

## Nonprofit Organizations Face Revolving Door With Volunteers

By Hardy Smith

A nationwide study released by the Corporation for National & Community Service on Volunteering in America, reports each year millions of people volunteer their time to worthwhile charitable and community causes.

However, the report also shows organizations continuously face a revolving door struggle to keep their volunteers after they have been recruited.

My long time experience in volunteer recruiting and retention has shown me that many organizations run into problems when it comes to keeping volunteers interested and active.

The reason for that is a good cause isn't always enough to keep someone involved.

Organizations struggling to keep their volunteers need to understand the volunteer's perspective. People have needs they want met, they are looking for benefits from their service, and they want to feel connected. Organizations must work to build relationships with their volunteers if they want to keep them.

Here are five tips that can help any organization hold on to those valuable volunteers.

- **Realize people do things for their reasons.** Take time to understand why your volunteer joined. What was their true purpose in wanting to participate with your particular organization? Their need may relate more to personal reason or benefit rather than to your cause. Are you fulfilling that need? If not, chances are high that you'll lose them.
- **People want to feel connected and you will lose the ones you don't know.** Are you working to build relationships with volunteers? Relationships with other people in your organization, will keep volunteers involved much longer. Relationships must be developed and rarely happen accidentally.
- **Don't use "sink or swim" technique for your management of volunteers.**

Often organizations will put someone in a leadership role without providing guidance, background information, training, or help from those in same role previously. This common occurrence is a big contributor to frustration. Volunteers don't sign up to be frustrated!

- **Loading up an eager performer who won't say no is a sure way to create burnout.** It is easy to give tasks to a new volunteer who is willing to yes. How many times do you see that shining star flame out in a short period of time? Keep that performer longer by working harder to get others involved.

- **Take time to recognize your volunteers.** People want to be appreciated. Don't wait for year end ceremony. Be generous with recognition. Make sure your volunteers know they aren't being taken for granted. Simple thank yours that show someone their efforts are making a difference can have a huge impact on how they feel about your organization. The better they feel, the longer they will stay!

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