

Motivation

Recruiting and retaining volunteers is critical. There are many strategies to motivate volunteers. The following list, while not exhaustive, is a good starting point.

1. Be an example. If what you're doing is worth being excited or passionate about, then demonstrate that enthusiasm and the work ethic it should inspire in your volunteers.
2. Make expectations clear. You must know what you want and be able to articulate it clearly before you can motivate someone to do it. Use written goal statements, job descriptions, orientation and/or training sessions, and regular feedback to let people know what is expected of them.
3. Make it meaningful. Members must feel that their participation is essential and important. Seek their input for ideas and for decision-making. Use brainstorming and other techniques which make input easy and non-threatening. Members should feel that they have made a genuine contribution and that their contribution is recognized by others, especially the organization's leadership.
4. Keep communication open and honest. Unresolved conflicts and the resulting hurt feelings, anger, frustration, and bruised egos can debilitate a volunteer organization. Work to keep clear and honest communication flowing and to combine it with cooperation and trust to effectively resolve conflicts.
5. Focus on relationships. It is important that positive relationships be established and maintained. While it is not necessary to be every member's best friend, it is essential that you try to develop relationships that are cordial, respectful and honest.
6. Provide social opportunities. One reason people get involved is to expand their social sphere. Many otherwise capable leaders alienate their general members with the attitude that the importance of the club's goals preclude social time.
7. Don't forget renewal. No one is always motivated - including leaders. Plan retreats which involve motivational and team building activities. Have a cookout or other social activity. Present awards and recognition documents.

The most important thing to remember is that there are no tricks to motivation. The strategies discussed above require time, energy, and awareness. Good leaders must develop an intuitive feeling for what is important to other people and learn to recognize and respect individual differences.