50 Ways to Engage Volunteers

Raise your hand if you love volunteers! 🙋‍♂️🙋 Volunteers are among the most committed to your cause and mission. Read on for 50 ways to meaningfully engage your volunteers so they keep coming back, year after year. And to learn how to leverage the stories of your volunteers (and of your beneficiaires, board, staff and donors) come to the Nonprofit Storytelling Conference (https://nonprofitstorytellingconference.com)

1. **Clear Communication**: Clearly communicate your mission, vision, and goals to ensure that volunteers understand what they are working towards.

2. **Training and Orientation**: Provide volunteers with adequate training to perform their roles effectively.

3. **Value Their Time**: Ensure that the tasks assigned are meaningful and value-adding.

4. **Flexibility**: Offer flexible volunteering hours to accommodate different schedules.

5. **Recognition**: Regularly acknowledge and appreciate volunteers for their efforts.

6. **Feedback**: Regularly ask for and respond to feedback from volunteers.

7. **Involve Volunteers in Decision Making**: Show volunteers that their opinions matter by involving them in relevant decision-making processes.

8. **Volunteer Socials**: Organize social events to build a sense of community and foster relationships among volunteers.

9. **Personalize the Experience**: Match the tasks to volunteers' interests, skills, and passions.

10. **Provide Opportunities for Growth**: Offer roles that enable volunteers to learn and develop new skills.

11. **Respect and Empathy**: Treat volunteers with respect and empathy.

12. **Encourage Teamwork**: Promote team-based activities that require volunteers to collaborate.

13. **Keep Them Informed**: Regularly update volunteers about the organization's progress and how their work is contributing.

14. **Establish a Volunteer Coordinator**: Assign a dedicated staff member or volunteer to coordinate and support volunteers.

15. **Offer Virtual Volunteering Opportunities**: For those who cannot be physically present, provide online or remote volunteering tasks.

16. **Recognize Volunteers Publicly**: Highlight volunteer contributions in newsletters, on social media, or during public events.

17. **Provide Perks**: Offer perks like free meals, event tickets, or branded merchandise.

18. **Create a Welcoming Environment**: Foster a positive and inclusive volunteer culture.

19. **Offer Certificates or References**: Provide certificates of appreciation or offer to provide references for volunteers.

20. **Support Volunteer Networking**: Encourage volunteers to network with each other and with staff.

21. **Create a Volunteer Retention Plan**: Develop strategies to retain long-term volunteers.

22. **Make Tasks Challenging:** Assign challenging tasks that can stimulate and engage volunteers.

23. **Celebrate Volunteer Milestones**: Recognize the anniversaries or significant milestones of your volunteers' service.

24. **Volunteer Surveys**: Conduct surveys to understand volunteer satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement.

25. **Assign Leadership Roles**: Allow experienced volunteers to take up leadership roles or mentor new volunteers.

26. **Safe and Healthy Environment**: Ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all volunteers.

27. **Develop Personal Connections:** Show interest in the personal lives of volunteers to make them feel valued.

28. **Support Personal Causes**: Show your interest in their personal causes and try to support them if possible.

29. **Set Clear Expectations**: Ensure volunteers know what is expected of them from the beginning.

30. **Professional Development**: Provide workshops or training sessions to enhance their professional skills.

31. **Volunteer Awards**: Establish a volunteer of the year award or similar recognition.

32. **Handwritten Thank You Notes:** A personal, handwritten note can show a high level of appreciation.

33. **Peer Recognition:** Encourage volunteers to recognize and appreciate each other.

34. **Create Volunteer Teams**: Group volunteers into teams to encourage camaraderie and shared responsibility.

35. **Ask for Their Expertise**: Let volunteers know that their skills and knowledge are valued by asking for their input.

36. **Provide Adequate Resources**: Make sure volunteers have everything they need to perform their tasks.

37. **Regular Check-ins**: Regularly check in with volunteers to ensure they're comfortable and satisfied with their tasks.

38. **Inclusive Policies**: Make sure your policies and practices are inclusive and respectful to all volunteers.

39. **Give Responsibilities**: Show your trust in volunteers by giving them responsibilities.

40. **Encourage Creativity**: Allow volunteers to come up with new ideas and projects.

41. **Open Door Policy**: Encourage volunteers to voice their concerns or ideas without fear of repercussions.

42. **Offer Volunteer Training to Staff**: Train staff members on how to effectively engage and manage volunteers.

43. **Promote From Within**: If possible, hire from your volunteer pool when job opportunities arise.

44. **Provide Progress Reports**: Regularly update volunteers on how their work is making an impact.

45. **Volunteer Swag**: Create custom merchandise such as T-shirts, hats, or mugs for your volunteers.

46. **Transparent Communication**: Be open and honest in your communication with volunteers.

47. **Match Volunteers with Mentors**: Pairing new volunteers with experienced ones can make them feel more comfortable and engaged.

48. **Collaborate on Goal Setting**: Collaborate with volunteers on setting their goals and objectives within the organization.

49. **Celebrate Diversity**: Embrace and celebrate the diverse backgrounds and experiences of your volunteers.

50. **Don't Overwork Them**: Ensure volunteers have a balanced workload to prevent burnout.