

Matching the *Thank You* to the Volunteer

Your recognition will be ineffective if it does not say a "thank you" that a volunteer can *hear*. No two people are alike in their motivators. Here are some tips on what "paycheck" is appropriate for each motivator. But remember, the volunteer himself or herself will be the best source of information on what satisfies him or her!

Praise

These volunteers enjoy recognition for their talents and accomplishments. They like being thanked, given gifts, singled out for achievements. They probably find situations where there is little or no (or exclusively negative) feedback very frustrating. They enjoy a volunteer program where the results of their effort are readily seen by others, especially a supervisor or the volunteer coordinator, and where some sort of yearly recognition event occurs. They might work best in a volunteer position where talents they already possess are put to use.

Affiliation

These volunteers like being part of an organization, club or team. They enjoy opportunities to get together with others with similar beliefs, backgrounds or goals, and being associated with a well-known cause or group. They probably would not find working alone or for an obscure organization very satisfying. An affiliation-motivated volunteer works best in a volunteer position where social opportunities are part of the program, where they work on group projects, represent the organization to the public or wear a badge, uniform or even a T-shirt with the organization's logo

Accomplishment

Accomplishment-motivated people enjoy seeing concrete evidence of their work: piles of finished paperwork, names checked off on a list, dozens of cookies baked, perhaps bags filled with groceries at a food bank. It's probably not a good idea to put these volunteers to work on a project where abstract goals are pursued or where achievements are very hard-won. Look for volunteer positions for them where they can either complete practical, tangible projects or at least receive some sort of certificate of completion for each stage of the work.

Power/Influence

These volunteers like persuading people to see or do things their way. Even if they don't always act as an official leader, they will enjoy showing people a better, easier way of accomplishing an objective. They probably don't want to be in a very insignificant position or to be the newcomer in an already close-knit or routine-bound group. Look for positions for these volunteers where they will help make decisions (such as a board position), teach or train people, help with rehabilitation or tutoring, or campaign or raise money for a person, cause or organization.

Volunteers, like everyone else, will have a combination of things that motivate them, and a few get some motivation from all four categories. Your best bet is to look for the strongest motivator and work with that.

<i>If the volunteer's motivator is...</i>	<i>Reward him/her with...</i>
Praise	Thank you (s) Small gifts Praise for their work, especially in front of others Public recognition Reference letters Letter thanking their boss or family
Affiliation	Social get-together Name badges Team projects Have special T-shirts made for special events Post a list of all volunteers in public area --- better yet, put up their photos, too Say “we”, “us”, not “you”
Accomplishment	Certificates of accomplishment at stages (5, 10, 15, etc. hours, years, steps reached, projects completed, people served, meals delivered, etc.) Concrete, perhaps physical projects, with a recognizable and reachable end A place to put or mark completed projects
Influence	Leadership roles Titles/rank insignia Opportunities to talk to others about cause: media, voters, donors, public officials, etc. Take photos of him/her with Executive Director or VIPs “_____ of the Year” award Ask their advice Listen and be open to their ideas: use some of them