How to get more volunteers and keep them

‘How to get more volunteers and keep them’ is all about understanding why people volunteer and how to create roles that will play to their strengths. It will also explore ways to develop, train and give volunteers recognition, and keep them engaged.

Formal volunteering is identified as giving ‘unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment’. Informal volunteering is defined as ‘giving unpaid help as an individual to people who are not relatives’. This session will mainly focus on formal volunteering.

A survey conducted by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) showed that just under a third of the population provides nearly 90% of all formal volunteer hours.

Three most popular causes that people volunteer for?
- Sport and Exercise  - e.g; refereeing at football matches
- Hobbies and arts  - e.g; local theatre productions
- Religion  - e.g; inclusive festivals and teachings

Three most commonly used reasons for volunteering?
- Wanted to help people / improve things
  - The cause was really important to them
  - They had spare time

The top three charities with the most volunteers?
  - Methodist Women in Britain  (140,000)
  - Royal British Legion  (119,000)
  - Scout Association  (116,438)

A volunteer is anybody who does something, especially helping other people, willingly and without being forced or paid to do it.

This can come in any shape or form. As mentioned earlier – parents can spend their weekends at their children’s sports clubs, or their mornings at their playgroups, and not even consider that as being volunteering. You could be taking out your neighbour’s bins once a week for them, that’s volunteering! Or giving blood three times a year, that’s volunteering!
Why do people volunteer?

- Wanting to give something back
- Commitment to cause or organisation
- Looking to use existing skills
- Looking to share skills
- Looking to learn skills or train
- Improve career prospects
- Meet new people
- Have some fun
- Be part of something
- Make a difference
- Get out of the house
- Stop boredom
- Reduce Isolation
- Feel good
- Gain confidence
- Feel important
- Life cycle

We have come up with this wonderful and catchy (and not at all tenuous) acronym to help you all remember these reasons

**V**ery good for your **O**rth**L**ove for the **U**se and share **N**ew friends
**T**ry new things
**E**mpowerment
**E**ducational
**R**eally fun!
V 
Very good for your health
Seriously! When you stop thinking about your own problems, and focus on other people, studies have shown that your stress levels reduce and your overall sense of life satisfaction increases. Helping other people interrupts tension inducing patterns and replaces it with a sense of purpose and raises confidence levels.

O 
Opportunities
Hello Career! Volunteering is an excellent way to boost career prospects. It gives you experience in sectors that you may not usually be able to access. Helps to create a positive impression, makes you more innovative and gives you a huge range of useful skills, including time management, people skills and working within a team.

L 
Love the cause
Let your love for animals, teaching, the environment, social media, healthcare, exercise create a positive change in the world. The more passionate you are, the more committed you will be. And the bigger your impact will be.

U 
Use and share skills
A chance to show off a little. Share the knowledge you have. You may be a pro at building bird boxes, but rubbish at posting on Facebook. Share your skills with other members of the community, and learn new skills from them!

N 
New Friends
Volunteering lets you meet people from all walks of life. You could meet your new best friend, a future business partner or have one of those conversations that sparks a new idea or a real change in your life.

T 
Try new things
It is not often that you can spend your spare time learning something new, teaching other people your skills or spending time with people you wouldn't normally. Volunteering gives you that opportunity to do things that you might not normally get the chance to do. This can be a real confidence boost.
Empowerment
Gives you a chance to change the world you live in. Quite literally. Whatever type of volunteering you are doing, in a local Dementia cafe, driving, fundraising, raising awareness… whatever it is you are doing, you are making a difference to the community in which you live and work. Without these volunteers, a lot more people and animals would be a lot worse off.

Educational
Every person has a story. Of who they are and how they came to be where they are. As a volunteer you never stop learning. Developing new skills, discovering new passions, gaining new insights about the world around you - volunteering covers it all.

Really Fun!
In the words of Dr Seuss… (kind of)

Oh the wonderful way you’ll feel, you hear?
If you just go out and volunteer…
A bird… a worm… a guzzle-bivvit,
Could all use some help if you’ll just give it;
You might say “No! Not !! No Way!
“I’ve got nothing to give – not today anyway!”
But you’ll see if you look deep inside of you,
You’ve lots to give! It’s true! You do!
Go be a friend. Go mentor a kid.
They AND you will be glad you did!
Grow a garden. Sow some seeds.
The world’s our friend! Go hug a tree!
When disaster strikes in your neighbourhood…
Don’t hide! Go help! Like a good neighbour would.
Go ride your bike! Go take hike!
Or walk to work with your co-worker Mike.
So see? Don’t fret… it’s simple really,
All that worrying – just seems silly.
When you’re done, you can say it, Loyd and clear.
You can shout it out proud for all to hear!
“Oh the wonderful way I feel!” you’ll cheer.
“Cos I just went and volunteered!”
Behind these reasons are usually one of three motivating factors:

**Need for achievement**
Achievers like to grow through challenges. They seek success in a situation that requires high performance. They may be so focused on the goal that they appear insensitive to others. Achievers like to make lists, are great at starting projects, but may become bored when maintaining them. They like to be given responsibility and crave feedback to improve their performance.

**Need for affiliation**
Affiliators like to work with other people and enjoy developing friendships. They don’t focus on goals, in fact they may sacrifice goals as they are too busy keeping everyone happy. Need approval and takes criticism personally. In groups, they tend to be more aware of personal feelings. They offer a wonderful balance in a group as they slow down the achievers and power people, by building a sense of a team.

**Need for power**
Power people like to use their influence and skills to bring about change. They like to share their power, information and control to influence people and events and shape opinions. They are concerned with position, title, respect and reputation. Power people like to take charge of groups and are focussed on the outcome.

(Group activity)
Volunteer roles to be matched with motivating factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Power</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fundraiser</td>
<td>Run Marshall</td>
<td>Chair person</td>
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<td>Volunteer Recruiter</td>
<td>Research Volunteer</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
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<td>Gardener</td>
<td>Social Media officer</td>
<td>Speed Watch</td>
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<td>Youth worker</td>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>Support group co-ordinator</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>Trustee</td>
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<td>Retail Assistant</td>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>Treasurer</td>
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<td>Online Sales</td>
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**Lessons Learned:**
Volunteers bring their own unique motivations to their work. Your job is to identify those motivations, and help that volunteer achieve a sense of personal satisfaction.

Most individuals have a mix of motivating factors, although one may be more predominant for everyone. Somebody who is volunteering as part of a wildlife group, may be there as they have a passion for the cause, and have a need for a sense of belonging and affiliation with others that share my belief. This motivation is completely different than if I am working on a political campaign with my local Parish Council. In that role, I may have a stronger need to make something happen or to bring about change.

Key points to remember:
- Be sure their personal motivational needs are met. If they aren’t, it is likely that they will get bored.
- Know them personally and understand what is important to them. Help fill their need for achievement, affiliation or power (whichever is the most dominant)
- Understand the way they work will be different to others. Understand any potential conflict this may have with volunteers with different motivations and work together to make sure everyone is comfortable and confident in their roles.

**Let’s take a look at how we can get more volunteers…**
Avoid publicising the need for volunteers by saying “Volunteers Needed”. Sell the benefits of what you can offer volunteers. Experience, Re-skilling, Interesting opportunities etc. Re-name the role. The most common excuse not to volunteer is because people don’t have the time, but if it isn’t called volunteering, and renamed as something exciting, or more interesting, you are more likely to attract different people. A Social media executive is more appealing to somebody than asking outright for a volunteer. Or offer work experience! Would you sign up to a job without knowing what the job entailed? By giving the roles different titles, you will also show how much they are valued as volunteers, as they aren’t all put into the same box as each other. They are important enough to have proper titles.

**When advertising for volunteers…**
It is important to be specific about the length of time you will be needing them for. Is it just a one off event? An hour a week? Or something they need to be committed to from birth to death? If you are all on the same page, it is a lot easier for your volunteers to deal with their time and other commitments.

While looking at this – share your volunteers! If you have somebody that is super efficient at raising awareness about your cause, but is only needed once a year, then let them know about other opportunities in the next village. They will then keep their momentum up and would be more likely to come back to you.
Where should you look for volunteers?
EVERYWHERE!! Social media – Facebook, Twitter, even Instagram… Gumtree is a great one to advertise for free on. Use the libraries! Host drop ins there so your neighbours can learn about your cause before committing their time. The UEA – or other colleges and schools all have students who are desperate for work experience. Go to their media schools for somebody to help you with a website or set up your Facebook page. Supermarkets all have noticeboards to advertise, get your vacancies up on there! The probation service have low level offenders who are looking for experience within their community as part of their journey back into society. Churches have huge amounts of attendees, tap into the resources that are already there. Voluntary Norfolk also has an amazing database full of opportunities. In fact it is worth taking a look there to see how other people are advertising their volunteering opportunities.

Tell me about the first day you started a new job, or a new volunteering role, or the first day at a different school.

What was it like?
How did the people already doing that job react to you?
Was it a good experience? Or a bad one? If it was work related, if it weren’t for the fact that you were getting paid, would you have gone back?

New volunteers are just that. New volunteers. If the environment they are entering into is negative, or clicky, or un-motivated, then they are going to go away feeling negative and un-motivated.

Cross your arms for me. Put them down by your side and cross them again the other way. Can’t do it? That is how new volunteers feel when they join your groups. They don’t know as much as you know, so share your knowledge. Get them involved. Listen to them. Learn what they are good at and make the most of them. But most of all, make sure that they are part of the team.

- Give them matching t-shirts, or if you don’t have the budget, a badge? Host social events for them as regular interactions with each other helps to keep volunteers inspired and motivated. If you don’t have the budget, or time, for this, set up a closed facebook page for them all to join so they can connect, vent and share ideas.

Understand motivations of your volunteers.
- If somebody wants to learn, wants to train, then teach them! Doing this shows you value them and want to invest in them. Provide references if needed. Volunteers are ambassadors of your cause, keep them happy. Get to know them. Send them birthday cards. Arrange for discounts for your volunteers in your local shop.
Say thank you.

It is so extremely important to say thank you to any volunteers.

- Be sincere when thanking them – and be specific. Don’t be vague! Write them a card. Send them a tweet. Make sure everyone understands why you have volunteers and how much you appreciate them.

- Celebrate them in National Volunteers Week (1-7 June). Celebrate milestones; 1, 3, 5, 10 years of volunteering with you. Take a photo of them on the job and frame them in a ‘Thank You’ frame and award it to them. Nominate them for a community award!

That concludes our bitesize session – Any questions at all?