



# The difference between volunteer management and volunteer leadership

Management vs. leadership is a hot topic in the business world, with many varied perspectives. Nuances of the ongoing argument can be subtle.

Two camps emerge from this lexicon debate. They suggest that a) there is an absolute difference between the two, or b) this is a game of semantics. When working with volunteers, management and leadership are more than word play. Defining the difference between the two is crucial.

## Management of volunteers

Management of volunteers focuses on the **four lowercase p's of the role: policy, procedure, process and practice**. The four p's are important to the sound operation of a volunteer-supported organisation. Their fundamental execution is critical to the movement. Managing volunteers requires being adept at crafting, communicating, implementing and ensuring adherence to the four lowercase p's.

The management aspect of the role of guiding volunteers is usually a natural strength. For many, their ability to manage the lowercase p's is what got them noticed. Management skills earned their promotion to their current role.

## Leadership of volunteers

Leadership of Volunteers focuses on the **one capital P - People**. The leader seeks to connect with and inspire every person who affiliates with the organisation. The leader understands that the human element cannot be overlooked in the haste of giving attention to policy, procedure, process and practice.

*Continued /...*





volunteer ireland  
obair dheonach éireann

When leading volunteers, this is not an either / or debate. Management and leadership is a proposition. The person called upon to guide volunteers cannot swap management acumen for leadership skill or vice versa. The most effective way to support volunteers is to become the best version of volunteer manager and volunteer leader possible. Continual development is key.

The objective in self-development is to leverage the inherent strengths that already exist while focusing on those areas that have room for growth. These growth areas may never rise to the level of our natural strengths. This is part of what makes each leader unique. Continual development through reading, research, study, feedback, coaching, mentorship, introspection, time for reflection and being an astute observer will yield a well-rounded manager and leader of volunteers.

Leading volunteers is synonymous with volunteer engagement. Managing volunteers plays a part in engagement, too. Management and leadership of volunteers are interwoven. The focus on the capital P of People is by design. Bolstering leadership knowledge and skills will enhance opportunities to touch the head, heart and hands of those who choose to serve.

Source: *Head, Heart and Hands Engagement Collective* ©

