

Training The New Breed of Volunteer

VOLUNTEER POWER

The Screaming Seven Questions

In this workshop we will answer these questions.

1. How can I motivate the volunteer to want to learn what he/she doesn't know?
2. What do I want the person to know that he/she doesn't already know?
3. How does the volunteer learn best?
4. How long should the training session be?
5. Who can best deliver our training?
6. How can I know that the volunteer is learning?
7. How can I make a boring training session fun and exciting?

Training the New Breed of Volunteers ... who perhaps think that you can't teach them anything

Thomas McKee

Question #1: How do you motivate volunteers to want to learn this information-especially if they think they know it?

When it comes to building leadership skills that last, the key ingredient is motivation and how a person feels about learning. People learn what they want to learn. If learning is forced on us, even if we master it temporarily (for example, by cramming for a driver's test), it is soon forgotten. One study found that the half-life of knowledge learned in an MBA course was about six weeks (Daniel Goleman, *Primal Leadership*, p. 99).

Human resource professionals are so frustrated by this fact. They require people to attend training classes so managers can update their skills. However, many folks attend classes merely to earn an accreditation or fulfill a requirement—not to learn. That is an advantage that we have as volunteer managers. Volunteers are volunteering because they have a passion about a mission to change their world and for the most part are willing to do whatever it takes to make it happen—including training. We can capitalize on making the training most effective by answering the seven questions.

The Most Effective Learning Ingredient is Motivation

Motivation begins with the question, "What's in it for me?" Three ways to motivate the learner.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Question #2: Information: What do I want them to know?

Take the time to very carefully consider these items and write down everything that the volunteer needs to know.

- Why we do what we do
- How we do it the way we do it
- The very specific equipment that we use
- The consequences to the organization if it is not done
- The consequences to the organization if it is not done the way we want it done
- Budget constraints and handling money
- Historical information (particularly in the case of hospitals)

Question #3: How does the volunteer learn best?

We all learn differently.

Three Basic Styles of Learning

Marcus Buckingham in *The One Thing You Need to Know* suggests three styles of Learning. I often ask the volunteer, "How do you learn best?"

The Analyzer:

The Doer:

The Watcher:

Question: How do I involve all three learning styles when they are all in the same training session?

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Question #4: How Long Should Training Sessions Be?

The General Rule: *The ability to maintain learning attentiveness or focused attention is affected by fluctuations in brain chemistry. This occurs at 90-minute cycles throughout a 24-hour day. Our brain learns best when learning is interrupted by breaks of two to five minutes so it can diffuse, or process, information.*

I follow these four rules when I am facilitating full-day workshops:

Rule one: Keep presentations down to five-to-ten minutes.

Give a motivational talk for about 5-10 minutes (20 max). If I go twenty minutes, I evaluate what I am saying every five minutes to make sure it is interesting.

Rule two: Follow up the presentation with a DVD, exercise or role play demonstration.

Then I show a DVD, do a group exercise, or get a volunteer to role play with me to break up the learning activity. After the DVD or exercise I facilitate a discussion. I vary this. In some groups I will give a case study (see rule four).

Rule Three: In half-day or all-day workshops, give 15 minute breaks every 90 minutes.

I always have a 15-minute break about every 90 minutes. People need to get up and walk around. In addition, during breaks, the more quiet people ask me questions, and I get great feedback.

Rule Four: Use the case study.

Case studies involve all three learning styles, and each member of the group will participate according to their style: analyzer, doer and watcher. Allow members of the group to use their learning style.

Question #6: Who can best deliver our training?

Shock – the best volunteer worker is not the best trainer.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

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Question #5: How do I know if my volunteer is learning?

The case study

How to develop a case study for your volunteers.

The role play

Other techniques

Question #7: How can we make a boring training exciting?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

“Better to train someone and lose them, than to not train them and keep them.”

Zig Ziglar