the Volunteer Program Manager view the work in a quite different fashion. As you can see from the connective lines of the triangle, the Volunteer Program Manager 'links' both to volunteers and to staff. This means that work must be done with both to be successful, not just

with volunteers. It means the Volunteer Program Manager must have skills in working with staff.

- A realization that the line relationship between the staff and the volunteers is the primary line of management and supervision. If volunteers work on a day-to-day basis with staff, whether through an assignment with a single staff person, or in conjunction with several staff, then it is the quality of that management and interpersonal interaction that will determine whether the volunteer is effectively and satisfactorily involved.

The operational relationships will vary in different organizations. Generally, the larger the agency the more likely it is that volunteers will be working more directly with staff. This new style is the most effective method of achieving optimal volunteer involvement.

Think back to the computer illustration. If a staff person is provided with a computer, does the Director of Computer Operations attempt to operate the keyboard for each staff person? Obviously not; indeed, the idea is ridiculous. Why, then, should we not also expect the staff to 'operate' the volunteers with whom they work?

For volunteers to be involved effectively, each staff member must understand and be adept at volunteer management. Staff must have the capacity to comprehend the diversity of the volunteer workforce, to create imaginative and meaningful jobs for volunteers, and to lead and supervise volunteers effectively. They must become, in essence, "Managers of Volunteers."

New Roles for the Volunteer Program Manager

And, in turn, Volunteer Program Managers must realize that preparing staff for these new responsibilities may necessitate a change in their own role. For the past two decades or more, directors of volunteers have had the opportunity to attend highly sophisticated training at national, state, and local conferences. This training taught them to be experts in volunteer supervision at a time when that role was increasingly being taken on by other agency staff. Unless the Volunteer Program Manager can transfer that knowledge to staff, all of this training only makes it more frustrating to watch staff play this role badly.

One way of explaining this shift is to note the subtle but significant difference between two position titles sometimes applied to the Volunteer Program Manager:

Director of Volunteers

Director of Volunteer Services

The first, "Director of Volunteers," implies a person who "directs" volunteers. It is the person responsible for everyday management and supervision of volunteers. In our computer analogy, the equivalent phrase would be 'Computer Operator.'

The second, "Director of Volunteer Services," indicates the person who is responsible for overall operations involving volunteers, but who does not manage each individual volunteer. Instead this person enables, assists, and prepares each member of staff to make effective use of their own volunteers. In the computer analogy this would be the "Director of Computer Operations." We have used the term "Volunteer Program Manager" in this book to indicate an individual who takes responsibility for directing the overall program of volunteer involvement, not just for the individual volunteers.

Now Volunteer Program Managers must take a broader interpretation of their role, viewing themselves as being responsible for the system of volunteer involvement within the organization, which includes working closely with both volunteers and staff. The Volunteer Program Manager will then identify, recommend and implement all the organizational actions that are needed to make it possible for staff to accomplish the tasks and activities identified during the diagnosis and instructional phase.

In all of this, the Volunteer Program Manager, acting as a consultant, concentrates on working with staff, not in attempting to coerce them. The point is to persuade and empower staff to think about volunteers

from the perspective of a trained "Volunteer Program Manager."

Dealing with Staff Concerns

A good Volunteer Program Manager will begin by recognizing that staff may have legitimate fears or concerns about the deployment of volunteers.

The concerns may be organizational in nature:

- a fear of diminished quality of service
- a fear that volunteers will be unreliable
- a fear of increased legal problems

The concerns may be personal in nature:

- a resentment of increased workload
- a fear of loss of a job
- a fear of having to manage volunteers without experience in doing so
- a fear of loss of control

The role of the Volunteer Program Manager is to determine the concerns of the staff and then turn these concerns into a sense of confidence among the staff that the volunteers will be a useful addition to the agency.

In general, this means imparting two feelings to staff:

- A sense of benefits greater than the difficulties or problems
- A feeling of control over the situation

Staff are more likely to be satisfied with the volunteers they will be working with if they can perceive that the return to them is greater than the effort involved, and if they believe that they will be closely involved in making decisions that affect how they are to work with the volunteers.

In dealing with staff concerns, it is wise to be aware that you may take their resistance personally. In such cases, your natural instinct may be to fight and win. This is usually disastrous. Many Volunteer Program Managers, for example, attempt to deal with staff concerns through throwing their weight around, often through seeking a top management mandate that "volunteers will be assigned to all staff."

This approach is fatal. It will leave the staff seeking revenge for what has been imposed upon them, and they will exercise this revenge upon the only available target—the volunteers.

Such a situation can also involve you in unpleasant political games. These reduce the morale of the organization. In cases where there is a lot of conflict among staff, where there is a "war zone" atmosphere, volunteer turnover will be higher. If volunteers sense tension and conflict in the agency, they will be deterred from continuing to work. Volunteer time is discretionary time, and most people prefer to spend their discretionary time in a pleasant environment.

Another natural but fatal instinct is to criticize staff for their inability to involve volunteers productively. Such criticism often leads to futile arguments; telling them five reasons why they are wrong is unlikely to persuade them to change their approach. Many of the concerns of staff will not be built entirely upon logic, and, indeed, may not even be directly related to the volunteer program. Directly confronting staff may only produce a defensiveness that will turn to hostility if you continue to push the issue.

Instead, you should attempt to work with staff in a consulting capacity, helping them to solve whatever volunteer management problem they encounter. Whereas our natural tendency is to tell them what is wrong, it is usually more effective to work with them to improve things by asking them questions. By doing so, you help staff gain a feeling of being in control of the solution.

For example, imagine you have a staff person who is experiencing turnover of volunteers assigned to him. You may be tempted to criticize his handling of the volunteers, but it is more productive to help him discover a different course of action. You might engage in a conversation that goes like this:

- *Staff person*: "These volunteers you send me just don't seem to be very reliable."
- *Volunteer Program Manager:* "Well, we certainly want to fix that problem. What do you mean by 'reliable'?"
- *Staff person*: "Well, they're not very dependable. They don't always show up."
- *Volunteer Program Manager:* "Why do you suppose that is?"
- *Staff person*: "Well, I don't know. I guess they probably have other things to do."
- *Volunteer Program Manager:* "Why would they prefer doing those other things?"
- *Staff person:* "I guess they might be more interesting or fun than coming here."
- *Volunteer Program Manager*: "Is there any way we could make their job here more interesting and fun?"
- *Staff person:* "I can't see how. It's pretty cut and dried. I guess it's pretty boring."
- *Volunteer Program Manager:* "Why is that? What makes it boring?"
- *Staff person:* "It's pretty repetitive."
- *Volunteer Program Manager*: "Could we redesign the job to make it more interesting and less repetitive?"
- *Staff person*: "That sounds like a lot of work."
- *Volunteer Program Manager:* "Would you like my help?"
- *Staff person*: "Well, if you think we can do it."

By using the consulting approach, the Volunteer Program Manager thus becomes a resource to staff, using her expertise in volunteer management to help staff involve volunteers more productively.

Using Questions to Help Staff Solve Problems

Often the consulting role begins with a problem staff are having. In assisting staff to solve problems, volunteer program managers work with them through five stages:

- to help them see the need for change
- to analyze the situation
- to generate options
- to select a solution
- to support the implementation

In each of these stages, the Volunteer Program Manager, acting as a consultant, uses questions to help the staff figure out a better way of approaching things. Below are some sample questions, to give you an idea of the kind of thing you might ask at each stage.

Awareness of need for change

- How are things working in your unit?
- What frustrations, if any, do you have in managing the volunteers?
- What sorts of frustrations, if any, do you feel with the present system?
- What keeps you from getting your work done as efficiently as you would like?
- Are there services that you receive from others that you feel could be delivered better?
- How would you describe the morale of the work group?
- What goals do you have for your unit?
- How are you doing in relation to those goals?

Analysis of the problem

- What factors in the situation contributed to the problem?
- Why do you think the problem person is behaving in this way?
- What would the person get out of behaving that way?
- Is there anyone who seems to work well with this person? What do they do?
- What have you done about the problem?
- How has that worked?
- What were the strengths of that approach? Weaknesses?
- How did people react to this approach? Why?
- Why do you think things have gone this way?
- What factors in the situation caused that to happen?
- What happened prior to the situation?
- What happened afterward?
- Is there a time when this seems most likely to occur?
- What has been your response?
- What has been the volunteer's reaction to that response?
- Why do you think he reacted that way?
- Why do you think this didn't work?

Generation of options

- What other options do we have?
- What are the pros and cons of that course?
- What else could be done about the situation?
- What would happen if you did that?
- Then what would happen?
- If they react this way to that course of action, what else could you try?
- What other responses to the problem might you consider?
- In hindsight, what do you wish you would have done differently?
- Are there other resources that could be brought to bear on this problem?
- Have you considered this fact?
- Have you considered this course of action?
- If you had things to do over again, what would you do differently?

Selection of a solution

- Which of these options seems most likely to succeed?
- Are there any impediments to that approach working?
- What would happen if you tried this approach? Then what?
- Which of these approaches would fit best with the personalities involved?
- If you were going to advise someone else what to do, what would you tell them?
- What would you advise someone else to avoid doing?

Implementation

- What will staff need before we try this?
- How could we transfer your experience and skill to others?
- How can this new solution best be communicated to others?
- How will you monitor the staff's behavior in implementing these ideas?
- Is there a way we could find that out?
- When will you have that done?
- Is there anything I can do to help make your plan work?
- When can we talk about this again?

Dealing with Staff Resistance

As you work with staff, you may encounter resistance to the assistance you are offering. Wilson Learning Corporation identifies five sources of such resistance. For each, there are some questions that can help overcome the resistance.

Lack of Trust

The staff person who is resisting help from the Volunteer Program Manager because she isn't sure if the Volunteer Program Manager is capable of helping solve a problem or meet her needs. Some reasons for lack of trust include:

- The staff person doesn't know your personal qualities.
- The staff person feels you don't have enough influence to help.
- The staff person feels you don't know the needs of her department.
- The staff person had a bad experience with your predecessor.
- The staff person is afraid volunteers might take over paid positions.

To deal with this source of resistance, you need to reduce the personal barriers between yourself and the staff person. Questions to help overcome this source of resistance include:

- What would you like to know about me?
- What is your perception of my role?
- How did you get along with my predecessor?
- Do you see any downside to involving volunteers in your unit?
- How can we work together?

Lack of Perceived Need

Staff might resist help because they don't see the need for volunteers to work in their unit. Some reasons for not seeing the need might include:

- The problem doesn't affect the staff person in an obvious way.
- Other needs seem to be of higher priority.
- The staff person feels the agency should solve the problem by giving him more paid help.

To get staff to see the need, you might ask these questions:

- How are things going?
- How could things be better?
- Are you facing any problems?
- What are you doing now?
- How is it working?
- How would you like to see things improved?
- What do you like best about the present situation? Least?

Lack of Imagination

Staff may also resist help because they don't see any hope of a solution. Some reasons for this include:

- No one ever tried this before.
- Fear of unanticipated consequences.
- Fear of being punished for acting without approval of higher authority.

In this situation you need to get the staff person to think more creatively. Questions to help overcome this source of resistance include:

- If you were to start your unit all over again, what would you do differently?
- If you could change anything you wanted to create a more ideal situation, what would you do?
- What would you do if you had a full-time staff person assigned as your assistant?
- What are some things you would like to get done that you never have time to get around to?

- Is it possible volunteers might be able to do some of the things you wish you could do by working under your supervision?

Lack of Confidence
The staff person may also resist help because he feels the assistance you offer will not help solve the problem. Staff may have this feeling because:

- You are proposing a solution that doesn't seem likely to work.
- The staff person feels there might be a better idea.
- The staff person's not sure he is capable of doing that.
- The staff person feels it is more your idea than hers.
- The staff person can't picture himself (the staff person wouldn't be comfortable) doing that.

To overcome this reason to resist help, the Volunteer Program Manager asks questions that help staff see the effectiveness of the proposed action:

- What would happen if we tried this?
- What more can you tell me about your reactions to this?
- Is there a better approach?
- How would that be better?
- Based on what you said, would it be useful if I . . .
- Do you feel that . . .
- Would you be interested in hearing about how this approach worked elsewhere?
- Shall we go ahead on this basis?
- Are there any problems you would anticipate in working with volunteers?
- Why do you think volunteers would behave that way?
- What would a volunteer get out of behaving that way?
- Is there anything you could think of that you could do to minimize the likelihood of these problems occurring?
- What do you think a volunteer would require in order to have a satisfying experience here?

Lack of Satisfaction
After the staff person has agreed to your proposed course of action, he has a new set of expectations of the relationship. Obstacles at this stage arise because:

- The staff person's not sure he made the right decision to try this.
- He is afraid others may react negatively to the course of action.
- He is afraid you my not fulfill your part of the bargain.

In this case, the Volunteer Program Manager asks questions that put her in the position of supporting the staff person:

- Other staff have felt some anxiety after deciding to use volunteers; do you?
- What can I do to support you in this?
- When and how should I keep in touch?
- How can I help?

Creating a System of Good Volunteer-Staff Relations
A good volunteer-staff relationship is helped when the organization has the following eight elements in place:

1. Overall Policy on Volunteer Involvement
The organization should have an overall policy on volunteer use, expressing why it involves volunteers. Reasons may include:

- Provide community outreach and input
- Gain additional human resources
- Cost savings

- Supplement expertise of staff
- Allow involvement of client groups
- Demonstrate community support
- Act as conduit to funders
- Provide personal touch in services to clients.

The policy should provide a clear rationale, which can be used in explaining the volunteer program to staff and to potential volunteers. It indicates to the staff that the volunteer program is not just an emergency measure dreamed up one weekend by a desperate Executive Director, but is one that fits within the overall mission of the agency. The policy should:

- Be adopted and supported by trustees and other top policy makers
- Be integrated into overall agency plans and budgets
- Encourage, but not mandate, staff involvement.

That last point is often overlooked, but is crucial. It is impossible to force staff to work effectively with volunteers. There are too many ways for staff to sabotage volunteer effort to think that staff can ever be coerced into productively involving volunteers. Even indifference of staff will quickly communicate itself to volunteers, who will equally quickly decide not to be where they are not wanted. Mandatory policies create resistance, and you will be asking for trouble if you attempt to force compliance. Plan to work through rewards for productive staff, not punishments for the recalcitrant.

You might also want to make sure that staff understand the need for volunteers, and understand that the volunteers are being involved to help, not hinder, staff. Here is an example of such a communication, which is included in a brochure entitled "Make Your Mark—Volunteer," which the Oregon Department of Human Resources distributes to its staff:

> ***What's in it for me?***
> *You can use the supervision of volunteers as experience when you are applying for promotions. By using tools such as position descriptions, training, evaluation, and feedback, you develop your own management skills. Involving volunteers in your problem solving and planning may help you gain a unique and valuable source of contributions and ideas. With the everyday workloads, it's hard to get to special projects and activities. Volunteers may be able to help you accomplish some of the things that you have had to put aside. At the same time you help yourself, you are helping volunteers reach their own goals.*
>
> ***Can volunteers replace paid staff?***
> *It isn't fair to volunteers or paid staff of your organization to use volunteers to replace paid personnel. Volunteer staff can supplement and complement the work that is being done by employees. Also, volunteers can help you catch up on things that are backlogged and/or help extend some of the services that you provide.*
>
> ***Can I depend on volunteers to be professional?***
> *Most volunteers have a professional attitude about their work. They take their responsibilities seriously, and uphold the policies of the agency and other requirements such as confidentiality. Identifying the assignment and carefully matching the volunteer to the job will help to eliminate future problems. Good direction from you and other staff with periodic monitoring and feedback will help the volunteer serve professionally.*

Such a communication can pro-actively address staff concerns and smooth the way for a successful staff/volunteer interaction.

2. Assessment of Staff Capabilities

The more you know about your staff the better you can design a system that takes into account their individual characteristics. A very effective preliminary tool is a quick survey of staff attitudes and experience with volunteers. This should ascertain the following:

- *Previous staff experience with volunteering.*
  This includes their own experience as volunteers, their previous work in an agency that used volunteers, and any previous experience in supervising volunteers.
- *Staff attitudes toward the use of volunteers.*
  This would include the opinions of staff about the perceived need for volunteers, and any fears or recommendations about what jobs would be appropriate or inappropriate for volunteers. It would also include staff perceptions of what needs to happen before volunteers are brought into the agency.

3. Staff Orientation to the Volunteer Program

Staff need to learn the system for volunteer involvement within the organization. This would include educating them about the following:

- Rationale for using volunteers
- Brief history of volunteer program
- Explanation of types of volunteers and the jobs they do
- Description of the contributions of volunteers
- In-depth explanation of role of the staff in all aspects of working with volunteers

This orientation might actually be provided in different ways and at different times. Part might be given to each new staff member. Part might be given as staff begin to be involved with volunteers. It may be given either in a formal or informal setting, either in a workshop or one-on-one. It is very effective to include successful managers of volunteers and volunteers as co-presenters during these sessions.

Some information may be provided in writing, as this further example from the Oregon Department of Human Service brochure illustrates:

> ***Can the volunteer program help clients I can't help?***
> *Helping people is what our organizations are all about. The Volunteer Program can be a place to turn when you are unable to help a client. Sometimes volunteers will be able to meet some of the client's needs or assist you in identifying resources in the community The Volunteer Program can make the tough part of your job just a little easier.*
>
> ***What happens when you make a referral?***
> *When you make a volunteer request, the local Volunteer Program Supervisor's (VPS) response will depend on the type of request. If the help you need is available immediately, the request will be filled quickly. If the service, volunteer or resource isn't available, the Volunteer Program will try to recruit, interview and register volunteers for you, or they may help you locate and access other resources. If the request is inappropriate for volunteer involvement, the VPS will call you to discuss available alternatives. Since the Volunteer Program serves four different divisions (Adult and Family Services Division, Children's Services Division, Mental Health Division, and Senior Services Division) every effort will be made to provide equal access to the services available. Priorities for your Volunteer Program are established by a local Volunteer Program board, with representatives from each agency.*
>
> ***How hard can it be to find lots of volunteers?***
> *Our Volunteer Program is competing with dozens of organizations in the recruitment of volunteers. Also, we're choosy; we want only the best. We screen all volunteer applicants to make sure they are appropriate and capable of serving our clients. Your help is important in keeping and attracting volunteers. Meaningful opportunities and positive experiences will keep present volunteers involved in our program. Also those same opportunities and experiences will help us find new volunteers. Nothing attracts like success. We welcome your help. If you would like to register as a volunteer or know of someone else who would be interested, talk to your nearest Volunteer Program. Our recruitment process is ongoing.*

What does it take to get a volunteer going on a project?
Volunteers come to us with a vast range of abilities, experiences, and interests. Some may be well equipped for the jobs and others may require some training. Every volunteer you work with will need clear instructions in order to do the best job for you. The effort you spend training a volunteer and outlining clear performance expectations will make the experience positive and productive for both of you.

Also, since most volunteers have lots of other commitments, working out a mutually agreeable schedule is very important for both of you. Good planning helps ensure success for everyone, and encourages the volunteer to consider future projects that you may have.

One of the potential problems in many organizations where staff seem to resist involvement of volunteers may simply be that the staff recognize their own inexperience in working with volunteers, even though they may not wish to admit it. This is particularly common in organizations with relatively young staff who have little experience in supervising anyone, much less a volunteer who they recognize has much greater life and work experience than they do.

In this case the volunteer program manager can assist staff by helping them work though what will need to be done to have a successful experience in supervising volunteers. The best time to do this is when the staff person will first be working with a volunteer.

Meet with the staff person and tell them that you will help them plan the first meeting they will have with their new volunteer. Ask them to think about the following questions:

a. What kinds of things do you want to make sure are *clarified* during this first meeting? I.e., how can you ensure that you and the volunteer share an understanding to what is to be done?

b. What *information* about the work to be done would be helpful for the volunteer? I.e., what do you need to make sure the volunteer knows in order to do a good job?

c. What *tone* do you want to set during the meeting? I.e., how can you communicate to the volunteer how you set the two of you working together?

The first two questions will lead to considerations of items familiar to any supervisor:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Priorities and timeframes
- Boundaries and rules
- Decision-making processes
- Communication styles and frequency
- Checkpoints and reporting

The third question may cause a bit of pondering, but this is good. You want the staff person to think seriously about how they see themselves and the volunteer interacting and what they want the nature of that interaction to be. And at the end of that thinking you want them to realize that they must view the volunteer as a partner and that as the supervisor they have responsibilities to the volunteer – to provide a supportive environment and guidance so that the volunteer can feel like they are part of the team. A simple way to communicate all this to the volunteer, by the way, is to suggest that the staff person end the conversation with the volunteer by asking a question: "What can I do to help you be successful?"

4. Personalized Volunteer Position Creation

As discussed in the last chapter, a critical element in volunteer retention is designing positions that are interesting and rewarding enough that volunteers will enjoy doing them. No recruitment campaign can compensate for boring volunteer work. This means that there needs to be a process in place for creating jobs that are meaningful to the staff who will be working with the volunteers (i.e., they really help out) and meaningful to potential volunteers. This process will work in five ways:

a. Linking Volunteer Roles Directly to the Agency Mission
If you can link volunteer jobs to the accomplishment of the agency's mission, and avoid having volunteers working in peripheral areas ("nice, but not essential"), then you can better guarantee that volunteers will be spending their time on meaningful activities.

Gail Moore and Marilyn MacKenzie noted this vital need:

> *"If directors of volunteers want to establish credibility they must demonstrate a commitment to helping the organization (and the people that direct it - the executive director and the board) meet its objectives and achieve its mission."*

To determine where within your agency volunteers can be linked to accomplishment of the mission, ask the following questions:

1) Where do we have the greatest difficulty in delivering effective services?
2) What are the biggest unmet needs of our clients?
3) Where do we have problems in reaching new populations?
4) Where are staff spending their time on work beneath their skills and capabilities?

The best time to ask these questions is either during the strategic planning process for the agency or during the initial planning phase of a new project. Each of the questions above will give you answers that could be turned into volunteer positions.

Ultimately it is desirable to have the role of volunteers directly linked to accomplishment of the agency's mission, preferably in a written statement that outlines the involvement of volunteers. Consider this example from the Volunteer Program of the Bureau of Land Management:

> *In the decades to come, volunteers will be woven into the fabric of BLM, playing a key role in protecting the health of the public lands and providing better service to our publics. Volunteers will be vital stewards of the public lands by serving as BLM team members, providing innovative ideas and key resources, and serving as ambassadors in their local communities.*

b. Providing Staff with Ideas Prior to Volunteer Involvement
You might, for example, produce a guide for staff that sparks their thinking about volunteer jobs by explaining various possibilities.

You could explain the different ways in which volunteers might help:

1) Are there areas of work that staff doesn't want to do? This may be because they are not skilled in that type of work, or are too skilled for the work, or else simply have a preference to concentrate their efforts on something else.

2) Are there areas in which there is too much work for staff to do alone, and for which you might create volunteer assistants to supplement staff resources? These assistants might work directly with one member of staff or could do tasks that benefit all staff.

3) Are there areas in which you can extend services because volunteers would enable the agency to begin work that you cannot now even consider undertaking? You might also suggest the creation of volunteer jobs based on the recipients of the service. Consider the following:
   - Jobs that are of direct assistance to an individual client (counseling, visiting, buddying, mentoring, etc.)
   - Office administrative help.(information services, filing, messengers, etc.)
   - Direct assistance to staff (research, training, computer help, etc.)
   - Outreach (speakers panel, fundraising, marketing and evaluation, research, etc.)

You might also want to suggest some considerations that staff should bear in mind as they think about potential jobs:

1) The work must be meaningful and significant, both to the agency and to the clientele. The work must be needed and should be interesting to the person doing it. This means that each volunteer job must have a goal or a purpose that the volunteer can accomplish and can feel good about having achieved.

2) The volunteer ought to be able to feel some ownership and responsibility for the job. Volunteers must feel that they have some input into and control over the work they are asked to do. This will mean including the volunteer in the flow of information and decision-making within the office.

3) The work must fit a part-time situation (for a part-time volunteer). Either the work must be small enough in scope to be productively undertaken in a few hours a week, or it must be designed to be shared among a group of volunteers.

4) Volunteers must be worked with. They should be assigned to work with staff that are capable of supervising their activities in a productive fashion and of providing on-going direction, evaluation, and feedback. What arrangements will you need to make in order to ensure satisfactory supervision?

And you may want to provide some helpful hints to staff, hints that would be helpful both to them and to you:

The more flexible the timeframe of the volunteer job, the greater the likelihood that there will be someone willing to undertake it. Think about the following as different options for the job:

- Can the work be done to a totally flexible schedule at the discretion of the volunteer?
- Are there set hours during the week when the volunteer is needed?
- Could the work be done in the evenings or on weekends?
- Must the work be done on-site or at the office?

c. Assisting Staff in Creating Volunteer Work in Their Area of Responsibility

Staff will value volunteer positions that they see to be of direct assistance to them. Unfortunately, you, as the volunteer director, are not in a position to determine what these jobs might be. To uncover possible volunteer jobs you will need to conduct interviews with staff to determine their needs and interests. This role basically engages the volunteer director as a consultant to staff, much as computer specialists seek to specifically match applicable software and hardware to computer users.

To successfully undertake this, you will need to ask the right questions, and to ask them in the right fashion. Here are some examples of different question types that a good interviewer might use in working with staff to develop opportunities for volunteers:

1) Factual Questions

Factual Questions are designed to obtain objective data about the other party and their work. They are intended to give you a picture of the status of the other party, and are usually best phrased in a manner that will allow them to be answered with short, unequivocal responses. Examples include:

- "Do you do any volunteer work yourself?"
- "Have you ever worked with volunteers in the past?"
- "Are you utilizing any volunteers in your department now?"
- "How many volunteers are here now?"
- "How long have they been with you?"
- "What sort of jobs do these volunteers do?"
- "What are the major services that you deliver?"
- "What do you see as the biggest needs in your area?"

- "What kind of training should a person have to do this type of work?"
- "What resources or assistance would you need to involve volunteers in your area?"

2) Feeling Questions

Feeling Questions are designed to obtain subjective data on the other party's feelings, values and beliefs regarding the situation. They are intended to give you information on how the other party thinks or feels about the situation. Feeling Questions are most useful when used to follow-up a Factual Question.

Examples include:

- "How did you feel about working with volunteers then?"
- "What do you think it would take for a volunteer to enjoy working here?"
- "What do you like to do most in your job?"
- "What do you like to do least in your job?"
- Is it possible that volunteers could do some of the things you're working on if they were under your supervision?"
- "Are there jobs that you do not think it is appropriate for volunteers to do?"
- "Do you think you could train volunteers to do the job adequately?"

3) Third Party Questions

Third Party Questions are an indirect way to discover what the other party is thinking. They are useful because they seem less threatening than a forced direct request or question. Examples include:

- "Some people would use volunteers to do _____. How would you feel about that."
- "One thing that other departments have tried is to _____. What would you think about that?"
- "A problem that other people sometimes have is _____. Do you think that might occur here?"
- "Has anyone else expressed any concerns about what volunteers might be doing here?"

4) Checking Questions

Checking Questions allow you to see how the other party feels as the discussion progresses. They also allow the other party involvement and participation in the decision-making process. Examples include:

- "How does this idea seem to you?"
- "What would happen if we did this _____?"
- "What would make this a negative experience for you?"

This process of direct interviewing of staff should be familiar to most volunteer directors, since it is precisely the kind of thing that is done in interviewing prospective volunteers about their interests and abilities.

d. Connecting Volunteer Positions to Wishes and Dreams

Another way to approach the development of new volunteer positions is to allow staff to dream about what they would like to do to really enhance their work. Assisting in this can be done either during direct interviewing of staff or during a planning session. It basically involves prompting staff to think about the ways they can both improve themselves and the quality of the work they are doing. The way to do this is to ask what is called a Magic Wand Question, one that allows the respondent to do a bit of daydreaming and wishful thinking.

Examples of good questions to ask to stimulate this process include:

- "What have you always wanted to do but never had enough staff?"
- "What would it be like here if you didn't have this problem or concern?"
- "What would you do if you had a full-time person assigned as your assistant?"

- "If you could design the perfect person for you to work with, what would they be like?"
- "What more would you have to do to be truly recognized for giving excellent service to your clients?"
- "What have you wanted to learn how to do better?"
- "What are some things that you would like to see done but that you never have the time to do?"

The goal of these questions is to tap into the frustrated creativity of overworked staff. This technique is also very useful in situations where staff may fear replacement of paid positions by volunteers, since it concentrates on developing new areas of activity, not re-assigning current work.

Each of the techniques above should assist you in increasing the "value" of your volunteers to the agency, resulting in the creation of positions that achieve a higher impact for the agency and more meaningful work for the volunteers.

e. Helping Staff Continue to Develop Innovative Jobs

The work development process is never-ending. New ideas should be continuously provided to staff. Among the ways to do this are:

- Talent advertising: disseminating information about volunteers who have recently joined the organization with particular skills or expertise.
- Success stories: highlighting examples of innovative involvement of volunteers, often best done by showing the success that staff have had in achieving some new goal or solving some problem through the involvement of volunteers
- Position upgrading: organizing scheduled evaluation sessions of volunteers to re-examine assignments and re-shape the work to take into account the growth and development of the volunteer.

5. Early Monitoring of Volunteer Placements

Those staff who are afraid of a loss of quality control will be made more comfortable if they are included in the selection and orientation process. Allow staff to help develop the criteria by which volunteers will be chosen, to participate in interviewing potential volunteers for their department, and to design and present portions of the volunteer training sessions.

Initial assignments for the volunteer can be on a trial basis. It is a bit irrational to assume that following a 30-minute interview you will know precisely where this volunteer will be most effective. It is far better to give a temporary assignment, with a review scheduled for 30 days later. During this period, the volunteer can conduct a "test drive" of the job and of the agency, and determine if it matches her needs. The staff member who works with the volunteer can see if the volunteer has the qualifications and commitment required for the job. The Volunteer Program Manager can see that the volunteer and the member of staff have those essential elements of "fit" that are essential to a mutually productive working relationship. The experience of this initial "trial period" can then be used to finalize the placement of the volunteer. If changes need to be made, it is much better to do them at this early stage than to wait until disaster strikes.

You will also need to monitor the staff providing on-the-job training for the volunteer.

6. Staff Control and Responsibility in Volunteer Management

Once staff are accustomed to the idea of supervising "their" volunteers, the majority will quickly become quite happy to accept this responsibility. The role of the Volunteer Program Manager is to teach staff how to do this correctly, particularly insofar as managing volunteers is different from managing paid staff, and to assist them in dealing with problem situations.

Be sure that you clarify the web of relationships between the volunteers, the staff, and the Volunteer Program Manager. The staff must understand whether supervision is being done by themselves or by the Volunteer Program Manager. She must understand who is in charge of what, who is responsible for what, and what should happen if things go wrong. Who, for example, is in charge of firing an unsatisfactory

volunteer? The member of staff? The Volunteer Program Manager? Is it a unilateral decision or a joint one? Is there any appeal or grievance procedure?

The extent of staff involvement will vary, depending upon the particular staff member's own comfort and desire for management responsibilities. Even if the Volunteer Program Manager still supervises the volunteer, an effort should be made to make the staff feel a part of the supervisory team and to keep them informed about what is happening. You can do this by asking their advice from time to time about how the volunteer should be treated, or inquiring as to how they think their volunteers are doing at the job.

The agency might also create set standards for staff supervision of volunteers. Consider the following, from Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis:

Minimum standards for supervisors of volunteers

We ask the volunteer supervisor to:

1. *Attend required volunteer supervisor orientation/training.*
2. *Work with volunteer coordinator to clearly define volunteer positions which the supervisor is requesting (including duties, qualifications, and time commitment to fulfill the position). Keep volunteer coordinator informed of changes in job description.*
3. *Participate with the volunteer coordinator in the selection of volunteers for the specific position.*
4. *Provide specific on-site orientation and training for volunteers.*
5. *Assure regular contact with volunteers for whom you are responsible, and provide a minimum of annual formal evaluation session.*
6. *Communicate key information to volunteers which will affect the volunteer's performance (i.e. current operating information, changes in schedules, training, meeting dates, and changes in client status).*
7. *Assure report of volunteer's hours/impact to the volunteer coordinator.*
8. *Participate in formal and informal volunteer recognition activities.*
9. *Notify the volunteer coordinator of any problems or questions regarding a volunteer as soon as they become evident and prior to any decision to terminate.*
10. *Advise the volunteer coordinator when a volunteer terminates and/or has a change in volunteer status.*

Supervisors of volunteers exceed expectations by:

1. *Attending additional training regarding supervision.*
2. *Assisting the volunteer coordinator in recruitment of volunteers and being aware of organizational volunteer needs.*
3. *Designing and implementing the volunteer training and training materials.*
4. *Contributing to the volunteer's professional growth, including such things as resume writing, career laddering, reference letters, and special training.*
5. *Planning and implementing formal and informal recognition activities for volunteers.*
6. *Along with the volunteer coordinator, solving problems around potential issues/problems regarding volunteers and the volunteer program.*
7. *Engaging with the volunteer coordinator in the annual planning process for the volunteer program.*
8. *Participating in the divisional volunteer program by serving on a task force or advisory committee.*

You may want to consider structural ways to give staff control and responsibility over volunteer involvement. In a small way, for example, creating a "user's group" for staff who supervise volunteers can be a way to involve staff. Much as user's groups for those dealing with computers this can allow a forum for discussion of problems and triumphs.

On a larger level you might consider a "staff advisory group" who assists you in developing policies and shaping the direction of the volunteer program.

7. Feedback and Recognition

The seventh element in a system for staff involvement is continuing to demand more volunteer help. This includes:

- Providing managerial information to staff on quantities and patterns of volunteer use.
- Showing examples of successful and innovative use of volunteers
- Implementing rewards and recognition for successful staff managers of volunteers.

Rewards for staff may range from formal recognition of their accomplishment by the agency to increased chances for promotion, and some informal recognition of their skills (represented by their inclusion in volunteer management activities, training, staff orientations, etc.).

A subtle way to get staff to recognize the importance of volunteering is to recognize volunteering that is done by staff. If you know of cases where staff have been significantly involved as volunteers in the community consider nominating them for local or national volunteer awards.

8. Ongoing Relationship Building

What you are trying to create is an overall organizational climate that recognizes and respects volunteer participation. This means that true recognition should occur throughout the management process. Including volunteer use in overall evaluations of the organization's accomplishments, or evaluating staff in their proficiency in volunteer supervision, are much more meaningful indicators than certificates handed to staff on an annual basis, and staff will be well aware of the difference.

Here are some specific tips:

a. *Support the initial decision to employ volunteers:*

- Attempt to reduce staff anxiety by indicating that the decision is under their control at all times.
- Follow-up both by telephone calls and face-to-face to discuss potential problems.
- Ask for feedback, both positive and negative.
- Introduce staff to others who involve volunteers. Build a support network.

b. *Help manage the implementation:*

- Keep in touch, and keep staff informed on progress or lack of it.
- Assist staff with getting the decision to use volunteers approved.
- Assist staff with paperwork.
- Involve staff in recruitment, interviewing, orientation, and other aspects of volunteer involvement.
- Advise staff of key management requirements.

c. *Deal with dissatisfaction:*

- Empathize with staff feelings.
- Respond to problems promptly.
- Continue to anticipate concerns and expectations.
- Reinforce the anticipated benefits.
- Never attempt to force continuing use of volunteers if things are not working out—withdraw the volunteers and deal with the problem, then seek to reintroduce volunteers.

From time to time both staff and volunteers will use you to vent their frustrations with the other. Learn to grin and bear it, since this is a very useful part of your job and a highly valuable role for someone to play in making relationships work more effectively. It is more productive for them to be venting their frustrations on you than on one another.

d. Enhance the relationship:

- Be available.
- Arrange for continual personal communication.
- Do not wait for staff to come to you - check for problems and approach them.
- Facilitate open, candid communication.
- Maintain high-quality volunteer referrals.
- Become a resource for information, help, new ideas, problem solving.
- Praise staff for good work, and inform their line manager.

The Issue of Volunteers Replacing Paid Jobs

Those new to volunteering often assume that staff resist volunteers because they are afraid that the use of volunteers will lead to possible loss of their own jobs. This does happen, although less frequently than imagined, even though most volunteer programs espouse the philosophy that "volunteers supplement, not supplant" paid workers.

A 2002 study by Brudney and Gazley of volunteers in a government agency found no evidence of volunteer replacement of paid staff or cutbacks in paid staff in response to volunteer initiatives.

A 2007 study by Stine of volunteers in public libraries in the United States found:

> *Cross-elasticity estimates of substitutions and input demand suggest a strong complementary relation between volunteers and professional workers…None of the estimates indicate that paid labor was being replaced by volunteers*

On the other hand another study by Handy, Mook and Quarter found that 25.5% of organizations surveyed agreed that "some activities carried out by volunteers today were performed by paid staff in the past." They go on, however, to note:

> *Before jumping to any conclusions, it should be noted that there is a complexity to our data in that in even a larger portion of the sample, paid staff are replacing volunteers; for example, 54.7% agreed with the item that "some activities that are carried out by paid staff today were performed by volunteers in the past." More than double the number of organizations agreed that paid staff are replacing volunteers, rather than that volunteers are replacing paid staff.*

Personally, we've always admired and agreed with the elegantly phrased comment by Noble, Rogers and Fryar:

> *Volunteer motives vary, but depriving paid workers of an income is not one of them.*

Key Points

Generating conflict between staff and volunteers is not at all difficult, as this following, somewhat tongue in cheek list suggests:

How to Generate Conflict Between Paid Staff and Volunteers

- Don't involve staff in the decisions as to if and how to utilize volunteers within the agency. Everybody loves a surprise.
- Don't plan in advance the position descriptions or support and supervision systems for the volunteers. These things will work themselves out if you just give them time.
- Accept everyone who volunteers for a position, regardless of whether you think they are over-qualified or under-qualified. Quantity is everything.

- Assume that anyone who volunteers can pick up whatever skills or knowledge they need as they go along. If you do insist on training volunteers, be sure not to include the staff with whom the volunteers will be working in the design of the training.
- Assume that your staff already know everything it needs about proper volunteer utilization. Why should they receive any better training than you did?
- Don't presume to recognize the contributions that volunteers make to the agency. After all, volunteers are simply too valuable for words.
- Don't reward staff who work well with volunteers. They are only doing their job.
- Don't let staff supervise the volunteers who work with them. As a volunteer director, you should be sure to retain all authority over 'your' volunteers.
- Try to suppress any problems that come to your attention. Listening only encourages complaints.
- In case of disputes, operate on the principle that "The Staff is Always Right." Or operate on the principle of "My Volunteers, Right or Wrong." This is no time for compromise.

To create a more motivating atmosphere, follow these general principles in planning your work with staff:

- Try to spend at least as much time working with staff as you do working directly with your volunteers. In the initial development of your program plan to spend much more time with the staff.
- If a department or project does not wish to make use of volunteers, do not attempt to force it to do so. Try to believe that if you have a winning resource, then eventually people will want to make use of it. Work first with departments that are willing to do a good job and then broaden the program from there.
- Deal with problems that arise as quickly as possible. Do not let a situation fester. And do not attempt to force people to get along. It is better for the volunteer to be transferred elsewhere than for you to try to enforce compatibility.
- Your ultimate objective is to get the staff to do the core work of volunteer management. If you can enable staff to become effective Volunteer Supervisors then you will be able to spend your time working on creative position development and troubleshooting. If you are forced to attempt to personally supervise all of the volunteers in the agency, then you will be overwhelmed by the trivial.

The willing involvement of staff is essential to the long-term success of any volunteer program. Note McCurley's Rule of Involvement:

Volunteer programs cannot be done to staff; they can only be done with staff.

Sample Organizational Policies Related to the Volunteer Program

From *Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, 3rd edition, to be released in 2010.

The following policies are intended for help in drafting organizational policies and procedures that may affect the volunteer program. They cover the role of the volunteer program within the organization, the role of volunteers as part of the organization team and protections and responsibilities of staff who work with volunteers. While all volunteer program managers should think about the issues raised by these standards, formal implementation may be a matter for the more experienced…

Role of the Volunteer Program

1.1 *Overall policy on use of volunteers*

The achievement of the goals of this organization is best served by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the organization accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels in the organization and within all appropriate programs and activities. All staff are encouraged to assist in the creation of meaningful and productive roles in which volunteers might serve and to assist in recruitment of volunteers from the community.

1.2 *Scope of volunteer involvement*

Volunteers may be involved in all programs and activities of the organization, and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making. Volunteers should not, however, be used to displace any paid employees from their positions.

1.3 *Oversight of the volunteer program*

Senior management and the board of directors shall monitor the operation and progress of the volunteer program through regularly scheduled reports at staff and board meetings.

1.4 *Role of the volunteer management unit*

The productive engagement of volunteers requires a planned and organized effort. The function of the volunteer management unit is to provide a central coordinating point for effective volunteer involvement within the organization, and to direct and assist staff and volunteer efforts jointly to provide more productive services. The unit shall also bear responsibility for maintaining liaison with other volunteer programs in the community and assisting in community-wide efforts to recognize and promote volunteering. The volunteer program manager shall bear primary responsibility for planning for effective volunteer deployment, for assisting staff in identifying productive and creative volunteer roles, for recruiting suitable volunteers, and for tracking and evaluating the contribution of volunteers to the organization.

1.5 *Role of the Volunteer Program Manager*

The volunteer program manager will work with all the levels and programs of the organization to plan, develop and manage a unified and consistent process for the involvement of volunteers. The volunteer program manager will take the lead in assisting all units of the organization in creating and implementing creative and productive ways for involving volunteers and providing them with a quality volunteering experience. The volunteer program manager will be involved in all organization decisions likely to affect volunteers and the volunteer involvement system.

1.6 *Staffing of the volunteer management unit*

Effective management of the volunteer involvement system of the organization requires time and attention. If such responsibility is allocated as a part-time responsibility of a staff person then care will be given to ensure that other duties are reduced to allow sufficient focus to creating and managing the volunteer involvement system. At appropriate intervals, this designation will be reviewed to see if the

organization is ready to transition to a full-time volunteer program manager. The volunteer management unit should also be accorded sufficient clerical and support staff to operate effectively.

1.7 *Resources for volunteer support and involvement*

An annual budget for the volunteer management unit shall be formulated by the volunteer program manager and submitted for organization approval. This budget shall cover staffing of the volunteer management unit, production of volunteer recruitment efforts, conduct of background checks on volunteers, training of staff and volunteers, provision of recognition, and all other appropriate areas of operation.

1.8 *Professional development of the Volunteer Program Manager*

The Volunteer program manager shall be encouraged to engage in professional development activities. These include participation in professional associations, attendance in training and conferences and other educational activities. Budgetary support shall be provided to such development activities.

1.9 *Oversight of the volunteer involvement system*

The Volunteer program manager shall conduct a regular evaluation of the volunteer involvement system and shall provide periodic reports to appropriate senior leadership and the board of directors on current operations and future needs. This evaluation should include feedback from both volunteers and staff.

Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

2.1 *Volunteer rights and responsibilities*

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to this organization, its staff, and its clients. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done. In return, volunteers shall agree to perform their duties actively to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the values, goals and procedures of the organization.

2.2 *Lines of communication*

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments. Accordingly, volunteers should be included in and have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials, meetings, and client records relevant to the work assignments. To facilitate the receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers should be included on all relevant distribution schedules and should be given a method for receipt of information circulated in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer. Lines of communication should operate in both directions, and should exist both formally and informally. Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions that would substantially affect the performance of their duties

2.3 *Access to organization property and materials*

As appropriate, volunteers shall have access to property of the organization and those materials necessary to fulfill their duties, and shall receive training in the operation of any equipment. Property and materials shall be used only when directly required for the volunteer task. This policy includes [does not include] access to and use of organization vehicles.

2.4 *Insurance*

Liability and accident insurance is [is not] provided for all volunteers engaged in the organization's business. [Volunteers are encouraged to consult with their own insurance agents regarding the extension of their personal insurance to include community volunteer work. Specific information regarding such insurance is available from the volunteer management department.]

2.5 *Continuing education*

Just as with staff, volunteers should attempt to improve their levels of skill during their terms of service. Additional training and educational opportunities will be made available to volunteers during their connection with the organization where deemed appropriate. This continuing education may include additional information on performance of their current volunteer assignment as well as general information. Continuing education might be provided either by the organization or by other groups.

2.6 *Conference attendance*

Volunteers are authorized to attend conferences and meetings that are relevant to their volunteer assignments, including those run by the organization and those run by other agencies. Prior approval from the volunteer's supervisor should be obtained before attending any conference or meeting if attendance will interfere with the volunteer's work schedule or if reimbursement of expenses is sought.

2.7 *Volunteers as supervisors*

A volunteer may [may not] act as a supervisor of other volunteers. A volunteer may [may not] act as a supervisor of paid staff.

2.8 *Standards of performance*

Standards of performance shall be established for each volunteer position. These standards should list the work to be done in that position, measurable indicators of whether the work was accomplished to the required standards, and appropriate timeframes for accomplishment of the work. Creation of these standards will be a joint function of staff and the volunteer assigned to the position, and a copy of the standards should be provided to the volunteer along with a copy of the position description at the beginning of the assignment.

2.9 *Evaluation of volunteer performance*

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluation to review their work. The evaluation session will review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the organization, convey appreciation to the volunteer, and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in that position. Evaluations should include both an examination of the volunteer's performance of his or her responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected.

The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the organization to examine and improve their relationship and effectiveness.

2.10 *Dismissal of a volunteer*

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the organization or who fail satisfactorily to perform a volunteer assignment may be subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Prior to dismissal of a volunteer, any affected member of staff should seek the consultation and assistance of the volunteer program manager to ensure a fair and consistent approach to applying this measure.

2.11 *Reasons for dismissal*

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of organization equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients or co-workers, failure to abide by organization policies and procedures, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance, and failure satisfactorily to perform assigned duties.

2.12 *Concerns and grievances*

Decisions involving corrective action of a volunteer may be reviewed for appropriateness. If corrective action is taken, the affected volunteer shall be informed of the procedures for expressing their concern or grievance.

2.13 *Privacy accorded volunteer information*

Personal information collected by the organization concerning individual volunteers shall be given the same protection and confidentiality as personal information concerning paid staff.

Responsibilities of Staff Who Work with Volunteers

3.1 *Identifying staff responsibility for volunteer management in position descriptions*

Staff who have responsibility for managing volunteers will have this responsibility clearly identified in their position description, including how such responsibility will be evaluated in their performance assessment. When volunteers are supervised by more than one staff member these supervisors should coordinate their efforts to provide uniform and consistent practices and procedures.

3.2 *Filling staff positions that manage volunteers*

Where staff bear significant responsibility for working with volunteers, previous experience in working with volunteers will be a key criteria examined during interviewing of position candidates. In addition, this responsibility will be clearly advertised in position announcements.

3.3 *Staff requests for volunteers*

Requests for volunteers shall be submitted in writing by interested staff, complete with a draft task description and a requested timeframe. All parties should understand that the recruitment of volunteers is enhanced by creative and interesting work and by advance notice. The volunteer management department reserves the right to refuse to recruit or place any volunteers until staff are prepared to make effective use of the volunteer resource.

3.4 *Staff participation in interviewing and placement*

Wherever possible, staff that will be working with the volunteer should participate in the design and conduct of the placement interview. Final assignment of a potential volunteer should not take place without the approval of appropriate staff with whom the volunteer will be working.

3.5 *Staff involvement in orientation and training*

Staff members with responsibility for delivery of services should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers. Staff who will be in a supervisory capacity to volunteers shall have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to those volunteers assigned to them.

3.6 *Responsibilities of supervisors of volunteers*

Staff charged with supervision of volunteers shall provide the same levels of supervision as they would if supervising paid employees. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer, and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance. The supervisor will have primary responsibility for developing suitable assignments for the volunteer, for involving the volunteer in the communication flow of the organization, and for providing feedback to the volunteer regarding their work. Volunteer supervisors should become familiar with the paperwork and recordkeeping applicable to volunteers and assist in maintaining complete and up-to-date records of the volunteer's work with the organization.

3.7 *Status of volunteer supervisors*

Staff charged with supervising volunteers shall be accorded the same status and privileges as those charged with supervising paid employees. This shall include the ability to participate in supervisory training to improve their own skills.

3.8 *Communication with the volunteer management department*

Staff supervising volunteers are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the volunteer management department on the status of the volunteers they are supervising, and are responsible for the timely provision of all necessary paperwork to the department. The department should be informed immediately of any substantial change in the work or status of a volunteer and should be consulted in advance before any corrective action is taken.

3.9 *Volunteer-staff relationships*

Volunteers and paid staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of the organization, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. It is essential to the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

3.10 *Acceptance of volunteers by staff*

Since individual staff are in a better position to determine the requirements of their work and their own abilities, no volunteer will be assigned to work with a member of staff without the consent of that person. Since volunteers are considered a valuable resource in performing the organization's work, staff should consider creative ways in which volunteers might be of service to the organization and to consult with the volunteer management department if they feel in need of assistance or additional training. Assignment of volunteers to programs will be at the discretion of the Volunteer Program Manager.

3.11 *Volunteer management training for members of staff*

An orientation on working with volunteers will be provided to all staff. In-service training on effective volunteer deployment and use will be provided to those staff highly involved in volunteer management.

3.12 *Volunteer involvement in staff evaluation*

Examination of their effective use of volunteers may be a component in the evaluation of staff performance where that member of staff is working with volunteers. In such cases, supervisors should ask for the input and participation of those volunteers in evaluating staff performance.

3.13 *Staff involvement in volunteer evaluation*

Affected staff should be involved in any evaluation and in deciding all work assignments of volunteers with whom they are working.

3.14 *Evaluation of volunteer/staff teams*

Where volunteers and staff are working together in teams they will be evaluated both on their individual performance and on their ability to develop a strong and effective working relationship as a team.

3.15 *Staff responsibility for evaluation*

It shall be the responsibility of each member of staff in a supervisory relationship with a volunteer to schedule and perform periodic evaluation and to maintain records of the evaluation.

3.16 *Staff recognition*

The volunteer management department shall design recognition systems for staff that work effectively with volunteers, and shall consult with volunteers and staff supervisors to identify appropriate staff to receive such awards.

Further Reading and Resources

Items that might be available through your ***Everyone Ready*** archives (depending on your organization's level of membership and time in the program) are marked with an asterisk (*).

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For more resources and relevant Web links, go to the "Employee/Volunteer Relations" area of the Energize Resource Library at http://www.energizeinc.com/art/subj/emp.html.