



Ask the experts

Are You Boring Your Volunteers to Death?

Can you get those tedious tasks done without alienating volunteers?

Q: How can we involve volunteers in the daily office tasks — those boring jobs without a lot of social opportunities?

A: That's an excellent question and an important issue. You can approach it in three ways:

- **Why give boring jobs to volunteers?** Maybe these are exactly the tasks someone ought to be paid to do. Or, are they just “boring” from your perspective while someone else might find the work fun? Can these volunteer assignments be expanded to include more variety? Can someone wear headphones, for example, and listen to music or foreign-language tapes while working, thereby making the time more interesting?

- **Find volunteers for whom the tasks won't be boring.** For instance, people who are training to be

secretaries might see this work as a useful learning opportunity. Programs for the mentally challenged might be able to assign someone who would feel rewarded by accomplishing what others see as tedious.

- **Share boring work equally.** If you make one or two volunteers do all the filing or copying, it's drudgery. But if everyone – volunteers and paid staff alike – is expected to spend 30 minutes each week doing some filing or copying, the work will get done and no one will resent it. ■

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