

Volunteer Administration in the 21st Century:

A Little Recognition Goes a Long Way Strategies to Recognize Volunteers

Lori Halfmann, Extension Assistant,
Christopher T. Boleman, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, and
Angela Burkham, Extension Program Specialist – Volunteerism,
The Texas A&M University System

Everyone loves to be recognized for hard work or job well done. So should we recognize volunteers? Definitely!

Recognition of effort and achievement benefits both the volunteer and the organization. For the volunteers, recognition satisfies basic human needs and helps the volunteers feel valued. They know that others acknowledge and appreciate what they do, that their performance is good and that they make meaningful contributions to the organization. For the organization, recognition can improve the volunteers' performance and increase their retention.

Frederick Herzberg, a psychologist and researcher of business management issues, studied the factors that motivate people in their work environment. He determined that workers are motivated by elements that enrich their job experiences.

Herzberg identified five strong factors in job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work

itself, responsibility and advancement. These motivators were associated with long-term positive effects in a person's performance.

In volunteer administration, recognition is vital. We as volunteer administrators need to incorporate recognition into our volunteer management practices.

There are two primary categories of recognition: formal and informal. Formal recognition—the more traditional method used in volunteer management—includes several commonly used approaches:

- Annual recognition dinners or parties
- Special pins
- Certificates for designated hours of service
- An honor roll of volunteers posted in your reception area
- Special awards for long-term volunteers

If you decide to hold a formal recognition event, make it solely for the volunteers, and acknowledge them for who they are and what they do for the organization or program. Consider allowing the volunteers to give their testimonies during the event. This will enhance the value of the recognition, enlighten the guests in attendance and serve as recruiting tool for others there.

Although often overlooked, informal recognition should be an ongoing part of your program. Consider trying one of these ways to informally thank your volunteers:

- Invite them to participate in staff meetings, staff training and social events.
- Assign them an e-mail address so they can be kept informed.
- Make sure they know about new developments within the organization.
- Provide a pleasant, comfortable work environment.
- Pay for them to attend training sessions related to their volunteer positions.
- Ask an experienced volunteer to help train new volunteers.
- Consult with volunteers in their areas of expertise.
- Let them know they are missed when they are absent.
- Send a birthday card or celebrate the volunteer's birthday with a cake at the office.
- Just say "thank you," which can go a long way.

It is important to make the recognition personal as well as meaningful. If you are in daily contact with volunteers, you can enhance their satisfaction and self-esteem by demonstrating that you are familiar with them and their work.

Other factors to keep in mind:

- The more you know about a person or group of people, the more you can personalize the rewards.
- Recognition is best built on a relationship of respect and appreciation that is communicated daily.

- Never give recognition because of what it will do for you or when it is not deserved. Others will lose respect for the giver, and the receiver will usually feel belittled. Instead, give it because you sincerely want to honor others.
- Inject fun into your recognition efforts.
- Give recognition unexpectedly, such as quick note of thanks along with a candy kiss.
- Keep good records of your recognition work. This will help you vary the rewards given to long-time volunteers.
- The best tools for building a good recognition process are simple respect on a day-to-day basis and warm, specific thanks.

Another popular way to show the value of volunteer time for groups is to present a "check" to the county commissioners court revealing the total number of people, hours provided and economic value of volunteer contributions to the community through the local Texas Cooperative Extension program.

You could also highlight the work of one or two outstanding volunteers and announce the monetary value of their contributions to the county during National Volunteer Week. You can find the current estimated value by visiting <http://texasvolunteer.tamu.edu>.

Use this formula to determine the value of your volunteers' contribution.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Total number of volunteers} \\
 \times \\
 \text{Total number of hours worked} \\
 \times \\
 \text{\$ value of the work in the private sector} \\
 = \\
 \text{\$ value to the community}
 \end{array}$$

Although everyone needs praise and recognition, volunteers especially appreciate them because they express the importance of their work and their time. To manage volunteers well, you need to recognize their work and know that recognition fulfills human needs. A little recognition can take you and your organization a long way.



What Do You Know About Recognition?

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|--|----------------------------|
| <p>1. Of the two types of recognition, which is easily overlooked but should be ongoing? _____</p> | <p>Recognition</p> |
| <p>2. Which recognition method is the more traditional form? _____
 _____</p> | <p>Informal</p> |
| <p>3. Recognition is best built on a relationship of _____ and _____.</p> | <p>Appreciation</p> |
| <p>4. The number of volunteers multiplied by the number of hours provided times the dollar value of he work in the private sector equals _____
 _____.</p> | <p>Respect</p> |
| <p>5. What helps satisfy basic human needs and is a form of motivation to keep volunteers involved in the program? _____</p> | <p>Formal</p> |
| | <p>Value of volunteers</p> |

1. Informal 2. Formal 3. Respect and appreciation 4. Value of volunteers 5. Recognition

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