

SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT SERIES – TOPIC 5

Supervision and Evaluation

Take a moment and think about the supervision structure within your organization. Do managers closely observe and routinely instruct workers, or are staff encouraged to be involved in decision-making and to take more personal responsibility for their actions? The nature, culture and history of your organization will greatly influence the supervision and evaluation process.

SUPERVISION

The goal of volunteer supervision is to create the conditions that support and encourage your team to accomplish their assigned tasks in a productive, professional and harmonious manner, and do so in a safe environment. This will allow volunteers to be the very best they can be.

Supervision and evaluation is built on the foundation of accurate volunteer job descriptions, effective recruitment, and proper orientation and training, as outlined in the previous topics in this Volunteer Management series.

Supervision goes far beyond simply observing and correcting behaviour. Effective supervision requires that volunteers have a clear understanding of the organization's values as well as their expectations of a volunteer, providing on-going support toward meeting those expectations, and maintaining open lines of communication between supervisors and volunteers. Supervisors also have the responsibility for ensuring that the workplace is safe and that all workers are treated in a respectful manner.

In many situations, the concept of 'volunteer supervision' would be better expressed as 'volunteer leadership' and offering support, advice, encouragement and praise. Supervisors should also have the ability to identify high capacity volunteers and cultivate them to take on additional responsibilities.

EVALUATION

One of the ways a supervisor builds and maintains a high-performance team is through regular performance evaluations. Not only does this create a forum to discuss any performance related issues, but it also demonstrates that your organization values the role of volunteers and is committed to their ongoing development, training and input.

An evaluation meeting not only examines how well a volunteer has been performing their duties, but it also affords the supervisor with an opportunity to ask the volunteer for feedback and to gauge whether the volunteer is enjoying their role and feels as though they are contributing toward the goals of the agency or ministry. In this way, the supervisor is obtaining vital information toward helping the volunteer to achieve his or her own goals.

Your personal style and the culture of your organization may determine how formal or casual such an evaluation meeting will be, but be sure that the process meets these criteria;

- Is non-threatening, constructive and supportive
- Have clear objectives/questions to ask of the volunteer
- Avoiding ganging-up/out numbering the volunteer
- Encourage the volunteer to stretch for high standards; ask if there are additional duties or responsibilities they feel ready to take on
- Leave an opportunity for the volunteer to express their concerns and ideas
- Stick to policies re: frequency (annual reviews should take place *annually*)
- Close by expressing appreciation and reinforcing the value of the volunteer to your organization.

If there are any matters or concerns arising from the evaluation meeting, it is advisable to express those in writing, to ensure there is clarity and mutual understanding by both parties. There should be no major surprises during an evaluation meeting. If you are experiencing concerns or problems with a volunteer, those concerns should be raised immediately – not postponed until the next performance evaluation meeting.

Remember that most volunteers are serving your organization because they want to give back to a cause, a community, or to share their skills, abilities and experiences with those who are in some need. It is possible that many of the people who benefit directly from the service provided by the volunteer will never have face-to-face contact with the volunteer. In those cases, the supervisor is in the most natural and effective position to offer encouragement, express appreciation and remind the volunteer of how they are contributing to the greater cause.

The Skills and Responsibilities of an Effective Supervisor

Trainer/Educator	Communicator	Team Builder	Conflict Resolver
Ability to Delegate	Thorough Planner	Problem Solver	Coach and Mentor
Evaluation/review	Good Listener	Shares Knowledge	Sets Standards
Express Appreciation	Can Lead by Example	Fairness/Integrity	

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES:

- What are some unique issues that make the supervision of volunteers more challenging or requiring special attention or management techniques?
- What personality qualities would you consider to be most important or valuable in a supervisor of volunteers for your particular ministry or organization?
- Are volunteers within your ministry or organization, given sufficient orientation and training to do their job? Are they aware of any performance monitoring and evaluation system that is in place? What might be some areas that require attention in order to create a motivating environment for your volunteers?
- Given the tasks that volunteers perform for your organization, what are some of the key performance measurements that need to be included in an evaluation meeting?

ServiceLink is proud to offer the following *Volunteer Engagement* workshops:

1. Identifying and Designing Volunteer Positions
2. Recruitment and Marketing
3. Screening and Interviewing Volunteer Applicants
4. Orientation and Training
5. Supervision and Evaluation
6. Discipline and Dismissal
7. Motivation and Recognition

Please contact us to learn more about available training and development opportunities:



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