

Essential Volunteer Management for Charity Shops
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With confident and capable volunteer managers (also known as shop managers) you can recruit more volunteers to achieve the charitable aims of your organisation and run successful shops. This fact sheet is an overview of the strategic and operational ten stages of good practice which are essential to achieve great volunteer management and happy volunteering.

Strategic Guidance

Most organisations have a strategic **plan, mission or vision statement** that includes volunteers. If you do not, you may want to adapt or add a statement to your organisations' or search for 'volunteering strategy or volunteering mission' to see examples from other charities.

All organisations need a **Volunteering Policy**. If your organisation does not have one you can use a statement similar to the one below.

Our policy for volunteering is to enable every volunteer to collaborate with us in our aim of xxx. We achieve this by fostering an environment where volunteering is integral; where volunteer management is founded on best practice; and which enables every volunteer to feel valued and to fully contribute their strengths and skills.

(name of charity) aims to create an environment where volunteers and staff work together to deliver xxx. It is our policy to involve volunteers organisation-wide to achieve xxx and to provide opportunities for more people to be partners in achieving our goals.

The Policy is structured around the journey of a volunteer, from initial planning through recruitment and ongoing support to new opportunities with us or positive endings.

We use a ten stage process to achieve good practice in volunteer involvement and management. It is our policy to follow every stage of when planning for and managing volunteers.

The Ten Stage Process to Great Volunteer Management

The ten stage process can be split into two sections. The first section, stages 1 – 5, is how to plan, attract, recruit, select and induct volunteers. How to find the right volunteers and ensure they are safe and ready to volunteer with you. The second part, stages 6 – 10, is about the on-going management, support, learning, communication, and what happens when things change or the volunteering ends.

1. Plan

Plan thoroughly, knowing that this is essential for effective volunteer involvement. Always include these key areas in the preparation:

- **The role:** do you have a clear idea of what you need? Is it something that would attract a potential volunteer? Is the role front of house, in the back room, as a specialist in an area like books, old cameras or crafting?
- **The volunteer:** what sort of person are they likely to be? What skills do they need? Great customer service? Love fashion? Fantastic organiser or an interest in books? Music? Crafting? This will inform how you write the role profile and how and where you advertise.
- **Practicalities:** Where will they volunteer from? (shop? part from home?) How long do you want them for, how often – and can you be flexible? Do you have budget for travel, and any other, expenses?
- **Volunteer management:** who will be the volunteer's main contact and support?
- **Criminal records check:** will the volunteer have frequent contact with children or vulnerable adults? Check your own safeguarding policy and seek advice from the disclosure and checking system in your country, (either VDS, DBS or AccessNI)

- **Under 18 and under 16:** If the volunteer is under 18, you are strongly recommended to capture the consent of the parents/guardians, including any relevant health info (eg, nut allergy). For under 16s each local authority also has its own Child Employment Welfare rules, many authorities require work permits when under 16s are volunteering in a profit making activity (ie a shop), although the interpretation of this rule varies considerably in different local authorities. The purpose of the permits is to ensure those of school age are not missing out on their education in order to 'work/volunteer in a shop'. For further guidance first check your own organisations policies and contact your local Child Employment Welfare unit.
- Then you can write your **Volunteer Role Profile:** This is important – it's a marketing tool as well as a selection tool. Use a search engine to find a template 'Volunteer Role Profile Template' if your organisation does not have a good practice template.
- A **timeline** of when you want the volunteers to start, and working back for the deadline dates for the stages of attracting, recruiting, holding informal interviews, taster sessions, induction and training dates, start dates and key dates for your shop and charity.

2. Market and Attract

You've thought about the sort of person you want – are there obvious channels for advertising? We know that most people prefer to volunteer near home so local channels are going to get the best results.

Including:

- Leaflet drops to houses near the shop
- Having a beautiful flyer/invitation to give to your customers
- Having an attractive display / chalk board / notice board about volunteering
- For posters / leaflets always use the wording 'we WANT volunteers' (never use the word 'need')
- Local radio: asking your current volunteers to speak about volunteering as part of 'phone in' programmes at your local radio station
- Holding open evenings or events like coffee and cake or cheese and wine to tell people more about your charity and recruit volunteers
- Asking each of your volunteers to introduce a friend to volunteering
- Holding 'taster' volunteering mornings/afternoons/evenings
- Websites: advertising your roles on your own site, Do-It.org, your local volunteer centre and volunteering agency in your country (VDS, WCVA, Volunteer Now and NCVO)
- Social media, like Facebook, twitter, Pinterest – there are many new tools
- Asking local businesses to cover a day or a shift as a group
- For specifics like a specialist in books or old cameras; try local camera clubs, specialist websites, magazines and hobby groups
- Targeting fashion students at your local college/university/school
- Internally: your staff and supporters, your newsletters, other routine communications
- Partner organisations you work with locally
- You could also get in touch with Jobcentre Plus, on either a local or national level (depending on your size), to see whether there are any opportunities to work together.

3. Recruit

Ensure the recruitment and selection processes are fair, consistent and transparent.

- Having a standard volunteering form to capture the essentials and always ask for emergency contact details of friends or family.
- Plan how you are going to manage the response if you have larger numbers of volunteers applying at the same time.
- Some shops prefer to offer 'taster' sessions and then see how the volunteer feels, before going through an informal interview. Tasters are a great way of both getting to know each other before committing to regular volunteering.
- Arrange an informal interview process. Some shops have a volunteer who interviews new volunteers, so this happens on a regular ongoing process. Some shops have an initial telephone chat to check out suitability for both the volunteer and the charity.
- From query about volunteering to application form to taster or interview: try and keep the time to a minimum and ideally 48 hours between each of the stages. People want quick answers about

their enquiry to volunteer with you, and if they don't receive a timely response they may join another charity who responded promptly.

4. Select

Make active and considered selection choices that meet the needs of both your charity and the volunteer applicant; in some cases this means declining a potential volunteer, in which case refer them to a more suitable role or the local volunteer centre or agency.

- Tailor the 'shortlisting'/interview process to the role, check that the volunteer has the skills or experience you identified in the role profile.
- Once you have had a telephone chat, an informal interview or a taster session you will be able to make a selection decision about a volunteer.
- It is good practice to take up one reference, ideally two, and these can be speeded up by telephone; ask standard questions appropriate to the role, note the referee's answers, sign and date the file note. Depending on the role you may also complete safeguarding and criminal record checks.
- Selection does mean at times saying no to some volunteers. There can be different reasons, not having particular skills that are needed or because a certain day has a full rota or concerns about attitude and behaviours shown during the recruitment process. Saying no is part of volunteer management, always signpost the volunteer to a more suitable role or the local volunteer centre or agency.
- Let all potential volunteers know the outcome as quickly as possible.

**** Congratulations – you have a new volunteer or group of volunteers! ****

5. Welcome and Induct

Provide an induction which equips the volunteer/s to carry out their role and which establishes the basis of a good ongoing relationship. Agree mutual expectations from the outset, and ensure that the volunteer/s can access key information and guidance; this will keep them and those around them safe, and will enable them to set off on their volunteering role.

Arrange a start date and ensure you've allocated enough time for your new volunteer/s.

Create an induction check list, where dates and initials can be recorded next to each item. The induction needs to include:

- **Basics** including, completed Registration Form and references taken, Tour of the shop and meet the team, Personal belongings and storage, Kitchen and toilet facilities including Health & Safety, Policies on purchases, discounts and expenses, Talking through the role profile and clarifying mutual expectations
- **Keeping safe** including, fire escape routes, accident books, first aid kit, electrical safety including steamers, lifting safely, using ladders safely, slips and trips prevention, housekeeping, personal security, lone working, safeguarding and equal opportunities
- **Communication** including using the rota, notice boards and shop reference materials/guide, day book, signing in and out, extra support and important phone numbers, welcome information, child safeguarding specifics, newsletters, bulletins
- **Stock and finance** including receiving and sorting donations and 'do not sell', steaming, pricing, display, merchandising, stock rotation and culling, recording sales, using tills, non-sale transactions, gift aid, data protection, banking money
- **Customer service** including greeting customers and potential volunteers, talking about the charity, returns policy, customer complaints, asking customers if they are interested in being a volunteer

6. Manage, Coach and Communicate

- Provide a named contact/line manager for every volunteer, and levels of coaching and support appropriate to the role and the volunteer's level of skills and knowledge.
- Encourage a culture of team working, inspiration and enthusiasm, motivating volunteers and staff to achieve the charity's goals.
- Establish open and ongoing two-way communication about their area of activity and the organisation as a whole; gather feedback, learning and act on it.

- Have a reasonable, fair and supportive Problem Solving Policy and Procedure to resolve any concerns raised by or about a volunteer as quickly as possible. You may have concerns or issues raised by volunteers about their volunteering, their peers or staff; the charity may have a concern about a volunteer's behaviour or performance; or a third party, like a customer, may raise a concern or observation about their experience in the shop.
- We avoid using all employment terms, for example disciplinary or grievance. They refer to parts of employment processes and law. Volunteers are distinct from staff and we want to avoid any confusion and ensure volunteers are treated as volunteers. Volunteering best practice is to have a problem solving policy and talk about resolving concerns.

7. Thank, Celebrate and Retain

- Value and thank your volunteers regularly and especially notice and say thank you for specific positive things a volunteer contributes to your shop
- Volunteers really value being thanked and recognised. The top result from surveys about volunteering is "someone noticing and saying 'Thank you!'" Other good ways are cards of appreciation, marking birthdays or anniversaries of being a volunteer or the shop being open. Local events, like opening the shop in the evening for a celebration party, or finding a local business that will sponsor or host a small thank you event. Also visits and appreciation from trustees and staff who represent the non-retail parts of the charity.
- Retention: This happens from stage one and goes through to stage ten, it is not something that you do at one stage only! If you are planning (stage 1) for the right volunteer and then going to attract (stage 2) them in the right way, with the right skills, you are more likely to get volunteers who are a good fit (recruit and select; stages 3 & 4) and feel motivated, have a great induction (stage 5) and feel really welcome and well prepared, with the result that volunteers stay longer.
- The new breed of volunteer is more likely to want episodic volunteering. They carry out an episode of volunteering, leave and do something else, and then return again for another episode of volunteering. This means volunteer managers must develop really positive endings (stage 10) so the volunteers want to return. And managers have to plan for a rotating and moving group of volunteers in shops and projects. Consequently attraction, recruitment, selection and induction are on-going activities that we do in a regular, systematic and planned way that maintains a steady flow of volunteers contributing to our cause and shops.

8. Develop and Learn

- Develop a learning culture where volunteers and staff can learn together and pool knowledge and experience, setting up informal and formal learning and development.
- Offer appropriate learning activities if a role needs additional support; and opportunities to enhance personal development by, for example, increasing responsibility or trying out a new function.
- Offer more experienced volunteers to buddy and support new volunteers.
- Arrange that all volunteers have the opportunity to be included in the charity's online and face-to-face learning and development activities.

9. Transition and Broaden Support

- Above we stated that volunteering is mostly episodic and that means that volunteers will want to change and transition between roles and charities. Supporting volunteers, where we can, at times of change means the volunteer is more likely to remain an active volunteer and supporter with our charity or return to us.
- Offer volunteers other ways of being involved; in ways appropriate to changing personal circumstances, or when time-limited volunteer roles end. Volunteers maintain their partnership with the organisation, continuing to share skills, creativity and commitment.
- Transitions may include a move to another role; broadening support by volunteering in new areas; creating different roles suited to episodic, online or micro volunteering involvement; taking a temporary break; remaining connected with your organisation in an alternative way, as a supporter or participant or campaigner, for example.

10. End and Exit

- We find ways to ensure that every volunteer who leaves feels positive about the organisation and positive about their own experience; we express thanks and appreciation; we recognise and celebrate achievements.
- This can be a personal thank you from a manager, director or a trustee, a group thank you of a card, a photo or certificate, or for some, more public recognition is suitable, like a public thank you article in a newsletter, local or social media.
- Even when occasionally things go wrong, we aim to achieve a positive ending, where a volunteer feels thanked and recognised for their contribution. This may have to be a more sensitive style of thank you and recognition of all the good things the volunteer has achieved during their volunteering.
- Gather feedback to learn from the volunteers' experiences. Why are they leaving? What worked well? What did not? Would they recommend volunteering with your charity? At your shop? Would they like to stay in touch? Would they like to contribute in other ways?
- There are a variety of methods to gather this feedback: exit surveys, questionnaires at regular events, survey monkey, spot phone calls where a sample of volunteers are spoken with, being asked by another volunteer or a non-line member of staff, a feedback board, or an ideas and suggestions book. The important things are to gather feedback regularly and to respond to feedback. Either making improvements where there are great ideas or communicating why and how where there are areas of difference.

The **ten stages** represent best practice volunteer management and successful shops implement every stage in a regular and on-going way. Have a great time recruiting, managing and developing your shop volunteers!

Resources

If you want to learn more about volunteer management look at these resources:

- [Association of Volunteer Managers \(AVM\)](#), represents and provides support to people who manage volunteers and its members are all managers of volunteers. It works to develop good practice in volunteer management.
- [ivo](#), a social action network for volunteers and organisations. Volunteer managers' blog and share learning on this site.
- [UKVPMs](#) is a lively and friendly networking and communication resource for all Volunteer Programme Managers working in the UK.
- [National Occupational Standards for Managing Volunteers](#). This sets out the skills that staff and volunteers who manage volunteers in their organisation should have, as well as what they should know and understand, in order to do their job well. It has useful learning grids and checklists in the back pages.

Books

The New Breed – Understanding and Equipping the 21st Century volunteer

Written by Jonathan McKee and Thomas McKee.

The Complete Volunteer Management Handbook

Written by Steve McCurley, Rick Lynch and Rob Jackson, 2012. It is revised since it was first published in 1994, by its original title, Essential Volunteer Management, the remit of this renamed edition has been broadened with the addition of a third UK based author, Rob Jackson.

With thanks to Rachael Bayley, Head of Volunteering Development, Save the Children

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