

TIP SHEET: 10 Tips for Rewarding Volunteers

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"If the work is valued and it's made fun, people will do lots of it." (John Cage)

1. Recognition

Volunteers are donors and they must feel they are contributing to common goals in a measurable way. Have a plan for recognizing volunteers and their involvement.

2. Rewards That Take a Measurable Amount of Time to Earn

Many volunteer organizations offer rewards for a set amount of successfully completed volunteer hours; e.g. CanStage gives two free ticket vouchers for 25 hours of volunteer work; some organizations offer coupons for free access to museums and the like.

3. Short Term Rewards

A draw for CanStage volunteers is getting to see the show during a volunteer shift. When this is not realistic, other options can be offered; e.g. volunteers can see the play if they're ushering but not if they do bar; therefore bar servers are invited to the dress rehearsal but not ushers.

4. Staff / Social Environment for Volunteers

It's rewarding to be in a friendly social environment, meeting new and interesting like-minded people. Teach staff about the expectations of volunteers. Organize staff representatives to do 45 minute Learning Series for Volunteers at least a couple times a season!

5. Access / Invites / Insider Opportunities.

Ask volunteers what they consider to be rewards. Volunteers may wish to view works in progress, work as a team with other like-minded volunteers, have educational opportunities like information interviews with staff, be in the presence of talent or creative contributors, and attend other organization's events at a discount. Have prize draws just for volunteers!

6. Make the work fun! (A Room of One's Own)

Volunteer work can be tedious and staff should be trained to indicate specifically how the work is important to the organization. Try to have a "volunteer room" or space where a group of volunteers can work together on a variety of tasks. Much administrative work can be done by a "Weekly Administrative Crew". CanStage's Weekly Admin Crews also include ESL students.

7. LISTEN!!!

Consult your volunteers. CanStage volunteers asked for a monthly event where they can mingle and sign up for shifts together. Within this event CanStage offers the Learning Series for Volunteers. These events build team spirit and volunteers feel their contribution is honored.

8. 2nd Tier Rewards

Volunteer internships are increasingly popular. A volunteer internship should be no more than 4 months, no more than 14 hours per week and offer excellent rewards such as progress reports, information interviews with staff, goal-setting with interns, and assistance with job searches.

9. Broadcast E-mail Subscription/Volunteers assisting in recruitment

CanStage's weekly e-mail broadcasts include volunteer and job postings. This assists volunteers in network connections and seeking employment. Broadcast e-mails also result in potential new volunteers receiving the e-mail from a friend – these people may come forward to subscribe.

10. Certification or Accreditation

Organizations should endeavor to assist volunteers in acquiring accreditation where it would prove to be mutually beneficial.