

A Quiz for Senior Managers

Susan J. Ellis

Looking for a conversation starter to open dialogue between you and the executive team or department heads about their understanding of volunteer involvement in your organization? The biggest challenge is that decision-makers assume they know what is going on. But it's rare for an executive to know all the ways volunteers contribute to daily work and even rarer to know what the trends are in volunteerism today.

Test your understanding of our volunteer involvement by indicating your opinion next to each item below:

Y = Yes | N = No | ? = I don't know

Our organization...

- Has access to highly skilled volunteers as on-call consultants or advisors.
- Lists current volunteer opportunities on free Internet sites established for that purpose.
- Has put the expectation of teamwork with volunteers into the job descriptions of all paid staff - and then provides training for staff on working with volunteers.
- Has a volunteer corps that reflects the diversity of our community.
- Knows what volunteers are saying about us to their friends and contacts.
- Is tapping into new trends in volunteerism such as virtual and micro volunteering.
- Invites financial donors to also participate as volunteers to increase their long-term loyalty.
- Gives volunteers the chance to give money as well as time, but with solicitation materials that first recognize the value of their donation of time.
- Fulfills legal requirements for screening volunteers and keeps background checks current over time.
- Benefits from national and local days of service like "Make a Difference Day" or the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service.
- Is implementing the best practices of volunteer management.
- Sees the connection between direct-service volunteers, fundraising volunteers, board

members, student interns, loaned executives, and other people who contribute time and talent to us without going onto our payroll.

____ Gets and uses input from volunteers on how we might improve our services.

____ Is able to create useful assignments for volunteers who offer us unexpected skills.

____ Has a vision for what we want volunteer involvement to look like here in ten years.

Add whatever questions are pertinent for you, of course.

You can also add a closing comment on the form - or use the following as the opening to the conversation you want to start:

Do these questions make you wonder if we are maximizing volunteer involvement on behalf of our agency? They should! Volunteerism is all about tapping the community to help meet agency needs. The only limits are imagination and not providing effective support once volunteers have been recruited.

By Susan J. Ellis, president of Energize, Inc. (www.energizeinc.com), an international training, consulting and publishing firm specializing in volunteerism. This was the Tip of the Month for December 2014.