



## The Value and Supervision of Volunteers

A STAFF-TO-STAFF WORKSHOP

*Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival*

THE TORONTO  
**FRINGE**

WorkInCulture





## PURPOSE

Thank you for your interest in training your staff on how to work with volunteers. Please note that this PDF version is only an outline of the presentation for you to peruse.

For a full, editable PowerPoint version, please contact [volunteers@hotdocs.ca](mailto:volunteers@hotdocs.ca). This version will give you the opportunity to personalize the presentation to your organization.

Questions and feedback about the curriculum are much appreciated and can be sent to the email above. Enjoy!

## PURPOSE

1. To sell the value of volunteers to the organization
2. To offer a better understanding of how volunteers can be integrated into your organization
3. To offer a better understanding of how staff can better supervise volunteers



## AGENDA



- ❖ Chapter 1 – **Planning**
- ❖ Chapter 2 – **Preparation**
- ❖ Chapter 3 – **In Practicum**

## CHAPTER 1 — Planning



The first section will cover ways in which you contribute to the PLANNING stages of the volunteer program. Volunteers are the gears that allow the machine of your organization to operate. Much of your success is based on those who believe in your mission and choose to invest their time into your work.

## PLANNING — Volunteer Statistics

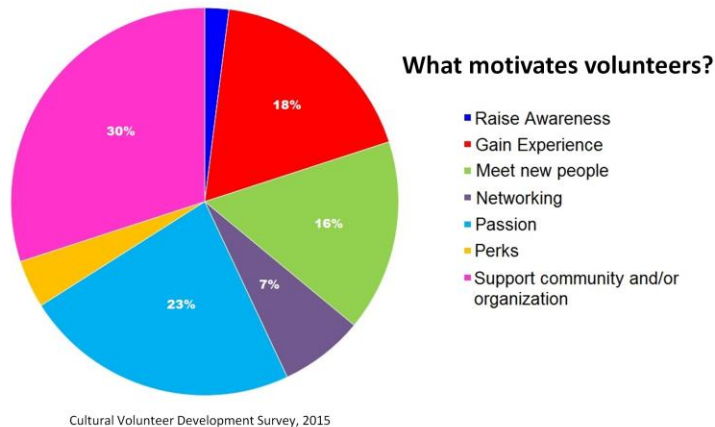
### Organization's statistics

- **Number of volunteers:**
- **Volunteer hours:**
- **Volunteer opportunities:**
- **Volunteer training:**



The first thing you can do in your position is to have an idea of how many volunteers currently contribute to your organization. Take some time to update this slide with your organization's information. Share this information with your staff and include what current volunteer opportunities exist, where your volunteers come from and what type of training is involved in those roles. This will give your staff a good outline of what volunteers expect from your organization and may inspire them to think of a position that doesn't currently exist.

## PLANNING — Motivations



Identifying the motivations of your volunteers will help you to better define the roles that you create for them. Now take a second to think about some of the motivations that drive YOU to volunteer time with an organization.

As you can see from this graph, some of the biggest motivators are also the most selfless – a passion for the work, supporting the community, and also just making friends. Most volunteers contribute time to your organization because THEY, like YOU, support your organization’s mission and goals. Gaining experience is also important to volunteers, especially now in our job market and we will touch upon that a bit later on.



## SCENARIO: The Social Climber

A returning volunteer reaches out to you to indicate that they only want to volunteer in one very specific role, because they feel it will offer them the best opportunity to network and advance their career. The team the volunteer wants to work with is a very small department with tight deadlines and professional contacts. You sense that the department's need for professionalism might not benefit from this individual's inexperience and desire to network. How would you manage their expectations?

**How would you handle this scenario?**





## SCENARIO: The Social Climber

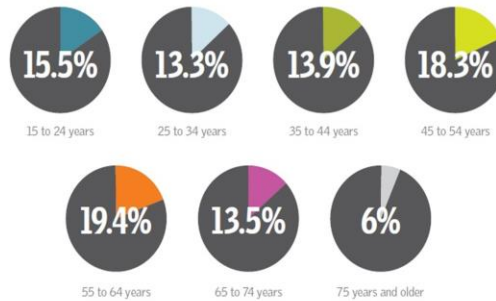
### How would you handle this scenario?

Suggest to the volunteer that there might be a better fitting department that still offers a similar learning experience. Suggest another team for them to volunteer with that is related to their area of interest. For example, if they want to work in the Communications Department, suggest an alternative to start out with, such as distributing marketing material, which will give them an opportunity to find out more about programming and opportunities available at your organization.

Work to find a compromise that puts the best interest of the individual and organization into play and reminds the volunteer that you need volunteers to be flexible and that you appreciate their willingness to try something else. If the volunteer still refuses to be flexible in what they're doing, then it may be in the best interest of the individual and organization that the volunteer look for that specific role at another organization.

## PLANNING — Age Demographic

### Who are volunteers?



General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, Statistics Canada, 2013

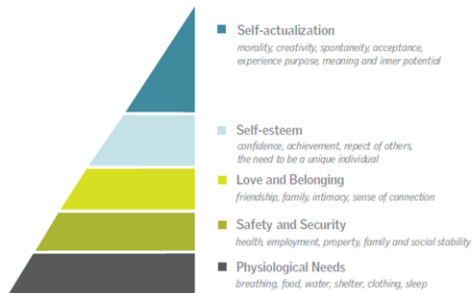
Moving along to who volunteers are. Not only do volunteers range in skills, abilities, cultures and orientations, they range a lot in age.

As you can see, the section of Canadians who contribute their time to volunteering is almost equally divided among each age group. What does this mean for the fine folks working with volunteers?

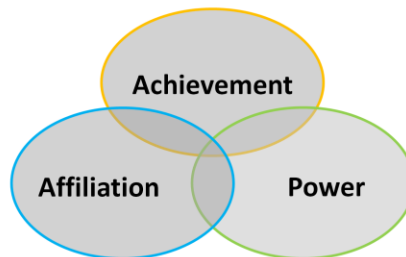
You're working with many different personalities, so it's important to recognize that your organization's cause is what's bringing them together. You need to tailor opportunities for them that follow the goals of your organization and follows their goals as well.

## PLANNING — Volunteer Goals

What do they want?



**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**



**McClelland's Theory of Needs**

But what do volunteers need when volunteering? We, as humans, have immediate needs that have to be met such as food, shelter and safety before we can focus on our other needs.

Your volunteers are looking for a sense of community and accomplishment when they donate their time. From Maslow's hierarchy we can identify those needs as socializing with others on shift and forming a sense of connection, gaining esteem and confidence from learning new skills and receiving positive feedback from staff, and ultimately bettering themselves by engaging in the community with a purpose and encouraging personal growth.

David McLelland's Theory of Needs focuses on the need for Achievement, Affiliation and Power, and how volunteers are looking to fulfill more than just their basic needs through their contributions to society.

## PLANNING — Skills-Based Volunteering

**What do you think  
volunteers bring to an  
organization?**

- A fresh set of eyes
- A chance to work with diverse groups
- An opportunity to better focus on your job



There has been a shift in volunteer management that addresses the need for a skills-based strategy rather than a needs-based strategy. By taking the time to identify and develop the skills of your volunteers as opposed to just filling the slots, you can receive:

- A fresh set of eyes that can offer another perspective
- The opportunity for staff to increase interaction with diverse groups and
- A chance to better focus on your job since a volunteer is there to supplement your work

## PLANNING — Skills-Based Volunteering

**How can you help to implement a skills-based system?**

- Assessment
- Planning
- Engagement
- Implementation

-Volunteer Canada



Having you on board with skills-based volunteers is key to creating a productive environment for both staff and volunteers. There are many steps to integrating skills-based volunteering into an organization, but the most important areas where you can help is with Engagement and Implementation.

It's important to get to know the protocols already in place, all while ensuring the volunteer remains engaged in their task. Keeping lines of communication open between you and the volunteer also gives them a chance to share their feedback, which may help you implement change to an existing process.

## PLANNING — Who are supervisors?

### **The Mean Supervisor:**

- Protective of their job
- Acknowledge they need help but don't want to give a volunteer the opportunity to shine
- Don't say thank you
- Rarely interact with volunteers

### **The Absent Supervisor:**

- Neglects volunteers
- No thought of the repercussions
- They usually arrive late to a shift if at all

### **The Aloof Supervisor:**

- Don't really set themselves up as a source of information
- Begrudgingly supervise

### **The Micromanaging Supervisor:**

- Huge distrust of volunteers
- Constantly hover



As a staff member working with volunteers, it can be tough to manage your workload while ensuring that the volunteer is having the best experience possible. It's easy to fall into certain bad habits especially when you have no idea the effect you have on volunteers. The following stereotypes are oversimplified but it's still important to acknowledge them in order to prevent them. Let's start with the negative stereotypes:

### **The Mean Supervisor:**

- Protective of their job
- Acknowledge they need help but don't want to give a volunteer the opportunity to shine
- Don't say thank you
- Rarely interact with volunteers

### **The Absent Supervisor:**

- Neglects volunteers
- No thought of the repercussions
- They usually arrive late to a shift if at all

### **The Aloof Supervisor:**

- Don't really set themselves up as a source of information
- Begrudgingly supervise

### **The Micromanaging Supervisor:**

- Huge distrust of volunteers
- Constantly hover

## PLANNING — Who are supervisors?

### **The Knowledgeable Supervisor:**

- Cares deeply about their work
- Present and open to questions

### **The Trusting Supervisor:**

- Content to leave a volunteer to complete tasks
- Supportive if needed

### **The Challenging Supervisor:**

- Wants to encourage development of skills
- Sets out tasks to strengthen the skills they've identified in the volunteers



Overall these types of supervisors are influenced by an “it’s not my job” mentality. If you’re watching this you’ve probably already realized this isn’t the case, and that supervisors can come from many different departments. With this in mind, here are some positive stereotypes that you can work to exemplify:

### **The Knowledgeable Supervisor:**

- Cares deeply about their work
- Present and open to questions
- Can turn into the Micromanaging stereotype

### **The Trusting Supervisor:**

- Content to leave a volunteer to complete tasks
- Supportive if needed

### **The Challenging Supervisor:**

- Wants to encourage development of skills
- Sets out tasks to strengthen the skills they’ve identified in the volunteers

## PLANNING — The Big Picture



- Formalized orientation session
- Feature on website
- Manual
- Training

Ultimately, volunteers lose interest in an organization when they don't feel as though they're a part of it. It's our role as supervisors to remind them that their contribution to the organization is really important, and show them how they fit into the equation. The best way to do so is by communicating your organization's goals and mission through outlets such as:

- A formalized orientation session
- A volunteer section in your website
- A listing in the volunteer manual
- A training session

Making sure that a volunteer knows these objectives will help them figure out how their work fits into the grand scheme of things. Remember, volunteers are not placeholders, and we should always think of ways to integrate them into the organization in a meaningful way.





## SCENARIO: The Rule Breaker

You notice that a volunteer who you assigned to a stationary position has been wandering away from their post, chatting with patrons and is generally unaware of the disruption in operations they're causing. How would you communicate the importance of their assignment to them?

**How would you handle this scenario?**



## SCENARIO: The Rule Breaker

### How would you handle this scenario?

Inform volunteers as to how the tasks they are performing fit into the goal or mandate of a specific department or project. It is a good idea to communicate to volunteers that times often fluctuate between busy times and slow times. When things start to slow down on shift, it's a great time to chat with volunteers to give them the bigger picture of how the organization works and why their position is so important. This is also a great time to really get to know them and their skills which might benefit both you and the volunteer down the road.

If it is clear that the volunteer does not understand the task at hand, give them a chance to show you how to complete the task. This will help you identify what part of the instructions is not clear.

Volunteers can also use this time to get to know each other and form tight bonds on shift. If at all possible, think about rotating the volunteer into another position so that they can experience different positions and situations during their shift.

## PLANNING — Volunteer Assessment

1) Decide on what tasks a volunteer can and cannot do.

- Provide exceptional customer service
- Help with the planning and execution of orientation and training sessions
- Offer information to the public as instructed by supervisors
- Assist with event management
- Engage in tasks that are meaningful and respectful
- Work autonomously BUT must be supervised by a staff member
- Replace the work of paid staff (handle cash, serve food or alcohol)
- Work with equipment without proper protection
- Lift more than 30 lbs on shift (if light lifting is involved, it MUST be noted in the job description)
- Be assigned to a task without the supervision of a staff member
- Complete a task they feel is unsafe (Right to Refuse unsafe work)

Keep in mind that volunteers are not covered by the Employment Standards Act (2000) and most are not covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (1997). However, it's just good manners to give volunteers the same treatment is regards to break times, etc. outlined in these acts.

Additionally, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, organizations have some responsibility for the health and safety of people visiting or helping out in their workplaces, such as providing proper protective gear and respecting the Right to Refuse Unsafe Work.

You can absolutely utilize the customer service skills of volunteers or other specific skillsets they may have in event management. They can be autonomous, but there must be some sort of support system. Any task should be meaningful and respectful as well.

The 'can not's' relate right back to the safety act and how they are protected from taking on what a paid staff member would do, or what is unfair/unsafe.

## PLANNING — Volunteer Assessment

2) Decide on what specialized roles you may need to accomplish your goals.

- Skills-based volunteering
- Fits with organization's mandate and goals
- Complements your work and allows more time to focus on succeeding in other ways



Specialized roles are a great way to not only complete projects that your organization needs but are also a way to develop the skill base of your volunteers. This is true with skills based volunteering as mentioned earlier but note that these roles often require a screening process to ensure the right candidate is brought on board.

Ensure that the role focuses on your organization's mission and goals but also keep in mind that the role should also focus on developing your volunteer's skillsets as well. In this way, a specialized role is a fine balance between the two objectives but once you find the right candidate you will see that they can complement your work and projects giving you time to focus on other areas of your job.

## PLANNING — Volunteer Recruitment

1. All Hands on Deck Recruitment
  - What kind of strategies would you use for reaching a large group?
2. Targeted Recruitment
  - Educational institutions
  - Industry circles
  - Returning volunteers
  - Partner organizations
3. Concentric Circles Recruitment
  - Staff and co-workers
  - Friends of organization
  - Family
  - Stakeholders, board members, etc.



There are many strategies you can employ in your recruitment, but we will focus on three basic ways:

- All Hands on Deck: the general call-out for a large group of people needed for a task or event that doesn't require a vast array of skills.
  - What kind of strategies would you suggest for reaching a large group of people?
- Targeted: works well when you're looking for specific skillsets or looking to fill leadership roles. It's helpful for staff to suggest educational organizations, industry circles, etc. that you know who could help with this strategy.
- Concentric: uses the network you already have – engaging staff, friends, returning volunteers

The latter two work a little better if you're looking for something specific, but the first is much more helpful for a large-scale event.

## PLANNING — Screening Volunteers

- Screening tactics:
  - Application form
  - Phone interview
  - In person interview
- Ways staff can help:
  - Vetting resumes
  - Job description



### Screening tactics:

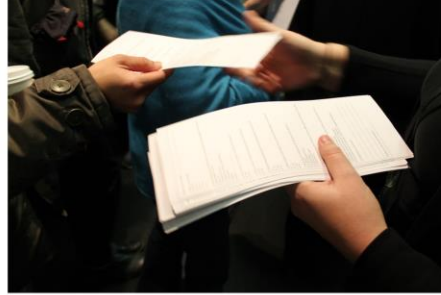
- Application form: Make it simple, encourage staff to circulate it
- Phone and in person interviews: staff should be involved in this process when they're requesting specialized roles. This way, they can ensure they're helping to select the best candidates for the job

### Ways staff can help:

- Job descriptions: making sure the original call for volunteers accurately depicts what staff is looking for, receive applications that reflect their needs
- Vetting resumes: looking through them and suggesting where they might fit in, helping to select candidates for further interviews

## PLANNING — Interview Tactics

- In person or phone interviews
  - One-on-one
  - Group
- Body language
- Pacing
- Encourage questions
- Things to consider:
  - Determine what they want
  - Be realistic
  - Assess their skills



- In person or phone interviews:
  - One-on-one: can be intimidating
  - Group: in person or a conference call, be mindful that it doesn't appear that you're ganging up, i.e. four interviewers and one interviewee
- Body language: Pay attention to body language as it can say more than their answers ever could
- Pacing:
  - Give yourself enough time for the interview and breaks in between
  - Try not to do too many interviews in one day – you will burn out and be unfair
- Encourage questions:
  - Ask follow up questions
  - Ask the interviewee if they have any questions
- Things to consider:
  - Try to determine what the volunteer wants to get out of the experience
  - Be realistic when assessing and asking how much time they can commit to the job. Most people make themselves appear more available than they actually are
  - Try to understand what skills and experiences these individuals can bring to your organization

## PLANNING — Inclusivity



- Different age groups = energy and experience
- Different cultural backgrounds = skills and insight
- Different physical abilities = accessible problem-solving

One amazing perk to working with volunteers is meeting many different people from many different walks of life. This is why it's so important to make sure that we approach each person as an individual and leave any presumptions we may have at the door.

Forming judgement based on age, cultural background, gender, orientation or physical ability is NOT acceptable and overlooks the advantages of a diverse volunteer base. For example:

- Welcoming a variety of age groups results in a wealth of energy and life experience
- People from different cultural backgrounds can bring professional skills learned in their native country and act as a bridge to another culture.
- Lastly, think of how volunteers with physical disabilities have to be natural problem solvers when navigating a space.



## PLANNING — Inclusivity



**What can your organization do to ensure your volunteer program is as inclusive as possible?**

- Share success stories
- Institute staff and volunteer policies
- Ensure material is available in different languages

Here's how your organization can be as inclusive as possible:

- Share the success stories of current volunteers who display an array of ages, cultures and abilities
- Institute staff and volunteer policies that promote inclusivity
- Ensure that your recruitment material and position descriptions are available in different languages

These are just a few ways you can make sure anyone and everyone feels welcome in your work environment, so we definitely encourage you to discuss this further with your volunteer office staff to see if they have any other initiatives in place.

## CHAPTER 2 — Preparation



Now that you have seen how you can get involved and help with the planning of volunteer roles in your organization, let's get you a bit more prepared to work with volunteers. Believe it or not, there are a few things you can do as staff to prepare yourself and your work space to welcome a volunteer in your organization. Taking some time to review and ensure that you have all the right tools and resources in place will go a long way to creating a warm and welcoming environment. Let's dive right in!

## PREPARATION — Requesting Volunteers

- Determine a deadline
- Filling out a volunteer request form:
  - Supervisor's contact info
  - Shift location
  - Shift length
  - Clear expectations and requirements
  - Note previously exceptional volunteers
    - Importance of feedback



Assessing the volunteer needs in your organization early on in planning may take a little while as your coworkers may not be thinking about what support they need on hand for an event that may be months away. It is the responsibility of the volunteer department to work with staff in determining the needs they may not even know they require as well as providing guidance into what is an appropriate task versus one that a volunteer cannot do. Open communication with staff at meetings, via email and telephone about your deadline to collect this information will help limit changes further down the road and will ensure that your time will not be spent chasing people down for that information.

In order to ensure that all necessary information is included in the job description, the first step should be setting a deadline for volunteer requests to be submitted. Then, they should be able to fill out a volunteer request form much more accurately.

Cover the key details first – the supervisor's name and contact info, the location of the shift, etc. If this info isn't readily available at this point, i.e. the supervisor isn't hired yet, try to provide the title or just as much info as you can.

The length of the shifts should be at least three hours in length to ensure it's worth their time. If shifts consider a lot of repetitive tasks, consider breaking a longer shift into two. Scheduling breaks should also be factored in.

Job descriptions should be clear and accurate to ensure all parties know what the expectations are. Legally, you must note any requirements with using equipment, heavy lifting, long periods of standing on their feet, any extreme working conditions, etc.

Ask supervisors if they have any suggestions for exceptional volunteers they would like to work with again, take that information and add it to your database for volunteer profiles. This is why it's so important to take notes on-shift so you can have a head start in this step. We'll expand on this more later!

Giving a big thank you to your staff for filling out the form as they are helping the volunteer department achieve their goals.

## PREPARATION — Position Descriptions

- Detailed outline of the task
- Time commitment
- Specific skills
- Physical requirements
- Nature of the position
- Supervisor
- Application process
- Dress code (if applicable)
- Benefits



Ideally, you as staff have had a helping hand in developing the position description for the volunteer role, but realistically, this is not always the case.

- **Outline of task:** Volunteers prepare for their role by reading over the description so they have a better idea of what to expect when they first arrive. Make sure to take some time to review the exact details of what your volunteers will come to expect on shift and avoid asking them to complete tasks not listed.
- **Time commitment of the position:** Figure out how often the volunteer will be coming in and plan your schedule around those times to ensure that you are around to answer any questions. This will also give you the opportunity to create a timeline of the task until completion and set benchmarks with the volunteer working on the task.
- **Specific skills required:** These are the skills your volunteer is bringing to the role. Get to know what you can expect your volunteer to know.
- **Physical requirements:** It's a good idea to review this section and make sure that none of the tasks you will be asking your volunteer to complete are listed. Some volunteers have injuries or cannot stand for long periods of time and they really rely on us to disclose this information ahead of time so that they are well prepared for the tasks.
- **Identify the nature of the position:** this goes a long way to set up volunteer expectations. It will ensure that volunteers know the pace of the role and tasks involved and will allow them to prepare for it.
- **Supervisor:** the volunteer knows who you are and what your role is.
- **Application process:** checking in on this will give you a better idea of how well the volunteer is suited to the position. The longer the application process is, the better the chances are that the volunteer is well suited to the role.
- **Dress code** (if applicable): some sort of uniform, whether volunteer t-shirt is or isn't required, dress pants, etc. so that you know if the volunteer shows up prepared.
- **Benefits:** let's face it, benefits are a motivation for some volunteers. Find out what the benefits are and how they work at your organization so you can answer any questions volunteers may have.

## PREPARATION — Volunteer Orientation



Here are a few ways staff can help with orientation:

- Anticipate Q&A from volunteers regarding their positions
- Pitching their volunteer opportunity personally
- Meeting volunteers after the session

Preparing an effective Orientation Session can take a while and making sure that input from staff working with volunteers is vital to ensure that the messaging to volunteers is consistent and accurate. While the preparation of the orientation session mostly lies with the volunteer department, there are ways that staff can inform the session to make sure they're recruiting the volunteers they need for their team.

- Anticipate a Q&A: draft answers in your mind ahead of time to questions that volunteers may have about the position
- Pitching their volunteer opportunity personally: putting a face to the supervisor name and task, staff will know the role best and what the requirements are
- Meeting volunteers after the session: another opportunity to answer questions and clarify details of the role, and more importantly to get a sense of who the volunteer is and whether they're right for the role



## SCENARIO: The Know-It-All

A very talented returning volunteer who was promoted to a role with a higher level of responsibility five years ago refuses to review the revised position description for their position this year and does not want to attend training, citing that it's basically the same, so there's no need. What would you do to encourage them to review the description and attend the session?

**How would you handle this scenario?**



## SCENARIO: The Know-It-All

### How would you handle this scenario?

It is best to start with a compliment by first saying you're aware of how well they've done with the organization and respect their dedication. Next, follow up with a comment about how the position descriptions change yearly and that it is in their interest to read it over.

You can also tell them that new volunteers in that role will be looking to their experience for answers and if they do not review the basic information of the role or attend training, how do they expect to answer these questions from other volunteers? With their experience and dedication to the role, it is their responsibility to stay on top of changes and keep up to date with role-specific training. This strategy plays into their strengths of knowing everything while addressing the need to fulfill their responsibilities in this higher level position.

Ask the volunteer to pitch the role at orientation or at a training session and act as the support for new volunteers in that role. This way you are providing them with more responsibility and they will feel that they have to know the role inside and out in order to present the details about it. If they still refuse, inform them that it is an expectation for them to review the position description and stay informed in order to fulfill that role as a volunteer. Given the type of volunteer you're dealing with, they likely won't take it this far.



## PREPARATION — Building a Successful Volunteer Shift

- Number of volunteers needed
- Type of volunteer required
- Be mindful of time needed
- Avoid schedule conflict
- Establish a meeting spot
- Schedule break times
  - Employment Standards Act
- Provide resources
- Team up volunteers



Building a shift isn't just about getting a certain amount of shifts filled. There are nuances that cannot be ignored for a successful shift to take place. Here are some things to consider before creating a successful volunteer shift:

- Number of volunteers needed: consider the boredom factor if there's a lot of downtime and pairing volunteers up so they have company, or alternatively to have support if it's a busy environment
- Type of volunteer required
- Being mindful of time: sometimes overestimate when setting shift length, but it's important to note that volunteers are carving out the full shift in their schedule and we should respect their time. Brief staff with start and end times of volunteer shifts, and assign a meeting spot to avoid confusion later on.
- Assess and alter the schedule to avoid conflicts: you want to make sure you're available as a supervisor for the whole shift, especially the sign-in and sign-out of the volunteers
- Establish a meeting spot: you requested a specific location in the volunteer request form, so ensure that you're consistently meeting volunteers at that spot. You don't want volunteers searching for you, especially if the shift is in a complicated space.
- Identify break times: factor a break into the full duration of the shift. To give you an idea, a volunteer should get a 15 minute break if the shift is 3 hours long, and 30 minutes if it's over five or more hours long. This coincides with the Employment Standards Act in Ontario.
- Provide resources: give volunteers material that will be helpful to them on shift. It's so important that you have the proper resources for the number of volunteers you request – i.e. if you're cutting and pasting and have 12 volunteers, make sure you have 12 pairs of scissors.
- Team up eager volunteers with veteran volunteers: Prepare to team up eager volunteers that may be seeking training and answers with veteran volunteers who know the role as well as you do.



## PREPARATION — Welcoming Environment



### What would you do to create a welcoming environment?

- Avoid bad habits
  - Show up late
  - Ignore the volunteer
  - Act brusque
  - Constantly forget their name
  - Cancel a project at the last minute
  - Never check in, share info, or say thank you

You may not even know that the way you act can poorly reflect on you as a supervisor. We don't want to blame anyone but merely want to draw attention to some **bad habits** that can go unnoticed, such as:

- Showing up late when you're supposed to meet with a volunteer at a specific time
- Ignoring the volunteer position description and instead ask the volunteer to do "other stuff"
- Acting in a brusque and/or condescending way- "Don't worry about why I'm asking you to do this, just do it." That may work in a volunteer army, but not with civilian volunteers!
- Constantly forgetting the volunteer's name OR not saying hello when you see them
- Cancelling a project and wait to the last minute to tell volunteers "thanks, but no thanks," or worse, wait for them to show up before sending them home.
- Never checking in after they have started on a project
- Never sharing information that may be relevant to their work or their understanding of the organization
- Never saying thank you.

## PREPARATION — Welcoming Environment



### What would you do to create a welcoming environment?

- Encourage good habits
  - Practice active listening
  - Provide corrective feedback
  - Understand that it's "different strokes for different folks"
  - Conduct performance evaluations

At the opposite end of the spectrum, here are some **habits that are encouraged**.

- Practice active listening so people feel that they are truly being heard
- Provide corrective feedback in a timely manner to stop negative behaviours from escalating
- Understand how motivational theory translates to "different strokes for different folks" when it comes to supervisor techniques
- Conduct performance evaluations that actually help people perform at a higher level

## PREPARATION — Welcoming Environment

Accommodate different:

- Personalities
- Age groups
- Abilities
- Cultural backgrounds



Working with volunteers means working with people from all different backgrounds but it is our job as supervisors to create a welcoming environment for everyone and sometimes that means accommodating different things. Here are a few examples that you may come across in your volunteer adventures:

### Personalities

- No two people are alike and so you'll need to find ways to accommodate shyness, boldness, slow and quick learners, humour and seriousness, and much more
- Volunteers learn in many different ways so try explaining instructions in a few different ways

### Age groups:

- Different generations bring their own life experience and expectations to their volunteer work. Understanding the differences is the first step to finding common ground.
- When supervising volunteers with more life experience, deal directly with any performance issues and offer training or alternatives to help them.
- Be patient with volunteers who have a busy life, check in often and offer to be flexible, like thinking about shortening shifts to suit the volunteer's schedule.
- Understand that today's youth have a tremendous amount of pressure, including everything from homework to chores. Make their volunteer work fun and rewarding so it's the beginning of a life-long commitment to your organization.

### Abilities

- Naturally the accessibility of a space needs to be noted. Take into consideration entry into your building, any ramps or stairs, and location of washrooms.
- Encouraging those with special needs to communicate their requests is an important part of the process to ensure that they feel welcome in your space. This can include providing seating if necessary or accommodating time for volunteers who need to administer medication while on shift.

### Cultural backgrounds

- Be mindful of culture norms. Around the world there are different senses of what's appropriate when it comes to things like humour, physical contact, or something as simple as greetings, so it's important to respect all cultures equally.



## SCENARIO: The Saboteur

Despite your best efforts to create a welcoming environment for your volunteer team, one person in particular seems intent on disrupting the peace by taking too long to return from a break, procrastinating on a task you assigned to them, and generally seeming annoyed. How would you try to improve their experience?

**How would you handle this scenario?**



## SCENARIO: The Saboteur

### How would you handle this scenario?

The volunteer obviously seems like they are not enjoying themselves and may need to be re-assigned to a new task. It would also be necessary to speak to the volunteer about breaks and why it is important for people to come back on time to ensure everyone gets a break. There may also be real-life problems that are distracting the volunteer from completing the task. Engaging the volunteer as to why they are distracted would be the first step to understand their actions. Do not assume you know what the issue is and take the time to talk to the volunteer to identify why they are acting out in a disruptive manner. Once you understand the cause of their behaviour, you can then take steps to correct it.

## PREPARATION — Camaraderie



- Team-building activities
- Treating volunteers as equals
- The importance of attitude

When you are working with a group of volunteers, you will want to set aside a bit of time for a team-building activity. This will allow volunteers to learn more about each other and you as their supervisor, and feel more comfortable about working together.

It's important for staff to speak to volunteers as equals. Volunteers are not our subordinates. Volunteers have specific roles and duties, which are assigned to them by your volunteer office. Volunteers are there to help and do tasks that some staff may consider remedial.

To volunteers, how you ask them to do something is more important than what you're asking them to do. While things may get busy on shift, take a minute to remind yourself that you are all a team, working together for a common goal. Think about how you say things to people just as much as you think about what to say to people.

## PREPARATION — Volunteer Software

Aspects to keep in mind when researching software needs:

- Aesthetics
- Organization
- Tracking volunteer performance and hours
- Scheduling system
- Training resource
- Community

**What do you need the software to do for your organization?**



While you may be working with a few volunteers in your job, keep in mind that the volunteer office works with all of them.

By discovering what system is used and how the volunteer office uses it, you will contribute in one way or another. Some aspects that you can contribute to are:

- Tracking attendance which leads to a volunteer's accountability
- Delivering and recording performance feedback
- Assessing the volunteer's strengths and weaknesses
- Recommending volunteers for potential jobs that come up

After all this, we hope that you can see exactly how valuable you are in a volunteer's experience with your organization. By planning and by preparing yourself ahead of time, you can be sure that any volunteer you work with will feel valued and appreciated by you and your organization.



## CHAPTER 3 — In Practicum



As you can see, there's just a bit of work that needs to be done before you even greet a volunteer on shift. In this last section of the tutorial, we will share some tips on how to create the best experience for you and your volunteers as well as some techniques on how to resolve conflicts that may arise when working with different personalities.



## IN PRACTICUM — Supervising On-site



- Check in with your volunteers
- Provide breaks
- Provide proper instruction
- Provide corrective feedback and/or praise as necessary
- Escalation structure:
  - Volunteer Leader
  - Staff Supervisor
  - Volunteer Office Staff
    - Solve problem/escalate accordingly

While we all have different styles when it comes to working with others, there are a few things to keep in mind while supervising volunteers on shift:

- Check in with your volunteers – this shows you support them
- Provide breaks – remember, you can use the Employment Standards Act as a guide
- Give proper instruction to make sure the volunteer understands the task
- Offer corrective feedback and/or praise as necessary
- For when a situation escalates, ensure volunteers know who to turn to. Most volunteer offices follow the structure listed on this slide.

## IN PRACTICUM — First Shift

1. Give a tour of the facility
  - a) Other staff
  - b) Emergency meeting place
  - c) Washrooms
  - d) Storage
  - e) Where you'll be
  - f) Extra materials



During a volunteer's first shift, take the time to train them effectively. First, begin with a tour of the area where the volunteer will be spending their time. Make sure to point out:

- Any other staff who will be present
- The emergency meeting place
- Washrooms
- Storage for their personal belongings
- Where the volunteer can find you if they have any questions.
- It's also great to point out where they can restock on materials so they can feel as independent as possible.

## IN PRACTICUM — First Shift

2. Full demonstration of task
  - a) Visuals
  - b) Handouts
  - c) Hands-on
  - d) Repeat instructions back to you
3. Circuit training model (if applicable)
  - a) Smaller groups
  - b) Different locations
  - c) Staff or experienced volunteer explains the task



Next, a demonstration of the task can go a long way. Feel free to use visuals, provide handouts, offer a hands-on approach, or simply ask them to repeat the instructions back to you to ensure they understand

Lastly, when dealing with a large group consider creating a circuit training module where you break them down into smaller groups and move them to various locations where a staff member or experienced volunteer explains each task.

## IN PRACTICUM — Providing Feedback



Two types of feedback:

1. **Reinforcement** – encouraging good habits
2. **Corrective** – suggests how to improve a task

**hotdocs**  
OUTSPOKEN. OUTSTANDING.

One of the most important steps in someone learning a new task is receiving feedback. There are two styles to consider:

**Reinforcement:** This identifies desirable habits and encourages the individual to continue with these in the future

**Corrective:** Which identifies and provides suggestions on how to improve a task

While giving Reinforcement is usually easier to do, most studies agree that Corrective feedback is integral to learning something new. Common approaches to Corrective feedback include the BOOST and EEC models.

## IN PRACTICUM — Providing Feedback



- BOOST method
  - Balanced
  - Observed
  - Objective
  - Specific
  - Timely
- EEC method
  - Evidence
  - Effect
  - Change

- Balanced: includes points of development and strength
- Observed: focuses on the facts, not assumptions
- Objective: highlights the behaviour, not the person
- Specific: give examples
- Timely: follows up on an issue in a timely manner

Similarly:

- Evidence: provides examples of the behaviour without focusing on the personality
- Effect: describes how the person's actions influenced the task
- Change: offers guidance on how to alter the person's actions

## IN PRACTICUM — Conflict Resolution

- Ask the volunteer to speak with you in a private place
- Maintain eye contact
- Do not assign blame
- No one is completely right or wrong
- Listen without interrupting
- Repeat key details
- Never jump to conclusions
- Thank everyone involved
- Ensure conflict is well-documented



Not so surprisingly, a lot of the steps used for providing feedback also inform the techniques used for conflict resolution, such as focusing on the objective behaviour and facts. Here are some other basic tips for solving a volunteer-related conflict:

- Ask the volunteer to speak with you in a private place
- Maintain eye contact
- Do not assign blame since no one is completely right or wrong
- Practice active listening by repeating key details and not interrupting
- Never jump to conclusions
- Thank everyone involved for their time

The last and most important step is to ensure the conflict is well-documented. Keeping a paper trail is key in case the issue re-escalates in the future or alternatively to show the progress of the volunteer.

## IN PRACTICUM — Tracking Volunteer Performance




- Volunteer recognition
- Retention
- Areas of improvement in both the task and/or for the volunteer
- Appropriate volunteer placement
- Promoting excellent volunteers in the future

When it comes to tracking volunteer performance, a supervisor is invaluable to the Volunteer Office since they can't be everywhere at once. Your input:

- Allows exceptional volunteers to be recognized by the Volunteer Office
- Helps the organization to retain its superstars by offering them leadership roles or additional rewards
- Identifies strengths and areas of improvement for both the task and the volunteers and therefore ensures that volunteers are placed appropriately in the future





## SCENARIO: Group Work

Similar to our study of the pitfalls that supervisors can sometimes encounter, we will now focus on the kind of volunteers who can make a shift difficult. As with the scenarios provided above, these scenarios focus on problematic behaviour that your staff may encounter on shift. These behavioural issues can be found in John Lipp's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Recruiting & Managing Volunteers*.

Divide your attendees into four groups. Assign them one of the following difficult volunteers:

- *The Gossip:* While on your break you happen to overhear a volunteer talking loudly nearby about how unimpressed they are with the executive director of the organization. They're describing them in very unkind terms to anyone who will listen.
- *The Negative One:* An unforeseen hiccup has occurred during a volunteer's shift that requires them to re-do a large portion of the task they just completed. They're pretty displeased about this development and are clearly displaying it, bringing the positivity down with them. They also begin to criticize how the system in place must be wrong since the issue occurred.
- *The Harasser:* After pairing up an older, more experienced volunteer with a young high school-aged volunteer, you begin to notice that the older volunteer is taking tasks away from the younger one, often giving them a glare or a condescending lecture in the process. The fact that they're trying to complete the tasks of two volunteers on their own is slowing down operations considerably.
- *The Prejudiced One:* While sitting in on a volunteer leader's debrief to their team, you notice that the leader is actively discouraging the older volunteers from taking on more challenging roles available during the shift, stating that they should probably just take it easy. Despite the protestations of the volunteers, they still decide to relegate them to a corner, so to speak.





## SCENARIO: Group Work

How would you handle these scenarios?

### **The Gossip**

These volunteers love gossip, especially when an organization is going through change. The best way to stop gossipers is to ensure information flows directly from one source like your Volunteer Office. Keeping people in the loop makes other volunteers less inclined to listen to gossipers. A directive approach may be necessary to let the individual know their behaviour is inappropriate and won't be tolerated.

### **The Negative One**

These volunteers never see anything as being right. They are quick to find flaws and if you are trying something they will probably suggest that it won't work. While these volunteers' impact is usually minimal, they can keep people's spirits down and create a toxic work environment for other volunteers. When dealing with these individuals, listen to them and keep it positive. Do not get sucked into their negativity. Humour is a good way to sidetrack negativity. It is best to keep these individuals away from public positions as they are not the type of people you want to be the face of your organization. They may also corrupt other volunteers, so it is best to keep them away from recent recruits as their influence and negativity may grow. If you're unable to work with these people and properly place them, then you may need to remove them altogether.



## SCENARIO: Group Work

How would you handle these scenarios?

### **The Harasser**

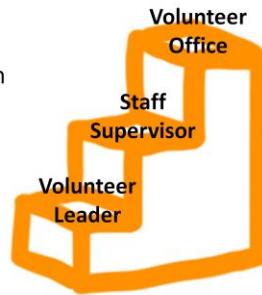
The harasser is a combination of the know-it-all and the saboteur combined. However, they have a much more intense approach. Through direct and indirect intimidation they can make others feel uncomfortable. They may use threats and make demands of co-workers. These people have a one-track mind and are often willing to compromise when it comes to how things are done. This type of behaviour should never be tolerated. Their behaviour is unacceptable in every part of society, whether it is at work or during their leisure time. These volunteers should be removed once their behaviour and actions have been verified and documented by a staff member.

### **The Prejudiced One**

The prejudiced volunteer can have many prejudices about many different things. Common prejudices include age, sex, sexual orientation and nationality, and can also include an area someone grew up in. A common prejudice that is seen a lot in volunteering is that some individuals believe that older volunteers aren't fit or capable of volunteering. On the flip side there is also a belief from some prejudice volunteers that younger volunteers aren't experienced or responsible enough to be in a supervisory role. These behaviours, if accepted can lead to a hostile work environment, a mass exodus of good volunteers and even legal trouble for your organization. Every person regardless of whether they are paid or not should be able to work in an environment where they feel safe, appreciated and not judged for who they are (Lipp, 2009).

## IN PRACTICUM — Constant Communication

- Ensure supervisors are open and available to communicate
- Make volunteers aware of escalation structure
- Show support by checking in
- Create a centralized point of information
  - Online
  - On-site
  - Volunteer Office



Communication is so important on shift and needs to be as constant as possible. Volunteers should always feel that you are open and available to them, so you need to take the time to check in while the task is being completed. It's much easier to step in early to make corrections during a process than it is to have to redo the work once it's completed, and the volunteer will end up feeling supported throughout.

Some organizations have created a centralized point of information for volunteers. Find out if this exists at your organization so you can direct your volunteers to the right place if they have any questions.

This centralized area can be a web page specifically for volunteers that lists available shifts and pertinent information, or a printed resource on-site or at the Volunteer Office. While this resource is primarily meant for volunteers, it is beneficial for you to understand some of the policies that your volunteer office has, especially when it comes to things like benefits or signing up for more shifts.

## CONCLUSION — Culture of Thanks

- Direct and positive contact with supervisors
- Thank-you cards
- Social outings
- Volunteer Advisory Committees
- Year-round opportunities
- ...and more!




**hotdocs**  
OUTSPOKEN. OUTSTANDING.

In his book, John Lipp says it's important to create a 'Culture of Thanks' around volunteers, where you're continually showing your appreciation in various ways - whether it's on-site feedback, sending thank-you cards, throwing parties, Volunteer Advisory Committees, and so on. It's actually very rewarding for a volunteer to get direct and positive contact from you, which is why it's important that you don't let your involvement with the volunteer program end when the job's done.

Not all volunteers like to be appreciated or recognized in the same way (and there's no point in recognizing them in the same way over and over again since the novelty will wear off), so be sure to come up with a few different ways to show them how much you value their commitment.

Getting involved beforehand just makes sense since it helps the supervisor to steer the volunteer ship in the right direction, but staying involved afterwards to ensure that the volunteers know that their contribution was appreciated by their leader is what truly makes a volunteer program successful. When volunteers feel that their time was well-spent, they will return, and the Culture of Thanks will be reciprocated.



## CONCLUSION — Culture of Thanks

**Thank YOU for your time!**

**Questions?**