How to Measure Your Volunteers' Success

Be sure your volunteer program is all that it can be.

How do you know if your volunteer program is successful? There's no way to tell unless you have a gauge.

Evaluating your volunteer program is worth the time and effort. If you find you're succeeding, you can use that evidence to make your case for enhancements and support. If your program isn't where you'd like it to be, you can take corrective action. Here are some ways to get started:

Track Your Numbers

Ideally, you've already developed goals for your volunteer program. You can track these benchmarks with some key performance indicators (KPIs).

KPIs revolve around quantitative measures. Focusing on numbers makes comparisons easier and more objective.

> **" Dig deeper by asking for other people's perceptions. "**

You'll want to use formulas that are as easy for line-level volunteers to understand as they are for executives. Stick with common concepts like averages and medians, so everyone's aware of what's going on.

Every situation is different, but some examples of KPIs include:

- **the total number** of active volunteers
- **number of volunteer hours** logged
- **number of individuals** served
- **monetary value of volunteer hours donated** (assume approximately $20 per hour) minus the cost to recruit and manage them
- **number of paid staff hours** saved by volunteer coverage
- **average revenue earned** per volunteer hour worked (net figures are best)
- **opportunity revenue** (revenue generated by a paid staff member when a volunteer covers a staff member's non-revenue-producing task).

> ## "How do you know if your volunteer program is successful?"

There are any number of other possibilities related to your organization. The main point is to make sure the indicators are meaningful and measurable.

If you haven't established any indicators for success, make it a priority. It's hard to know where you're going if you don't know where you've been. With the proper volunteer management software, tracking and compiling these numbers should be easy.

Ask for Input

Information on your key performance indicators is important: It can assure you that things are going well or alert you when there's a problem. On their own, however, KPIs don't show you the whole picture. To get a more global view of why your numbers are up or down, dig deeper by asking for other people's perceptions.

An easy way to do this is to send out surveys. E-mail questionnaires are simple to create and distribute. Make sure to send them to all involved. You'll want input from clients, event attendees, volunteers, and paid staff. Each group is likely to have a completely different perspective.

For more detail, conduct some interviews. Create situations in which the interviewee can be honest. Solicit help from those outside the program to perform the interviews. With the interviewer as a neutral party, interviewees won't be as tempted to sugarcoat their answers. Similarly, exit interviews are a great method of getting honest feedback, since the interviewees are on their way out the door.

Take your evaluation results in stride. Some folks will always be extra-critical, while others will glow about everything. Focus on what most of the people think of your program most of the time.

Share Your Results

Now that you have your results, share them on a regular basis. Those you supervise will know how their performance contributes to your organization. Those you report to will have tangible evidence that you're doing a good job (or assurance that you're working to tweak things if necessary). Your results will be a guiding light for everyone involved, so distribute them with pride.

This article is adapted, with permission, from content by VolunteerHub (volunteerhub.com), originally posted on the VolunteerMatch website (volunteermatch.org).

Aligning Your Goals & Results

For more on gauging your volunteers' performance, see these articles from the Society for Nonprofits' library at NonprofitWorld.org:

Using Surveys & Focus Groups to Gather Market Data (Vol. 13, No. 3)

Key Performance Indicators: Nonprofits Need Them, Too! (Vol. 31, No. 2)

Four Steps to Evaluation Success (Vol. 23, No. 2)

Using Your Outcome Measurement System (Vol. 18, No. 1)

Something Is Missing: The First Step in Evaluation (Vol. 29, No. 6)

How to Conduct Focus Groups (Vol. 17, No. 5)

Free Webinar Recording for Members: Mobilizing Volunteers in the Face of Budget Cuts. Learn how to to engage volunteers realistically and effectively, whether revenues decrease or increase.

Also see Learning Institute programs on-line: Outcome Measurement and Volunteer Management (www. NonprofitWorld.org/LearningInstitute).

WHAT'S UP ONLINE?

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NonprofitWorld.org/social/
(free Yahoo login required)
or send a blank e-mail to:
NonprofitWorld-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
If you have any questions, contact Jason Chmura at jchmura@NonprofitWorld.org