Support for Volunteer Co-ordinators

Voluntary Action Islington

Understanding our duties and responsibilities as volunteer co-ordinators, and how to juggle this with our many other roles!

- Building our skills on delegation and 'influencing up'
- Using questioning techniques to understand both staff and volunteers' needs across the organisation
- Finding support, online and face to face, from other coordinators

www.rebeccatully.co.uk

VOLUNTEERSYEAH TRAINING

Verbal and Non Verbal Assertiveness

Verbal openers	***Co-operative statements and questions***
I would like you to I feel that I think that I don't want to I will not I cannot	Lets see what everyone else thinks What do you want How can we resolve this Let's discuss Shall we negotiate Have you any suggestions Can you tell me a time that would be good for you to talk about…
Empathetic statements	**Non verbal accompanying behaviour**
I appreciate that this is difficult for you I can see that you seem worried You may be too busy now, but I understand that this may not be something which is very important to you, but	Calm purposeful walk Weight evenly balanced, upright posture Relaxed hands and legs – not clenched, or crossed Direct eye contact – but don't glare!! Srong, clear, steady voice Expressive face and gestures – but don't fidget Relaxed, non- manipulative smiling, as appropriate

Gael Lindenfield, The Positive Woman

How to Say 'No'

"I want you to stay a bit later tonight to finish preparations for the volunteer induction event tomorrow. I wouldn't ask but there's no other option"

Start with an **affirmative statement**. Agree with something they are saying or feeling.	***"Yes, I can understand that the preparations need to happen…***
Softening statement: show recognition, empathy or understanding	***We have been short staffed all week and I know it has been difficult…***
Indicate process	***But I need to explain my situation…***
State **reasons** for your position	***I have not seen my family much this week and tonight I promised to spend some time with them…***
Disagree – finally! Use strong language – don't be tentative. And start with "so…" it makes the whole thing seem logical	***So I cannot work past 6 tonight.***
Compromise – optional, but useful if it will help you get what you want.	***Can we explore what other ways we can get this done – I can phone others, or swap hours with someone and work tomorrow?"***

Max Eggert, The Assertiveness Pocketbook

Delegating Tasks

Some Questions:

- *When someone asks you about your day at work do you talk about how much **you've** done, or do you sometimes find yourself talking about the achievements of your volunteers? This will help you see if you are a good delegator.*
- *Think about the subtext of your worries… It's up to me to run this show. I'm scared of letting go. They'll do it wrong…*
- *Think about YOUR RESPONSE to the worries of the volunteer and how you will use this when asking them to complete a task.*

The information below was written for senior managers, about employees, but has been chosen for its relevance to the subject of delegating to volunteers.

What is Delegation?

Delegation is not task assignment. You're not simply assigning work to employees that falls within their job duties and responsibilities. To delegate, you must give someone the responsibility and authority to do something that's normally part of your job.

Delegation is not "dumping." If employees think you're merely throwing unpleasant assignments on their lap, they'll resent having to find extra time for boring or dead-end projects.

Delegation is not abdication. You share accountability for the assignment. That's why you must establish appropriate controls and checkpoints to monitor your employees' progress.

Your role is to set clear goals and expectations for the assignment — including any boundaries or criteria — without telling the worker how to do it. This way, you allow others to discover for themselves the best way to follow through.

When you delegate, you distribute responsibility and authority to others while holding them accountable for their performance. The ultimate accountability, however, still lies with you.

Karen Lawson, Lawson Consulting
http://www.lawsoncg.com/lcgi-article_delegate.htm

How do I Delegate?

1. Give the task to someone who can get it done.
This doesn't mean that person has all the skills for execution, but that they are able to martial the right resources. Sometimes the first step in the project will be education. Maybe your delegate has to attend a seminar or take a course to get up to speed.

2. Communicate precise conditions of satisfaction.
Time frame, outcomes, budget constraints, etc.; all must be spelled out. Anything less creates conditions for failure. It's like the old story about basketball - without nets the players don't know where to shoot the ball.

3. Work out a plan.
Depending on the project's complexity, the first step may be creation of a plan. The plan should include resources, approach or methodology, timeline, measures and milestones. Even simple projects require a plan.

4. Set up a structure for accountability.
If the project is to take place over the next six weeks, schedule an interim meeting two weeks from now. Or establish a weekly conference call, or an e-mailed status report. Provide some mechanism where you can jointly evaluate progress and make mid-course corrections. This helps keep the project, and the people, on track.

5. Get buy-in.
Often time frames are dictated by external circumstances. Still, your delegate must sign on for the task at hand. If you say, "This must be done by next Tuesday," they have to agree that it is possible. Ask instead. "Can you have this by Tuesday?" To you this may seem a bit remedial, but the step is often overlooked. Whenever possible, have your delegate set the timeline and create the plan. You need only provide guidance and sign off. As General Patton said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

If you skip any one of the above steps, you dramatically reduce the likelihood things will turn out the way you want them to. On the other hand, if you rigorously follow the steps, you greatly increase the odds in your favour.

Isn't this more work than doing it myself?

No - it isn't. The time it takes to 1) establish the goals, 2) review the plan, and 3) monitor the progress, is not equal to the time it takes to execute. That is how you gain leverage. This is how you multiply your efforts. (Occasionally it does take longer to communicate something than to do it yourself. Delegate it anyway. The next time will be easier.)

Paul Lemberg and Lemberg & Company, 1998
http://www.talkbiz.com/digest/emt17.html

Supporting each other and ourselves – non-hierarchically

We all need support. The level varies, but we all need to feel valued and to bring issues from time to time.

Volunteer Co-ordinators rarely have time to support volunteers adequately, let alone themselves.

So…

How do we ensure those that need it have the support they wish for, including co-ordinators, and that we maintain motivation and retention at the same time?

Non-hierarchical structures:

Enable us to see all roles' 'value' as a more equal thing. It becomes more time-orientated, less financial.

Enable some people to stop feeling like they're on the 'bottom rung'. With certain volunteers, getting away from this kind of set-up will increase feelings of confidence and worth.

Make use of all existing skills for supporting volunteers, and nurture new skills.

Share support for volunteers between everyone, and therefore share responsibility for continuing volunteer involvement in the project too

As organisations and co-ordinators we need to be:

Clear with the roles we have – include support for others in tasks and have clear systems so support can be carried out by many.

Not just well-intentioned and welcoming but entirely committed to interaction that allows everybody to feel like that have a role to play and a stake in the outcome.

"For a non-hierarchical community to work the people in the community must actually be a part of the community. They are not participants, they are not recipients, they are not contributors. They are the community."
Margins Project, Union Chapel London

Support and Skill-Sharing for Co-ordinators

Co-ordinating volunteers is a skilled job, and often an isolated one. But - good news! Support to carry out your skilled role is more available now than it ever was.

Support and Networking for Co-ordinators

Volunteer management blogs: A number of hosts have volunteer managers from all over the country – and the world – asking and answering questions that are relevant to you. This is often shared on Twitter, following The Association of Volunteer Managers is the best way to find these out – but this may change, things are transient! **twitter.com/AVMtweets**

Your local Volunteer Centre may have a face-to-face or online forum where you can get advice and – hopefully – have good snacks too. **www.do-it.org** has a list.

Good Practice in Volunteer Management: NCVO have a good practice bank: **www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering**

Volunteering England (before merging with NCVO) published a guide to support those who manage volunteers to gain support. It is not currently marketed by NCVO but is still relevant and useful. ***Influencing Up: A Guide to Gaining Executive Support for Volunteering and Volunteer Management.***
https://vwisetraining.files.wordpress.com/2015/04/ve_influencing_up.pdf

Volunteer Management Q+As:
Rebecca Tully runs online training and has free online Q+A sessions:
www.rebeccatully.co.uk

Building your skills

Co-ordinating and Facilitating Groups

www.seedsforchange.org.uk/resources
http://rhizomenetwork.wordpress.com/resources/

Clear Writing Skills:

www.plainenglish.co.uk

Making Writing Accessible for Everyone:

www.learningdisabilities.org.uk
www.mencap.org.uk

Changing Cultures in your Organisation

The session used some examples of from a framework developed by National Children's Bureau with a view to increasing participatory cultures in organisations:

Changing Cultures: some things that work

Highlight the need for change

It can be beneficial to highlight the need for change, by promoting the case for a different organisational approach to volunteering using research or other evidence, and highlighting links to relevant policy requirements.

- Disseminate research on the benefits of volunteering and evidence of the need for support.
- Evaluate a pilot project and promote learning.
- Visit or invite professionals from other organisations to observe and talk about their work.
- Identify and highlight links within relevant local, national and international policy
- Hold discussions about the possible need for change: identify levels of support and concerns, allay false perceptions and discuss ways to overcome real barriers.

Establishing catalysts for change

- Identify existing champions
- Establish new champions
- Build senior management support
- Develop a vision and commitment
- Organise and plan for change
- Develop partnerships and networks
- Identify funding
- Understand culture and politics of organisations

Building a Culture of Participation *Perpetua Kirby, Claire Lanyon, Kathleen Cronin & Ruth Sinclair*
(Taken from: Kath Pasteur, ***Changing Organisations for Sustainable Livelihoods****, 2001)*