



# The Chamber Wants YOU!

*The keys to finding and retaining the best volunteers*

**D**o you find it difficult to recruit and keep volunteers? Have you had great volunteers lose their passion and stop volunteering actively with the chamber? What would it be like to have enthusiastic and

committed volunteers help the chamber achieve its goals?

Retaining volunteers is the key to success for your chamber. A successful volunteer network partners with staff members to organize and manage councils, committees and events, while actively recruiting and retaining other chamber members. However, there's really no point in being effective at recruiting volunteers if you can't keep them coming back. Effective recruitment ensures that you have sufficient volunteers to work on your initiatives. Volunteer retention is the only way to minimize recruitment problems down the line.

Having a successful volunteer network sounds like a dream come true or a lofty goal to achieve, yet it is possible. Most chambers have experienced the positive effects of great volunteers, even if it's only a handful of them. Is it possible to clone or attract more like them? Yes, but it takes forethought, an understanding of volunteer expectations, and an organized effort to meet those expectations.

## Why is volunteer retention a challenge?

Attracting and retaining volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult for many associations and non-profit organizations. Across the country, there are common concerns and challenges about getting more people to volunteer and to continue supporting organizations, with their time as much as their money. Some of the common challenges for retaining volunteers include:

*Lack of time and competing priorities*—Most volunteers have full-time jobs and work forty-plus hours a week for employers or in their own companies. Many of them also have family obligations and outside interests, and are struggling to maintain a balance between work, home and community needs.

*Increased competition for volunteers*—Other associations and non-profit organizations in your region also rely on volunteers to accomplish its goals. Volunteers are needed to participate on boards, lead and manage fundraising initiatives, implement projects, and coordinate activities that result from strategic planning retreats. Everyone competes for a small pool of volunteers.

*Difficulty in meeting volunteer expectations*—Volunteers are not all alike and have individual needs. Dealing with such a diverse

set of needs may be difficult and time consuming for staff members. Within any group of volunteers, individual needs and agendas may surface, requiring officers and staff members to manage the differences.

## What motivates members to volunteer?

In many ways, managing volunteers is akin to managing staff members, although volunteers don't receive paychecks. This difference in itself makes it more difficult to motivate volunteers to show up and perform as expected; numerous studies have concluded that staff members are not actually motivated by monetary compensation. Money is thought to be a satisfier or non-satisfier depending on how well other motivators or expectations are met. In that regard, retaining volunteers and staff members may be more similar than once believed.

Volunteers are motivated by internal needs and behave in ways they have found to be effective in meeting those needs. To motivate volunteers, you will need to create experiences that allow them to meet their needs while helping the chamber to meet its own. The essence of retention is to provide a motivational paycheck for the valuable contributions volunteers make to the organization

Most volunteers have needs that fall into the three distinctive psychological areas: achievement, affiliation and power. The chart below describes the needs commonly associated with each area and what volunteers may be seeking to fulfill those needs.

### Achievement

- Sense of accomplishment
- Being unique and highly skilled
- Ability to use talents
- Challenges to overcome
- Meet professional and personal objectives
- Setting goals and planning how to achieve them
- Interesting, exciting work
- Learning new skills
- Being the best

### Affiliation

- Sense of belonging
- Being with others who have common goals, values and interests
- Ability to meet and connect with others
- Exchange of dialog
- Ability to contribute to a higher purpose
- Give back to the group or community
- Help others
- Friendship, support of others
- Part of worthy cause

### **Power**

- Sense of effectiveness
- Control of self and the environment
- Authority or important position
- Ability to influence others
- Bring about change
- Promotion or award
- Ability to lead others
- Competition, winning
- Access to those in higher positions
- Recognized by other leaders

Keep in mind that the needs and motivation of volunteers changes over time. The true art of motivating volunteers is being able to understand volunteers' needs and providing the right combination of opportunities to meet them. Simple as it may seem, The best way of exploring volunteers' needs and motivation is simply by asking these questions from time to time:

- What do you like best about volunteering?
- If you could have any opportunity to volunteer in the community, what would you choose to do and why?

- What volunteering opportunity has been the most memorable for you?
- Overall, what you to continue volunteering with the chamber?

### **Meeting your volunteers' motivational needs**

Once you have identified your volunteers' motivations for serving, you can meet their expectations in a variety of ways. Depending on the specific motivational needs you are addressing, the ideas listed below may help to meet your volunteers' expectations. You may also think of other ideas you can add to each psychological area. And, if you want some fresh ideas, ask your volunteers what would create additional value for their time and commitment to the chamber.

#### **Achievement-oriented volunteers:**

- Recognize specific accomplishments
- Include clippings of accomplishments mentioned in the media
- Provide "Best" or "Most" awards
- Plaques, trophies, certificates for individual contributions

*see Retaining Volunteers, page 30*



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### Retaining Volunteers (continued from page 29)

- Letter of commendation
- Handwritten notes of appreciation
- Invitation or sponsorship of special training
- Special assignments and task forces

### Affiliate-oriented volunteers:

- Recognition at a group activity, or in the presence of friends and family
- Group photo of members
- Award voted on by peers
- Plaques, trophies, certificates for group accomplishments
- Card signed by group members
- Logo clothing (e.g., t-shirts, caps), badge, team identification
- Celebrations, recognition lunches, dinners and parties
- Opportunities to work with teams or in the community

### Power-oriented volunteers:

- Position of authority, leadership role
- Promotion or special designation of role
- Introduction to other leaders
- Award voted on or presented by leader-peers or mentors



- Plaques, trophies, certificates for individual contributions
- Acknowledgment in front of a large group of members
- Letter from the President or Chairman of the Board
- Public and community recognition for accomplishments

Recruiting and keeping your best volunteers starts with understanding their motivation for serving. Once you understand the motivation, you can better align specific roles and responsibilities with volunteers' intrinsic needs, and look for ways to better meet their expectations. By maintaining ongoing communication and understanding the changing needs of your volunteers, you can attract and keep the best of them.

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