

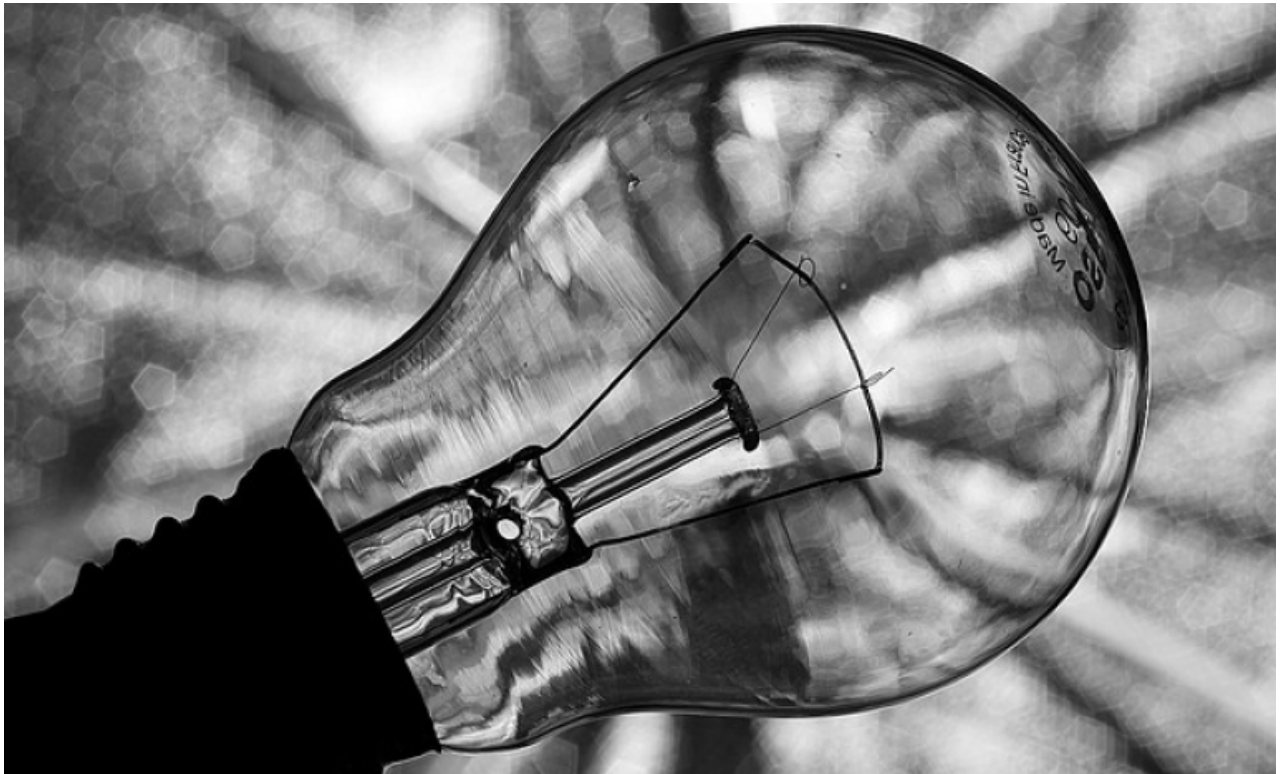
News

5 key factors to improve management of volunteering



07/30/2015 - 13:32

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What to take into account when concentrating on the improvement of management of volunteering? As a result of our experience in assisting organizations in improving their management, we here submit a collection of 5 factors that significantly helped to improve volunteering.

Management of volunteering is gaining more and more priority in the agendas of non-profit organizations. This phenomenon does not occur just by chance. Right now, while economic resources diminish and social problems that need to be tackled increase, it is especially necessary to count on **more and better volunteers**. That is, more people involved, and more of them giving their best! Here we offer 5 factors to improve the management of volunteering:

1. Commitment of volunteers based on the organization's mission

One of the most important factors to attract, to involve and to motivate people is **the own mission**, the cause an organization works for. According to **Lesley Hustinx**, expert of volunteering, nowadays people tend to identify most of all with this main aim. However, the classic paradigm of volunteering is being based on the identification with the organization itself and its rules. Let's not motivate then with organizational reasons, but through the cause as such!

2. The psychological contract between organization and volunteer

It is recommended that a so called "[commitment document](#)" is being signed between volunteer and organization. This document specifies formal aspects as for instance the role the volunteer will play, the schedule and time of his dedication, or the rights and duties of both parties. But, beyond this document –which is of vital importance– we must take into account the **psychological contract**. This means, to go into depth what is expected to be exchanged between volunteer and organization. So, it is necessary to **harmonize expectations** regarding aims and criteria guiding the tasks to develop, the working methods (teamwork or separately) or, most of all, the **hidden**

agendas (what does the volunteer expect beyond his/her own task: to learn? Opportunities? Contacts? CV-development? Recognition?).

3. The secret of practical tools at the right moment

Management of volunteering is built upon a series of key instances that need to be carefully processed to ensure a beneficial experience for both sides. To invest time and money in these stages may save your organization from risks or problems in the future. A good example might be the selection, reception and following-up of new volunteers. To build and dispose of the right tools to develop these moments is very helpful. This would apply, for instance, for a **solid collection of criteria to select volunteers**, suitable **guidelines** and the appropriate materials to welcome them, a **standardized record with basic information** about the new volunteer, a complete database to carry out the assistance of the newcomer or, without going any further, the organization's own **Volunteering Plan**. In each case, these tools must be as **simple, intuitive and useful** as possible. They must help us, not lead us to complications!

4. Vision and attitude regarding the key persons and the decision-making organs

Who is supporting the volunteering action within the organization? Does everyone **share the same vision** on the role of volunteering? We should never forget that volunteering **affects directly the heart of the organizational model**, and this often introduces changes that might encounter some resistance. That's why leadership, consensus and the participation of people or groups holding key positions will be vital to clarify the role of volunteering within the organization and to ensure that everyone is giving their best.

5. To rely on a dynamics-organizer, to start walking and to engage in learning-by-doing

One of the factors that is most helpful in improving volunteering management is to contract somebody –on a paid basis, or having enough time at his disposal– to manage and organize volunteering. This implies to bear in mind that this is not an expenditure, but **an investment** that will definitely pay-off in the future. Another aspect that helps organizations a lot –most of all those having few volunteers and willing to make a leap forward– is daring to start walking. It is about starting from the very beginning, focusing on the development of key factors as attraction, selection, reception and following-up/loyalty of volunteers. Now it's time to be brave, to dare to start working utilizing **volunteering schemes** and, most of all, to learn from our successes and our mistakes.

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