Beyond Plaques and Ribbons

A Complete Guide to Volunteer Recognition

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Session Overview

Part 1	Why Recognition is Important
Part 2	Principles of Volunteer Recognition
Part 3	Tangible vs. Intangible Recognition
Part 4	Formal vs. Informal Recognition
Part 5	Matching Recognition to Motivational Needs
Part 6	Volunteer Recognition Strategies & Resources

Sources: (Cho et al., 2020; Phillips & Phillips, 2010)

Why Do We Recognize Volunteers?

Volunteers need to be appreciated and shown that they are a valuable part of the organization.

Organizations develop volunteer recognition programs to increase volunteer commitment and favorably influence volunteer performance. Some of the most common ways we recognize our volunteers are through letters, banquets, professional development, gift cards, leadership opportunities, and more.

Recognition is an important component of volunteer retention. When volunteers feel appreciated and important, they are more likely to feel connected to the program and continue their involvement.

How do you recognize your volunteers?

Recognition Activity

1. Share your recognition ideas! What have you done recently to recognize your volunteers?

2. Go to menti.com and enter code **10783389**

4. Contribute to the conversation by briefly describing the volunteer recognition experience.

Screenshot this!

Principles of Volunteer Recognition

- Emphasize Success Rather Than Failure
- Deliver Recognition in a Personal Way
- Tailor the Recognition to the Unique Needs of the People Involved

Recognize to:

Educate

Inspire

Highlight Achievement

- Timing is critical
- Strive for a clear connection between the accomplishment and the recognition

Source: (Wu et al., 2019; Phillips & Phillips, 2010)

Tangible vs. Intangible Recognition

Tangible Recognition

- Thank you notes
- Prizes or gift
- Food
- Certificates
- Service pins
- Celebrations
- Paid professional development
- Volunteer uniform
- New supplies or materials to better perform volunteer tasks

Intangible Recognition

- Feeling satisfied with position and duties
- Being able to apply personal skills
- Developing relationships with people being served
- Being able to see how they are making a difference in the community
- Thank you from people being served, staff, or program

Which form of recognition do your volunteers prefer?

A study involving 868 hospital volunteers showed that volunteers with more opportunities for rewards, social interaction, and reflection, were more satisfied in their volunteer roles.

Another study involving 294 volunteers showed that older and more tenured segments of volunteers prefer intangible recognition over tangible recognition.

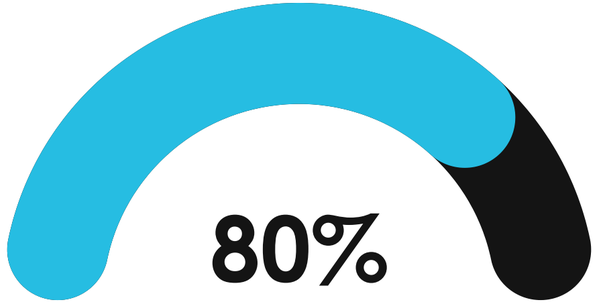
Source: (Phillips, & Phillips, 2010).

Volunteer Recognition Items with Significance to Program Culture

A study found that tangible low-cost items that were organizational-specific and embedded into the culture were some of the highest-rated items when it came to how a volunteer wants to be recognized.

What are some low-cost recognition items with organizational significance?

Notably, 80% of volunteers would like to be recognized by hearing the impact of their contributions. This could be done by generating a volunteer impact report or recognizing volunteer efforts publicly on social media or in newsletters.



of organizations claim to not have the budget to recognize volunteers.

Over 80% of organizations indicated that the most common barrier they encounter around volunteer recognition is that they do not have enough money in the budget to offer rewards.

Source: Volunteer Canada 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study

Formal vs. Informal Recognition

Formal Recognition

- Presenting awards, plaques
- Holding a special event or banquet
- Having a volunteer of the week bulletin board
- Featuring the volunteer on social media
- Submitting an article in the paper
- Establishing a Hall of Fame
- Creating an online volunteer directory

Informal Recognition

- Sending a personal email or letter
- Involving the volunteer in decision making
- Asking the volunteer for feedback
- Remembering special occasions
- Selecting the volunteer to serve on committees
- Reaching out to the volunteer when you see an opportunity they are suited for
- Showing interest in the volunteer and their life

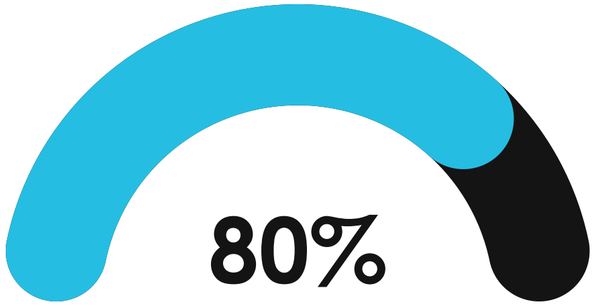
Source: Volunteer Canada 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study

Some segments of volunteers prefer informal recognition over formal recognition, which is why it is important to include both formal and informal strategies in your volunteer recognition program.

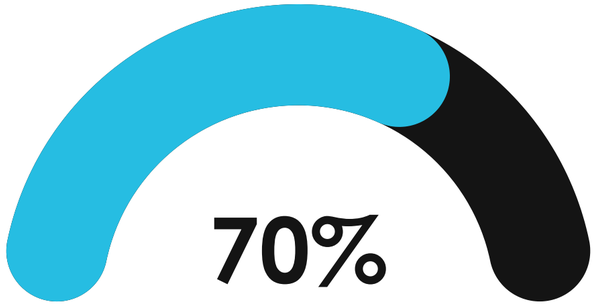
Do volunteers want to be formally recognized?

What does the research say about informal and formal volunteer recognition?

A study of 379 volunteers indicated that their least preferred forms of recognition include banquets, formal gatherings, and public acknowledgment in newspapers, etc. These methods are common methods for many organizations to recognize volunteers, with 60% citing banquets, and 50% using public acknowledgment as their recognition strategies.



of volunteers want to know how their work makes a difference



prefer to be thanked in person or informally, rather than a large formal gathering

Source: Volunteer Canada 2013 Volunteer Recognition Study

Different Motivation Types

According to McClelland and Atkinson's Motivational Theory, volunteering can meet an individual's motivation needs.

Which motivational type are you? Take the 3-minute self-assessment at

http://bit.ly/3qCGYjD

Screenshot this!

Achievement

Volunteers motivated by achievement:

- Seek responsibility
- Seek unique achievements
- Often need tangible rewards

Affiliation

Volunteers motivated by affiliation:

- Need to be liked
- Seek socialization
- Like personal relationships

Power & Influence

Volunteers motivated by power/influence:

- Seek positions of authority
- Has a need for status
- Needs to influence the process and others

Achievement

What are some ways you can recognize achievement-oriented volunteers?

When recognizing an achievement-oriented volunteer

- Link the recognition to a very specific accomplishment.
- Include phrases like “Best” or “Most” awards.
- Provide additional training or more challenging tasks.

Ways they should be recognized

- Plaques and awards
- Letters of Recommendation
- Professional Development
- Advancement in Tasks
- "Most Dedicated" Award

Affiliation

When recognizing an affiliation-oriented volunteer

- Recognition should be given at a group event in presence of peers, family, or other bonded groups.
- Recognition should have a personal touch.
- Recognition should be voted on by peers.

Ways they should be recognized

- Unexpected creative thank you notes or gifts
- Social events
- Awards program with peers and family present
- Connection to clientele

What are some ways you can recognize affiliation-oriented volunteers?

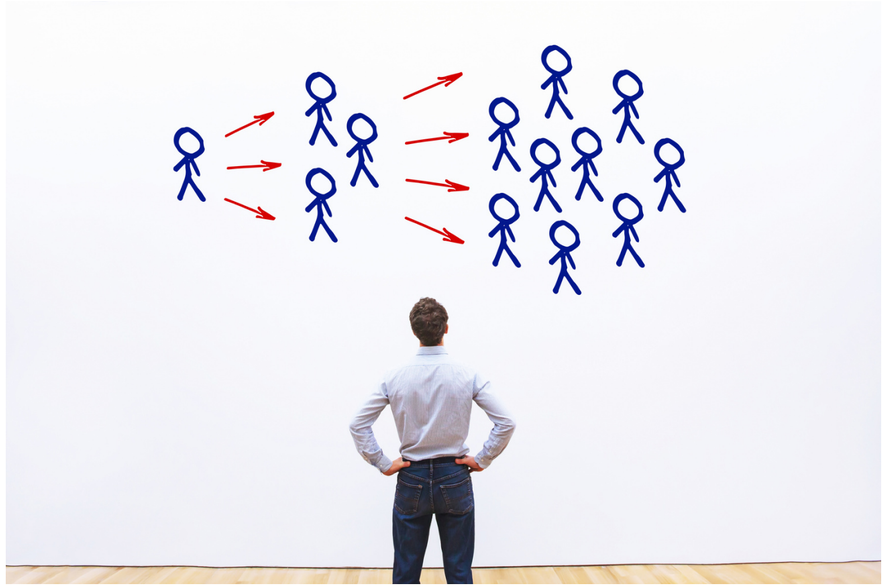
Power & Influence

When recognizing a volunteer motivated by power & influence

- A key aspect is “promotion,” conveying greater access to authority or information.
- Recognition should be announced to the community at large, put in the newspaper, etc.
- Recognition should illustrate the impact or influence the volunteer has had on systems, the community, etc.

Ways to Recognize

- Impressive Job Title
- Featured Seminar Presenter
- Media Contact or Public Relations Role



What are some ways you can recognize power-oriented volunteers?

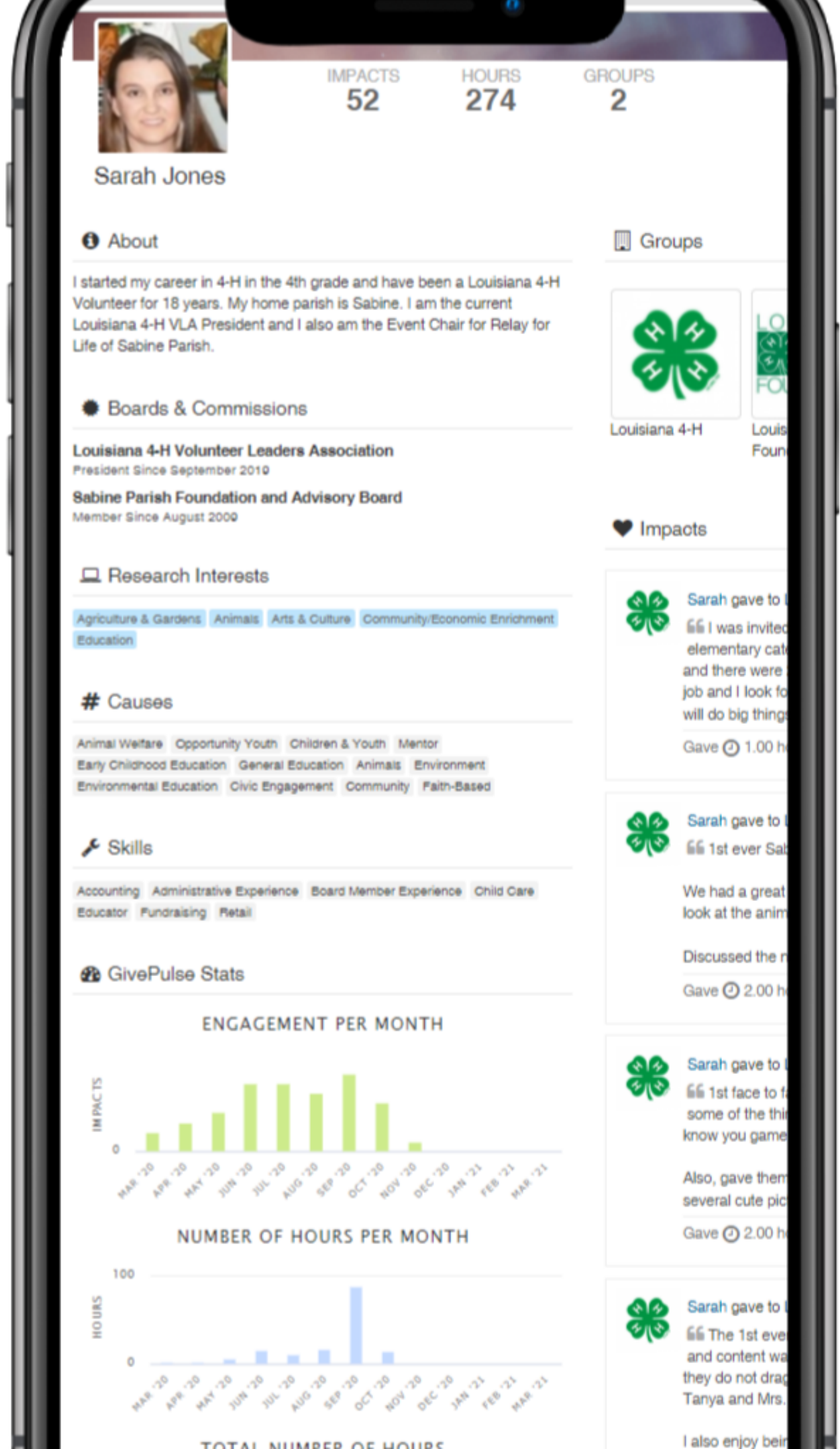
Learn how your volunteer prefers to be recognized

You can develop an effective volunteer recognition program by taking time to learn the unique motivations and preferences of your volunteers. This can be done by creating a survey to accompany any annual volunteer paperwork. This information can be referenced throughout the year.

Pro tip!

Meaningful Rewards on Minimal Budget

- President's Volunteer Service Award: https://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/
- Your state's service commission may offer free or low-cost volunteer service pins and certificates (volunteerlouisiana.gov)
- GivePulse.com offers a free/low-cost method to allow your volunteers to log hours and generate a service resume.



Professional Development: Digital Credentials through Badgr.com

Badgr offers free options for organizations to reward volunteers with digital badges and credentials when they reach volunteer milestones or participate in professional development opportunities.

Reflection

- What did you take away from today's session?
- What new volunteer recognition ideas and strategies might you implement in your organization?

Share on the Jamboard at **http://bit.ly/SHVLVol**

Type this link into your browser!

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