

# Welcome to The Workshop

## Gaining, Retaining and Sustaining Volunteers

by

Dr Judy Esmond



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# Customers?

- Volunteers are customers – they are buying the volunteer experience
- More precious than \$\$\$ is their time
- You are selling the product
- The question is – Is the volunteering experience worth buying?

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- Suspects – you don't even know yet- getting their attention
- Prospects – shown an interest and not signed on – keep in contact – more convincing- almost volunteered – anything done differently? What could we do now to have you volunteer?
- New – volunteers – the importance of first impressions
- Repeat – long-term volunteers come back again and again
- Advocates or Raving Fans – satisfied volunteers – so impressed tell everyone – blow the trumpet for you  
(see **Count Me In! Book pp19-20**)

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# Target Marketing

- Target your markets – from general to specific
- Young, old, male, female, students, professions, skills, etc
- Choose a group to market to and focus
- No just the Warm body recruitment & scattergun approach
- Bullseye story – draw around person not role or duties (Count On Me! Book p. 44)

## Research

- Research with current volunteers
- Research what the target group are looking for
- Less than 10% of customers complain – volunteers just slip away
- Include exit interviews

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# Make It Easy To Buy

- No obligation trial period
- Buddy or mentor for new volunteers
- Remove roadblocks to volunteering
- Best sellers – mention the product and listen to what the customers want – their needs
- Include the needs and benefits
- Sell the emotion and the passion, not the ‘head stuff’

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# Publicity

- Headlines – most important features of written material – catchy headlines make people read
- Ask volunteers for words to explain volunteering & call to action
- A prize for finding the error in the newsletter

**Have a look at your own publicity?**

**State the benefits for your target group – WIIFM?**

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# Baby Boomers - BOOMNET

- Boomers
- Organized
- Openness
- Meaningful
- Needs
- Education
- Time

See [www.morevolunteers.com](http://www.morevolunteers.com)  
click on newsletters and  
BOOMNET report to read what  
Baby Boomers are looking for  
from volunteering

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# Written material

- View it as an opportunity to ask – providing your written material is informing not asking – it tells not sells
- All outgoing material – piggyback volunteering material
- Flyers in carry bags – by retailers
- Business cards for volunteers

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## Word of Mouth

People-oriented person to ask

- Remember we recruit people like themselves
- No 1 reason for volunteering – I was asked
- Networking circles - brainstorm
- ‘You plus two’ party
- Increase the relationship – increase the conversion rate

*If you don't ask people can't say...YES – McCurley & Vineyard  
(Count Me In! Book, p.69)*

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# Most successful recruitment strategies

- Recognition of short-term volunteering
- Breaking down the tasks
- Targeting
- Relationship marketing - asking
- Excellent training
- Orientation and follow-up
- Exit interviews
- Mentoring programs for new volunteers

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# Revolving Door Volunteering

Cost 5 times as much time, effort & money to attract a new customer as to keep an Existing one.

What is your goal? – specifically?

*In the absence of clearly defined goals, we become strangely loyal to performing daily acts of trivia – Anonymous – See Count On Me! Book, p. 4*

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# Top 11 Reasons Volunteers Leave

1. Culture and climate – how it feels to be there
  - If the talk is openness & creativity but really bureaucracy & procedures
  - Honesty & integrity but really is watch your back culture
  - Is it a learning or churning environment

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## 2. Mission & Goals

- Alignment of mission & goals - idealistic
- Clear sense of purpose – what are we here for?
- Dealing with the gap between idealistic expectations of volunteers and the reality

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### 3. Policies and Procedures

- Policies and procedures – outdated (leave out and see what happens) – often just habit
- Paperwork – TASK- Toss, Assign, Send or Keep
- Ask volunteers to identify least efficient procedure and then eliminate it
- Re-look at your meeting processes too - change the way you do it

## 4. The Work Itself

- Volunteers – need a sense of accomplishment and positive self-esteem
- What do you truly need to do your best work?
- Small successes – clearly defined are the most powerful
- What gets measured gets done
- Opportunity for volunteers to grow and develop

*The usual trouble with volunteers is not killing them with over work, but simply boring them to death – Harold J. Seymour See Count Me In! Book, p. 198*

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# 5. Communication

- Big picture – how I fit
- Volunteers need to be part of the decisions that affect me – otherwise rumor and gossip
- Suggestion box – use it or abuse
- Newsletters, phone calls, emails, updating

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## 6. Relationships

- Relationships between senior management and volunteers, between paid staff and volunteers and between volunteers themselves
- Can everyone answer – why we need volunteers?
- Organizations need to ensure equality between paid staff and volunteers otherwise Baby Boomers will vote with their feet and leave

# 7. Leadership

- 4 leadership characteristics –  
(1) clear vision; (2) high moral standards, (3) genuinely care & (4) processes to move closer to the organizational goals

See Count On Me! Book pp. 57-58

- Studies – 90% believe good idea only 30% management has any interest to listen
- Become a Tweaker – not massive overhaul
- Handling difficult people – completed staff work – 3 solutions

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**We lead by being  
human.**

**We do not lead by  
being corporate,  
professional or  
institutional.**

**(Paul Hawken)**

# *The Chinese symbol for listening*

Ear



Eyes

Undivided  
attention

Heart

## 8. Screening, Selection & Orientation

- Always hire the attitude not skills
- Orientation - 2 questions every volunteer asks – Have I made the right decision? Am I going to like it here?
- Making an impression – standing ovation, welcomed by all
- Orientation – too long, too much information, ask current volunteers – what were the important questions to answer at the orientation? – FAQs

## 9. Training

- More training less doing – combine both otherwise volunteers will leave
- Ask previous volunteers – what was the best part of training
- Use good facilitators
- Constant feedback from participants involved in training

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## 10. Changes in life circumstances – death, moving, etc

## 11. Top reason volunteers leave

- Do not feel appreciated
- Find ways to make me feel special and important

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# Life Cycle of Volunteer

- Different stages – most leave in 1<sup>st</sup> 6 mths
- Newbies – gap between unrealistic expectations & reality
- Experienced volunteers – enjoying the work, a change opportunity, flexible, etc – mentoring opportunities
- Overcommitted volunteers – annual leave

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# **RECOGNIZING & REWARDING VOLUNTEERS**

- No.1 reason people leave – they don't feel appreciated
- Volunteers want to be thank – it is just how each of them wants to be thanked that is important

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# Recognition & Reward

## 5 keys components

1. Sincere & honest – deserved not false
2. Consistent & equal
3. Timely & specific – sooner you praise, the more impact – more specific more powerful
4. Continuous & frequent – ongoing process, praise is short-lived – several months – never thanked
5. Customized and personalized = relationship

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# You get what you reward

- The behaviours you recognize & reward is what you will get
- Worse thing – value quality but reward cutting corners and skimping on costs; creativity but conforming to old ways; care about volunteers but burn them out
- Reward everyone the same – high and low achievers move to the common denominator

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# You get what you reward

- Most rewarding – length of volunteer service - rewarding for hanging around long enough to receive the award
- Rewarding for being there – give a certificate but recognition based on results (e.g., meeting goals, new skills, mentoring)

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# Relationship Recognition

- Develop a personalized and customized database- file/card on every volunteer – demographics – names of others, hobbies, birthdays, talents, interests, etc
- Information from volunteers – survey – how would you like to be recognized & rewarded? What types of rewards? List them and have people rank them.

*There are two things people want more than sex and money...recognition and praise – Mary Kay Ash See Count On Me, p.105*

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## Answer these 3 recognition questions

3 point scale – never, sometimes, always? |

receive meaningful recognition from my immediate manager for the work that I do

I receive meaningful recognition from others in the organization for the work that I do

I feel appreciated for the volunteer work that I do

I give recognition to others in the organization for the work that they do

## Answer these 4 questions

The most meaningful type of recognition I have received is...

I feel most appreciated when...

I like to recognize others by...

My ideas for further recognition and reward are...

**See Count On Me! Book, pp. 122-123**

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# The power of the personal thankyou

- Verbal thank yous – never underestimate  
-best ongoing reinforcement
- Immediate, most timely & most overlooked
- Know names – can't remember – great badges want to wear
- Vague and generalized thanks mean little
- Get specific in your thanking

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# Steps to Specific

- Step 1 – thank by name
- Step 2 – state specifically what they have done that they are being thanked for
- Step 3 – say how you feel about what they have done
- Step 4 – identify the importance to organization, team and others
- Step 5 – thank again by name

**See example Count On Me! Book, p. 170 Jenny...**

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# Verbal Recognition

- Heard positive from someone else – tell them
- Take to lunch, morning tea with a group or CEO
- Ask for feedback, ideas, opinion – verbal recognition
- Monthly meetings – good news session
- Ring their family – children don't know what their parents do. – bring family to work day
- Younger volunteers – ring parents, employer.

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# Written Recognition

- Permanent reminder of appreciation – with verbal can be the most powerful forms of recognition you could use
- Not form letter with dear volunteer – fake signature – better to have none at all
- Exactly the same steps as the verbal **thankyou** – See the key words in **Count On Me! Book**, p. 178

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# Written Recognition

- Send a birthday card, 50<sup>th</sup> wedding, other significant events
- Birthday card – start and never stop, in the diary – never forget
- Send a letter, card, postcard – thanking and achievements – copies to CEO and others
- Card, letter to family
- Card, letter from client that has been helped

*Only two groups of people thrive on sincere recognition and genuine appreciation – men and women – Jim Clemmer See Count on Me! Book, p. 132*

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# ALWAYS CONTINUE TO REVIEW, EVALUATE & IMPROVE

Further Ideas can be obtained in the books:

[Count Me In! 501 Ideas on Recruiting Volunteers](#)

[Count On Me! 501 Ideas on Retaining, Recognizing and Rewarding Volunteers](#)

Or at my website [www.morevolunteers.com](http://www.morevolunteers.com)

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**Life is either a daring adventure  
or nothing at all – Helen Keller**

**Thank You for Listening to Me  
The Best is Yet to Be!**

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