



Volunteer Appreciation

Connie's Weekly Newsletter

This week is National Volunteer Week and many of you are having volunteer appreciation events during the week. Volunteers are often the “oil” that helps non-profit organizations to run smoothly. If not already, volunteer appreciation should be an ongoing area of focus within your organization. Here are some quick pointers for volunteer motivation and retention.

Positive Feedback

Positive feedback isn't just for dog training it is a great motivator for people too. Provide personal in the moment feedback when you see volunteers on the job. Provide a personal thank you note annually to each of your volunteers. Email a thank you when you are told about a volunteer accomplishment. These are all wonderful ways to say thank you. Make sure the whole staff is involved in thanking volunteers, have each paid supervisor be responsible for their team giving out 200 thank you cards throughout the year to different volunteers.

With more responsibility, comes trust

Another effective way to motivate a volunteer is by extending your trust, and assigning them roles with greater responsibility and importance within your organization. PetPoint makes it easy for you to give volunteers access to writing your animals adoption descriptions and downloading video and photos. In the profile section give your volunteer Petango Editor status and they can then access this feature and create great adoption pages for your animals. For example, at the Humane Society of Boulder Valley volunteers are responsible for all the adoption messaging. You can see for yourself at www.boulderhumane.org.

Hire Staff That Are Committed to Supporting Volunteers

Most non-profit organizations depend on volunteers to help carry out their mission. A key role of regular staff is to provide the resources necessary to foster a strong culture inviting and fulfilling to volunteers. This will help ensure existing volunteers feel positive about the time invested in your organization, and will certainly help fuel greater interest from others to also offer their time. Make volunteer relationships part of their annual evaluation, observe those staff who have positive relationships with volunteers and provide on the spot positive feedback and recognition.

Send Volunteers to Conferences

To further instill a sense of value and trust, while helping your organization stay abreast of changes and opportunities within the industry, a suggestion would be to budget to send key volunteers to conferences. The PetPoint Summit is a very affordable conference where you could send your volunteers along with a staff member. The Summit will be held September 15-17th in Chicago. A great example of putting this approach to practice is the Almost Home Foundation in Illinois, their PetPoint Administrator is a volunteer and he has attended the last two PetPoint Summits!

Make time for your volunteers

Volunteers normally expect to spend time working with paid staff, but unfortunately, some paid staff get frustrated with what they see as interruptions. While not easy to balance the demands of the environment, and successfully manage those that make the effort to volunteer, make sure staff are held responsible for having an open door policy with their volunteers. It is important to understand that spending time with your volunteers can be very beneficial for all parties involved. Volunteers will feel appreciated and motivated to work hard, bringing a sense of unity to the organization, and ultimately helping your organization to be more effective.

Provide Free Food and an annual gift

What is it about food that is a motivator? This is true in the workplace as well as with volunteers. Offering free snacks for your volunteers will go a long way in motivating and encouraging them. Bringing bagels, donuts and fruit to a volunteer meeting, or refreshments to a long evening meeting is a winner in my books. Give a free gift to your volunteers once a year as a thank you. These gifts should reflect their contribution to the organization (number of hours, expertise). A DNA kit for their dog or a t-shirt with your logo, provided exclusively to the volunteers, are just a few ideas for gifts.

Have Fun

It may sound simplistic, but fun is another great motivator and one of the most effective stress relievers. Volunteer work can be as stressful as paid work, and so adding a bit of fun can help volunteers and your regular staff to enjoy their work more, and to be more effective. Consider having scheduled group events where volunteers and paid staff can come together and bond in a less stressful environment. Some ideas would be to host a group hike with your dogs, play miniature golf as a group, or host a pizza party (food again)!

Too often leaders, who are passionate about their cause, forget to laugh. We become so serious about our causes and our mission that we forget to have fun. John F. Kennedy famously stated, "There are three things which are real: God, human folly and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension. So we must do what we can with the third."

Invest in the safety of your volunteers

It's important to have fun but also to be safe, especially in the workplace. Volunteers are exposed to the same opportunity for injury as your paid staff, but are not insured by your workers compensation insurance. Show you value your volunteers by letting them know that volunteer insurance is part of their welcome package. PetPoint's Volunteer Accident Insurance Program offers a variety of benefits including coverage of \$100,000 per incident/\$500,000 per year with \$0 deductible. For more information and for a quote, please call 866-600-3354. And remember that your volunteers can save 10% on their pet insurance with 24PetWatch Pet Insurance Programs. Have them call us today at 1.866.597.2424 to protect their pet's and start saving.

Did you know?

You could win a trip for two just for being a PetPoint partner! PetPoint's two contests, *PetPoint 2000* and *24PetWatch in Vitre 2013*, will each grant two lucky people from the winning organization a trip of a lifetime. [Click here](#) for contest updates and how you can participate.

Sincerely,

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