

21st Century Volunteers – adapting roles for today’s volunteers

Why do we need to adapt?

- Time commitment
 - Because of people’s time commitments we need to be flexible
 - It can feel like we are competing for people’s time
 - E.g. Lack of stability in people’s lives due to zero hour contracts etc.
 - Changing expectations of how volunteers want to give their time
 - E.g. to accommodate people with child care responsibilities. Some people cannot commit to a specific time every week.
 - The time volunteers are giving is slowly declining each year
- Culture of volunteering
 - Staff in organisations need to buy into volunteers
 - Need to change to make volunteering meaningful
- Make opportunities more accessible
 - E.g. on social media
- Technology – need to utilise more
 - E.g. mobile phones
 - Consider how technology can support volunteer roles
 - We now expect to get a response at the click of a button
 - Snap chat; texting
 - How can technology mobilise people
- Websites
 - The following organisations websites were given as examples of attracting volunteers:
 - <https://volunteering.macmillan.org.uk/>
 - <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/know-your-place?>
 - <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering>
 - Offer a range of roles which should increase the chances of keeping volunteers involved

What is Micro Volunteering?

- Bite size, on demand, no commitment activities that benefit a worthy cause
 - Short term, on demand, no lengthy application process, no induction, worthy cause
- It can have a big impact from a large group of people doing tiny actions
 - Could offer a menu of volunteer roles / tasks
- Decide how to manage risk with micro volunteers

- E.g. if a micro volunteer tweeted a message that conflicted with the values of the organisation and its branding
 - Any risk to volunteers
 - E.g. if a volunteer listening to traumatic experience over phone; tasks associated with offenders / ex-offenders.
- The following examples of organisations that use micro volunteers were provided:
 - Post Pals where micro volunteers write cards / letter to poorly children
 - Crowd crafting a website where you can recruit volunteers to undertake tasks e.g. Arthropod Interactions where volunteers can document different species of arthropods (insects, spiders etc.) This is good if you require small amounts of information from people who can contribute to a research project
 - <https://communityservice.org> request volunteers to identify websites for non-profit organisations
 - Non-profit organisations where volunteers report illegal parking
 - <https://www.meetup.com/EndHomelessness-digital-community> Ask for volunteers with digital skills who meet up in a room together and work on a range of tasks
- Micro volunteering can be expressed in other ways so people are not put off by the terminology e.g. informal volunteering. Micro does not have to be “virtual”. It may require volunteers for one off activities / events
 - E.g. volunteers required for litter picking day
- Volunteers may move from micro / informal to formal volunteering

Can you make it micro?

The participants undertook the following exercise which can be applied to all volunteer involving organisations:

- Identify an existing volunteer role
- List all the tasks involved
- What impact does this role have / what difference does it make?
- Who is involved in managing or working with volunteers in this role?
 - Brainstorm all tasks associated with the role
 - Could these tasks be delivered in a different way?
 - Decide what resources you need
 - Make sure the opportunities relate to the volunteers; lives and the time they have to give
 - Think about how you are going to communicate the difference they have made
 - The crowd crafting website displays the number of volunteers working on each task so they know they are contributing as part of a collective.
 - Ask volunteers for the option of still keeping in touch once they have completed their task

Comments

It makes sense for what's going on in our organisation

DBS may not be needed with no direct contact

Newsletter could be sent to a volunteer at home to work on

Leaflets could be done through micro volunteering

If holding an event volunteers could tweet and share

Move away from roles, think about tasks. This can broaden your range of volunteers