

Evaluating Volunteers

by Shawn Kendrick | September 1, 2009

Do you have an evaluation process for your volunteers? If the answer is “no,” you are not alone; in fact, you are in the majority. Granted, to many volunteer coordinators, the concept of actually **evaluating volunteers** may seem strange. After all, these folks are freely giving their time. Putting them through an evaluation may seem unfair and even unappreciative. The truth is, however, that these helpers *are* anticipating something in return for their efforts. Among other motivations, they expect a well-run program filled with dedicated and competent volunteers. By completing evaluations, you’ll send a clear message that you are running a serious program. You’ll also insure that volunteers are utilizing—and not draining—precious resources.

Volunteer Evaluation Process

Once you’ve decided that you are going to evaluate your volunteers, it’s time to think about the process. Even though the tendency may be to interact with volunteers more casually than with paid staff, some experts recommend making sure the volunteer evaluation process closely mimics that of the one used for those on your payroll. In fact, you may even want to use an identical process. This means you won’t be doubling your efforts by creating a whole new set of forms and systems specifically for volunteers. If this doesn’t fit your needs, however, and you find it necessary to create a specific process and paperwork for your helpers, there are places you can turn to for guidance. For example, www.idealists.org has a whole host of resources, including a link to a sample evaluation.

Forms for the Evaluation Process

Another great source is www.docstoc.com. There you can search for both paid and free volunteer and/or employee evaluation forms. (This site also has a ton of other documents that may be helpful, such as authorizations, agreements, surveys, and registrations, just to name a few.) Once you’ve honed in on what your process is and what your paper trail is going to look like, you’ll want to decide how often you are going to give feedback. One of the best evaluation devices most businesses use is the “probationary period.” This is also a great way to set the tone for you volunteers. Letting them know that for the first 30, 60, or 90 days they will be receiving a lot of instruction and feedback both assures them they won’t be thrown to the wolves and lets you keep a close eye on them. This also creates a sort of forced reflection point to see if the volunteer and the organization is a good fit.

How Frequent?

Of course, you will also want to decide on how often volunteers will be evaluated after the probationary period. Most of your successful volunteers will probably welcome the opportunity to receive feedback. Also, if potential volunteers are informed that they will be evaluated if they join the program, you’ll probably find that some of the marginal candidates will weed themselves out.

All in all, evaluations will help significantly aid in the [volunteer management](#) process, which will ultimately help your program.

Reproduced with permission from Volunteer Hub. <http://volunteerhub.com>