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Creating volunteer roles

Do

- ✓ Define specific roles for volunteers and reflect this in the name you give the role. Just trying to recruit people to the role of 'general volunteer' doesn't give anyone an accurate idea of what they will be doing and sounds a bit boring.
- ✓ It's worth noting down what you would like the volunteer to do. If you run a home visiting scheme and you want a 'volunteer befriender' to carry out home visits – don't just leave it there - make a list of all the things you will require them to do – this will form the basis of your **task description** (it's better to avoid using the term 'job description' where volunteers are concerned)
- ✓ List the skills that you will require people to have in order to perform the role before they start volunteering with you (other additional skills can be learned/acquired through training that you can provide) – this will form the basis of your **person specification**.
- ✓ Start shaping volunteers' roles by asking the question 'what needs to be done?' Most organisations can identify fairly readily (just ask your user groups!) a long list of tasks that need doing. By starting from this point it is possible to involve volunteers in really meaningful work based on the actual needs of the organisation.
- ✓ Try to give volunteers as much responsibility as possible and make it clear to them how their work impacts upon the organisation. This form of recognition is not focused on the giving of certificates or other types of appreciation (although those are important), but is about demonstrating clearly that the role has been thought out and is fulfilling an expressed need.

Don't

- ✘ Just ask 'what can volunteers do to help?' This potentially restricts their involvement by creating 'jobs for the sake of it' and may mean that they often end up doing things that are not really necessary or don't need doing ahead of other more important things.
- ✘ Be too rigid about sticking to a formalised role. Ideally volunteer roles should be adjustable enough to be personalised to the needs of each volunteer. It's good practice to review volunteers' roles on a regular basis and make changes where necessary to ensure that they meet the needs both of the volunteer and organisation.

Resources

- 📖 ***Motivating & retaining volunteers***, Camden Volunteer Bureau, Training Pack (27 pages + additional handouts) – Revised & updated 2003
- 📖 ***The Good Practice Guide***, Kate Bowgett, Kathryn Dickie & Mark Restall, National Centre for Volunteering, 2nd edition 2002. pp 34-37

Contacts

- ☺ **Camden Volunteer Bureau**,
293-299 Kentish Town Road, NW5 2TJ.
☎ (020) 7424 9990
E info@camdenvb.org.uk
W www.camdenvb.org.uk
CVB provides a range of services for volunteer involving organisations.
- ☺ **National Centre for Volunteering**,
Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, N1 9RL.
☎ (020) 7520 8900/8986
E Volunteering@thecentre.org.uk
W www.volunteering.org.uk
NCV operates an information line and stocks a wide range of publications on all aspects of volunteering.

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