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VolCanO



The Newsletter for Volunteer Coordinators and Organisers

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FINDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

In our desire to gain acceptance for volunteers within agencies, we work to reassure colleagues that volunteers are just “like” employees. Is this really the goal? Think of what we might accomplish if volunteers had free rein to make the most of what distinguishes them from a paid work force: flexibility, the luxury of focus, short bursts of energy, and multiplicity of perspectives.

The Work Available to Them

Due to the finite number of paid jobs in any organisation, each employer seeks workers who best match the qualifications and requirements of each job description. Education, experience, and being available when the organisation is open for operation all matter a great deal. The result is a relatively homogenous workforce with a core of consistency in approach; diversity is added by variety in gender, race, and other external characteristics.

In contrast, a volunteer workforce has no boundaries and unlimited diversity. Every possible talent or skill can potentially be donated. Volunteers can experiment with new service ideas before anyone even attempts to raise money for staff to continue the approach.

The number of volunteer opportunities is actually *limitless*. While some organisations may reach a point of not accepting new volunteers, there is nothing stopping individuals from going elsewhere, acting independently, or even starting a new organisation – because, at least initially, money is not needed to act. “Where there’s a will, there’s a way” could be the universal volunteer mantra.

The Hours They Work

There is variety in the hours employees work for pay but the vast majority of wage earners work between 20 and 40 hours a week and mainly on a schedule determined by when a physical location is open. The very term “business hours” refers to the generally accepted Monday to Friday, 9:00 to 5:00 timeframe for paid work – even though there are many exceptions to this rule.

The point about volunteers, however, is that there are no rules. Certain volunteer assignments do require the person to go on-site and donate their services on the same schedule as paid workers. But many volunteers have far more flexibility than that. They can also be immersed in service 24 hours a day or give the equivalent of full-time jobs, but most volunteers give far fewer hours per week than employees do. In fact, at the moment we are pushing the time bar lower and lower, from single days of service to a few minutes of volunteering via cell phone – time so short that no one would create a paid job for it.

Further, volunteers can give their time at *any* time. Often, especially in all-volunteer associations, what makes volunteers burn out is the lack of boundaries. An employee can say, “I’ll be reachable tomorrow from 10:00 to 3:00,” but volunteers call each other at night, on weekends, and at all hours. For some organisations, it is only volunteers available to clients at midnight or on weekends.

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Cont..... FINDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES

The Reasons They Work

Despite our dislike of negative stereotypes about volunteers, we tend to accept blanket statements about employees. Recognition events that praise volunteers as “the heart and soul” of the organisation insult employees by implying that somehow getting paid reduces compassion. Dedication, enthusiasm, and caring are personality characteristics that can be demonstrated by *both* paid and unpaid workers. Devotion is not what separates the two groups; money is. Most people need to earn a living and so the decision to get a paying job is mainly a necessity, not a choice. Going after or selecting a *specific* job is influenced by many variables, but the first critical step to employment is an employer with a job opening or money to pay for service.

Volunteering is not a substitute for paying work (except perhaps, for the very rich); it is most often done in addition to earning a living. But because it is not due to financial pressure, volunteer service allows the doer to follow *any* interest, cause, or passion. Volunteers are “dream chasers” (making those who lead volunteers dream *catchers*). They can support established organisations or protest against them. No one is paid to start a revolution.

Latest update on Volunteer Rights Inquiry

The Volunteer Rights Inquiry has now concluded its evidence gathering phase and is starting to explore the findings.

In addition, a number of people were interviewed at three separate ‘hearings’ to enable Inquiry members to really get under the skin of the issues involved.

Work has now started on analysis of the findings with a view to the Inquiry sharing its initial thoughts towards the end of June and launching a call to action by the end of the year.

It is then envisaged that a series of consultative events will take place over the summer and autumn to discuss the Inquiry’s findings and find ways for the volunteering movement to work together to make sure even more people have a great experience when they volunteer.

After a series of high profile cases and campaigning by a number of people, concerns were raised that volunteers have no rights in dealing with volunteer involving organisations when problems occur, be they rights in law or in procedures for redress.

As the national development agency for volunteering in England, Volunteering England decided the time had come to examine the issue of volunteer rights more closely.

The Volunteer Rights Inquiry will provide a comprehensive overview of the issues, concerns and possible solutions. It is hoped that these will be of interest to stakeholders in volunteering (e.g. policy makers, volunteer involving organisations, Volunteer Managers, volunteers themselves)

The Inquiry will not set out to make specific recommendations, rather it will provide a starting point for further action and discussion on how the volunteering movement could work together to resolve the issues.

For more information on the Inquiry either visit www.volunteering.org.uk or contact Robyn at the Ripon Volunteer Centre

Volunteering for the Future Conference Report

On the 26th February at the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate, over 70 professionals from the voluntary and statutory sector in York and North Yorkshire met to look at how we can all work together to promote and support volunteering better in the future.

The event was expertly facilitated by Linda Mitchell, taking us through an open process where we all had the chance to raise the issues that felt important to us, discuss these with others, and make recommendations for the future.

Discussions focused on a range of volunteering issues including how we can make volunteering visible in strategic planning, how we can

offer more consistent support for volunteering across the county, and how we might better train managers who recruit and support volunteers.

The messages for the conference will feed into the development of a strategy to determine how we can better support volunteering across the county.

A whole range of other issues were raised and discussed, and an Executive Summary of the conference is currently being produced for dissemination. Contact Ripon CVS if you want a copy. In the meantime, here is what a few people had to say about the conference:

IMAGES AND FEEDBACK FROM THE CONFERENCE



It's the best I felt at 3.45 on a Friday

I am impressed by our enthusiasm. It is a great overall picture of North Yorkshire.

I am looking forward to taking our next steps together with enthusiasm

There has been a lot of energy. I don't want to lose. We need to keep the momentum going.

We need to promote ourselves more to people who do not know what we do

It's good to hear others' opinions. You are not alone!

It's good we are all working together, the next few years are going to be difficult but let's keep working together

Networking, fresh thinking, motivating, energising



Dates for your Diary

VOLUNTEER MANAGERS NETWORK MEETINGS

Wednesday April 28th, 10am:

Ripon Community House

Sharow View, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 2LE, Tel: 01765 603631

"Problem Solving Clinic"

Thursday June 10th, 10am:

Horticap

2 Bluecoat Wood Nurseries, Otley Road, Harrogate, HG3 1QL

VOLUNTEERS WEEK

June 1st - 7th

STAFF CHANGES

Both Ripon and Harrogate Volunteer Centres will say goodbye to member of staff at the end of the month.

Ripon Changes

We are very sorry to have to say goodbye to Melva Burton, who has been working at the Ripon Volunteer Centre is leaving to join V youth volunteering at the end of the month.

Melva has been delivering a project that has aimed to support unemployed individuals into volunteering. The project has been extremely successful and everyone at Ripon would like to thank her for all her hard work and support over the past few months.

Alana McGowan will be picking up where Melva left off. Some of you will already know Alana through the work that she has been doing on the Volunteering infrastructure project at Ripon CVS.

Harrogate Changes

We are sorry to see Helen Jillings leaving us at the end of March, after funding for the Volunteering Development Project came to an end.

Helen has been a valued member of Harrogate CVS for nearly 3 years, having previously run the Practice Work Development project before joining the Volunteer Centre in September 2009. May we wish Helen well in her future career, and thank her for the hard work she's done during her time with us.

As a result of Helen leaving, Harrogate Volunteer Centre will be open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9.30-4.30 from 1 April 2010."

We are indebted to Volunteering England and energize.com for some of the content of this newsletter



The Volunteer Centres
in Ripon and Harrogate
are integral to their respective
Councils for Voluntary Service