

Challengers to Champions:

Cultivating Staff Loyalty for Volunteer Engagement

A View from the Trenches
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PRESENTER:

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OUTCOMES:

Participants will:

1. Examine different ways to solicit feedback and explore objective & subjective reasons for staff resistance to volunteer engagement;
2. Learn about specific short-term actions and long-term strategies they can apply to overcome resistance and build support;
3. Identify ways to cultivate trust among staff regardless of where they fall on the Challengers-to-Champions spectrum.

WHY STAFF LOYALTY?

Marlene Wilson: “The relationship between volunteers and paid staff [is] what I consider to be the #1 challenge in the field of volunteerism today.”

Ivan Scheier: “The co-existence of volunteers and staff...is like a marriage that hasn't settled down yet, after 25 years! But for sure, the honeymoon is over!”

Susan J. Ellis: “The single most requested training topic in volunteer management is...how to develop good volunteer/salaried staff relationships...Why is this so hard?”

JUST HOW HARD IS IT?

RATE YOUR ORGANIZATION

Relations between staff & volunteers at my organization are generally:

1 = Actively antagonistic or hostile

2 = Vaguely mistrustful

3 = Neutral or mixed

4 = Cautiously accommodating

5 = Actively supportive

DRILLING DOWN: Conduct an Individualized Staff Assessment

WHAT: Individualized staff assessments explore individual differences in attitudes, opinions, & experiences relevant to the concept & practice of volunteer engagement

WHY: Understanding differences among staff helps you to determine who your champions and challengers are

WHO: All staff members who have an influence on or play a role in the success of your program

WHEN: At least once or twice a year, preferably ongoing

HOW: Informal conversations, formal interviews, surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, retreats

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORMS:

- McCurley, Steve & Lynch, Rick: *Volunteer Management, 3rd Edition*
- Noble, Rogers, & Fryar: *Volunteer Management, An Essential Guide, 2nd Edition*
- Scheier, Ivan: *Building Staff/Volunteer Relations*
- Stallings, Betty & Ellis, Susan J.: *Leading The Way To Successful Volunteer Involvement*
- Stallings, Betty: *Training Busy Staff To Succeed With Volunteers*

FACTUAL QUESTIONS:

- “Do you do any volunteer work yourself?”
- “Have you ever worked with volunteers in the past?”
- “Are you utilizing any volunteers in your department now?”
- “How many & how long have they been with you?”
- “What sort of jobs do these volunteers do?”
- “What are the major services that you deliver?”
- “What do you see as the biggest needs in your area?”
- “What kind of training should a person have to do this type of work?”
- “What resources or assistance would you need to involve volunteers in your area?”

FEELING QUESTIONS:

- “How do you feel about working with volunteers?”
- “What do you think it would take for a volunteer to enjoy working here?”
- “What do you like to do most in your job?”
- “What do you like to do least in your job?”
- “Is it possible that volunteers could do some of the things you’re working on if they were under your supervision?”
- “Are there jobs that you do not think it is appropriate for volunteers to do?”
- “Do you think you could train volunteers to do the job adequately?”

**NOW THAT YOU KNOW MORE,
WHAT'S NEXT?**

RANK THEM:

CHAMPIONS	NEUTRAL	CHALLENGERS

CHAMPIONS

WHAT MAKES THEM A CHAMPION?

Little things....

- An encouraging comment spoken to you or others:
“Great project!” “Good job!” “Thanks for your hard work!” “That was a big help!”

As well as big things....

- Willingness to accommodate volunteers
- Planning cooperation & teamwork
- Advocacy of your program at board & staff meetings and in the community

WHAT YOUR CHAMPION CAN DO FOR YOU:

- Their perspective as an outsider can help you with your external marketing strategy.
- Their perspective as an insider can help you with your internal marketing strategy.
- Their encouragement as a supporter can help model positive behaviors.
- Their influence as a leader can help with engagement and persuasion of other staff.
- Their creativity as a strategist can help increase impact.

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR CHAMPION:

- Include them in planning sessions
- Solicit their suggestions & act on them if possible
- Take their concerns seriously & react promptly
- Promote them as positive examples of staff-volunteer relations
- Find formal & informal ways to reward them for working well with volunteers
- Ask them to speak at recognition events or present awards to volunteers

PUT YOUR CHAMPION TO WORK:

- Ask them to write a testimonial for your blog or newsletter
- Ask them to speak at a board, staff, or committee meeting
- Ask them to consider serving on your advisory council
- Ask them to join a meeting involving a neutral or challenger
- Ask for their help in developing strategic plans for your program

NEUTRALS

WHAT MAKES THEM NEUTRAL?

They communicate (verbally or nonverbally) in ways that make them seem:

- Vaguely mistrustful
- Neutral or mixed
- Cautiously accommodating

They seem supportive to you but might express otherwise to others.

HOW TO CONVERT NEUTRALS INTO CHAMPIONS:

- Educate them on the structure of the program, screening process, policies, training requirements, etc.
- Ask for their help in developing position descriptions and policies
- Acknowledge staff authority & expertise in orientation and training
- Enforce volunteer expectations
- Engage them in the evaluation process

HOW TO CONVERT NEUTRALS INTO CHALLENGERS:

DO:

- Insist that staff accommodate volunteers regardless of their preferences
- Give volunteers meaningless “busy work” tasks
- Always blame staff when things go wrong & only praise volunteers when things go right
- Pretend you don't see evidence of performance issues and hope they'll just go away
- Recognize and reward volunteers even though they did not meet expectations

HOW TO CONVERT NEUTRALS INTO CHALLENGERS:

DON'T:

- Involve staff in decisions about how to involve volunteers
- Have clear & consistent policies and procedures
- Offer support & training to staff who must interact with volunteers
- Allow staff to participate in the supervision of volunteers in their own departments
- Solicit staff feedback on volunteer performance
- Recognize staff for working well with volunteers

CHALLENGERS

WHAT MAKES THEM A CHALLENGER?

Little things....

Words, gestures, or facial expressions observed by you or others that communicate skepticism or outright hostility

As well as big things....

Behaviors that undermine or sabotage volunteer efforts

Passive or active resistance toward accommodating volunteers

Lack of cooperation & teamwork

WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM A CHALLENGER:

Sometimes Staff Resistance Is Based On Legitimate Concerns!

Organizational concerns:

- Fear of diminished quality of service
- Fear that volunteers will be unreliable
- Fear of increased legal problems

Personal concerns:

- Resentment of increased workload
- Fear of job loss
- Fear of loss of control
- Fear of inexperience in managing volunteers

WHAT MUST BE DEMONSTRATED TO A CHALLENGER:

Organizational concerns:	You have to convince them that:
Fear of diminished quality of service	The screening process will match volunteers with appropriate skills to specific positions Once assigned, volunteers will be trained to meet expectations
Fear that volunteers will be unreliable	Time commitments will be enforced
Fear of increased legal problems	Risk management mechanisms are in place and problems will be addressed promptly

WHAT MUST BE DEMONSTRATED TO A CHALLENGER:

Personal concerns:	You have to convince them that:
Resentment of increased workload	Supervisory efforts and challenges will be shared
Fear of job loss	Clear boundaries exist between paid and unpaid functions
Fear of loss of control	Volunteers are evaluated periodically, can receive constructive criticism, be reassigned, or even fired
Fear of inexperience in managing volunteers	They will have access to your support and training at all times

HOW TO (EVENTUALLY) CONVERT CHALLENGERS INTO CHAMPIONS:

In order to feel greater confidence in the program & volunteers, staff must:

- Feel that the benefits (to the individual and to the organization) outweigh the concerns
- Feel a sense of control over volunteer activities

HOW TO (EVENTUALLY) CONVERT CHALLENGERS INTO CHAMPIONS:

Increasing The Sense Of Benefit

Remind staff that...

- Volunteers can work on general tasks and free up valuable time for staff to work on specialized tasks or “wish list” projects
- Volunteers can contribute fresh energy & ideas toward solutions to persistent problems
- Staff can gain valuable supervisory experience & develop other leadership skills
- Staff can receive recognition for succeeding as a “team player”

HOW TO (EVENTUALLY) CONVERT CHALLENGERS INTO CHAMPIONS:

Increasing The Sense Of Control

Assure staff that...

- They will have a say in how volunteers are utilized
- They will contribute to the development of position descriptions including required skills & expected outcomes
- They will receive support and have access to training in order to increase their supervisory competence
- They will have the opportunity to provide feedback concerning performance and that expectations will be enforced

SOMETIMES YOUR BEST EFFORTS WON'T WORK (RIGHT AWAY):

- Be patient
- Don't take things personally
- Keep the conversation focused on performance, not personality
- Accept that some staff members will never be “fans”
- Keep asking questions & listening to the answers
- Demonstrate leadership
- Keep improving

YOUR TURN:

CHAMPIONS	NEUTRAL	CHALLENGERS

- Identify at least one colleague as a champion, neutral, or challenger
- Why did you assign them to this category? Describe a specific example!
- What is one strategy you might try to keep them or convert them?
- Identify at least one colleague with whom you would like to conduct an assessment
- How & when will you conduct this individual's assessment?
- Develop a plan for increasing your overall organizational rating by at least one level



**ONE
ORGANIZATION'S
JOURNEY**

ARTICLE:

“WHAT WOULD THE PERFECT VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANIZATION LOOK LIKE?”

- Positive, welcoming atmosphere
- No distinction between donors of money and donors of time
- Friend-raising is a priority for everyone
- Paid staff rewarded for their skills in working with volunteers
- Board members are required to serve as volunteers
- Volunteer input & feedback regularly solicited
- Paid & volunteer staff have equal status

SUCCESS STORIES

**ONE TAKE-AWAY?
ONE NEXT STEP?**

Leaders understand that to create a climate of collaboration they need to determine what the group needs in order to do their work and to build the team around common purpose & mutual respect. Leadership is not a solo act, it's a team effort.

- The Leadership Challenge