

# Motivating and Thanking Volunteers



volunteer ireland  
obair dheonach éireann

People volunteer for a multitude of reasons: to give something back to their community; to gain or improve skills; to meet new people; because they are interested in an issue or cause; or because they have some free time on their hands. Acknowledging the work that volunteers do with your organisation ensures they will stay motivated and continue to work on your behalf. Here are some suggestions on how to motivate and thank volunteers

## Ways to Recognise Volunteers

**Say 'thank you'.** Thank your volunteers regularly. Send them personal notes on special occasions (birthdays, holidays, for a job well done etc). Remind them how important their efforts are to your organisation.

**Award service gifts or certificates.** Recognise effort and service by awarding small gifts that commemorate longevity. This can be a formal or informal prize giving.

**Give volunteers an 'identity'.** Give them an official role title, have special volunteer T shirts or name badges made.

**Social events.** Plan events to say 'thank you' and show your appreciation. It can be anything from going out for a drink, a themed event, a film or lunch. Use your imagination!

**Create volunteer appreciation day(s).** Set aside a day to appreciate your volunteers. Put up posters. Make a speech. Everyone loves a cake!

**Establish a volunteer 'Hall of Fame'.** Elect someone as the volunteer of the week, month, or year. Take his or her picture. Build a gallery of honoured volunteers.

**Additional training or personal development.** Send dedicated volunteers to relevant training to build on their knowledge and develop their skills in relation to the work they do for your organisation.

**Professional events.** Invite long-term volunteers to meetings, events or conferences that relate to their role.

**Publicise volunteer efforts.** Ask your local paper to write an article about one of your volunteers who has an interesting background, reason for volunteering, or other newsworthy characteristics.

**Promote volunteers' work in your communications.** Be sure that your newsletters, annual reports and other communications recognise the importance and extent of the work your volunteers do throughout the year.

## Ways to Motivate Volunteers

Give praise and positive feedback on completed tasks or on a job well done.

- Vary duties where possible and appropriate.
- Respond to requests for help or assistance as quickly as possible.
- Resolve problems swiftly and efficiently in a proactive manner.
- Ensure volunteers are not overloaded or take on too much.
- Support and supervise all volunteers.
- Set goals together and share the outcomes with others.
- Discuss progression options.
- Involve volunteers in staff meetings and events and add them to staff mailing lists.
- Include volunteers in the planning process for projects and programmes associated with their role.
- Demonstrate how their role has impacted your organisation.
- Provide opportunities to learn more about the organisation through work shadowing, attendance at meetings, conferences, training etc.

“When the story of these times gets written, we want it to say that we did all we could, and it was more than anyone could have imagined.” - Bono