

Critical success factors for “Becoming a Volunteer Focused Organisation”

1. Re-define the term “volunteering”

- Encourage and incentivise people to think innovatively about volunteering, talk to people across the organisation including existing volunteers and supporters, understand the external perception of the organisation and developments in the volunteering market - inspire people to think ‘differently’.

2. Develop a volunteering strategy in the same way that you would develop your business strategy

- Make sure your objectives are tangible and specific, measure the success of your strategy through key performance indicators and ensure that your volunteering strategy directly contributes to your wider organisational aims

3. Understand the size and value of the volunteering opportunity

- Build a volunteer target and cost model that shows the different types of volunteers that are out there, the numbers available, how many and in what way can they contribute to the charity – either via extending services, improving internal operations or helping out with campaigns or events. Translate the opportunity into hard facts and figures including how much you need to invest in your infrastructure and resources to realise the opportunity

4. Differentiate yourself in the market place

- Develop a marketing strategy and approach, segment your market to understand the different types of volunteers and their requirements, target specific segments with marketing campaigns, ensure that your opportunities and overall volunteering strategy matches the market

5. Convert the opportunity into real resources

- Make sure you have excellent recruitment processes and resources in place - aim for a 100% conversion rate (for suitable candidates). That means that when a volunteer approaches your organisation you can find them a great opportunity that benefits the organisation and inspires the volunteer, without them, taking their time to one of your competitors

6. Once you have the volunteers, keep them

- Aim to get your retention rate as high as possible – remember recruiting new volunteers is far most costly than keeping your existing ones. Develop best practice management and support processes for your volunteers and tailor them to the different types of volunteers. People volunteering to gain work experience to get back into the work place will require different support to those about to retire and leave the work place

7. Make sure the organisation has an infrastructure and is accountable for volunteering

- Developing and delivering great volunteering opportunities does not just ‘happen’. It takes time, investment and resources. The organisational structure, business processes and roles/responsibilities need to be carefully thought through to ensure that they are capable of delivering the volunteering strategy. The most important point though is to ensure that volunteering has a place at the “top table” and that accountability for the delivery and success of the volunteer strategy sits firmly at Director/ Chief Executive level

8. Implement a strategic planning and review process

- The volunteering strategy should be a living, breathing document. As a matter of good practice it should be reviewed at least once a year to ensure that trends in volunteering and society are translated back into opportunities for the organisation. It also helps to re-focus people on the importance of volunteers and keeps volunteering firmly on the management agenda

9. Develop sustainable partnerships with the corporate sector

- Volunteering is a fantastic opportunity for the corporate and not-for-profit sectors to work together in a mutually beneficial way. Charities can benefit from employee volunteering schemes and corporate funding whilst the corporate can benefit from experiencing a completely different working environment leading to increased motivation, enhanced skills and cultural diversity

10. Develop a volunteering brand

- Developing an inspiring, innovative and relevant volunteering brand is critical to differentiate the organisation and create the level of buy-in required from your employees and supporters