



## TOP TIPS – What your Volunteers need to be happy

The happier your volunteers are, the longer they will stay with you and the more effective your organisation will be. The first step to understand how you can retain volunteers is to remind yourself why people volunteer.

A study from [JoinInUK.org](http://JoinInUK.org) pretty much sums up what volunteers want. The points from the study can be summed up with the word GIVERS.

- G** Personal growth and well-being
- I** Increased sense of purpose, such as knowing just how they make a difference.
- V** Voice or how volunteers are asked to give their time.
- E** Easy to sign up, to get there, to get the job done.
- R** Recognition. Being thanked, appreciated, and celebrated.
- S** Social opportunities like making new friends and working on a team.

**1 - Be prepared for them.** Don't bring volunteers in until you have everything worked out for them, from the job description, to a place to work with proper equipment, to something to do immediately. Might seem obvious but many volunteers stop turning up out of boredom.

**2 - Make your recruitment stands out** and attract the best volunteers. Get creative on all your communication channels - mix visual content, testimonials, short impactful videos and emotive experiences from existing volunteers. You want to capture imagination and demonstrate the difference they'll be making once they join.

**3 - Act as though your volunteer is a guest in your home.** Welcome them. Show that your organisation is warm, friendly, helpful, and happy to see volunteers. Introduce them to your staff and other volunteers, have your executive director drop by and say hello and thanks.



**4 - Provide Excellent Induction and Training.** No matter how simple or complex their role is – take the time to explain it, demonstrate it and mentor the volunteer and/or provide a buddy (another experienced volunteer who would feel very gratified by this responsibility). Make the training engaging and interactive - volunteers don't want to be lectured, they want to participate.

**5 - Establish Excellent Communication.** Strong, regular communication motivates volunteers - make sure they are receiving relevant, tailored information AND use suitable channels that they've confirmed they're happy to use. Volunteers like to have a particular person who looks after them, this can be a volunteer coordinator or another member of staff. Be ready to listen and respond to feedback and concerns, particularly when the organisation is experiencing change or the role itself changes.

**6 - Offer Interesting Work & Opportunity for Development.** Do not use volunteers to do the tasks your staff doesn't want to do. Envelope licking and mindless filing. Consider your volunteers as extra staff who are capable of performing complex tasks that use their experience and skills. Provide opportunities for learning new skills and leadership opportunities to those volunteers who are willing and have the time to shoulder more responsibility. Help them connect with people they may not otherwise interact with. Understand their skills and background – they maybe able to do more than you're currently offering them.

**7 - Acknowledge contributions, express gratitude and demonstrate it openly.** Small and simple gesture can go a long way. Taking volunteers to lunch, giving a small gift or sending a thank you card to their home.



**8 - Share success stories.** Volunteers want to know that they are making a difference, keep them updated with any progress towards your organisation's goals. Let them see their work in action through presentations The NVCO website has a great article with examples of effective impact stories taking inspirations from storytelling.

<https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2016/03/08/once-upon-an-outcome-effective-impact-stories/>

**9 - Encourage social connectedness.** Volunteering is a great way for many people to socialise, so provide the opportunity to do so both digitally and in person with colleagues, service users and visitors. Help people to feel connected and part of something bigger.

**Watch this video and be inspired:**

Anyone can be a superhero <https://youtu.be/OZUz19a3-fk>