



Tips for Providing Performance Feedback to Volunteers

If feedback is provided effectively, whether positive or negative, it can both motivate and inspire a volunteer to do better. However, when feedback is handled badly, negative feedback can result in lack of motivation, resentment, frustration, anger, loss of respect, and the possibility of permanent damage to the volunteer and club relationship.

Positive feedback is more likely to ensure that a volunteer will experience feelings of being content, satisfied, happy, respected and motivated to continue in their current role.

Written below are some recommended guidelines that could be implemented in order to ensure that each volunteer is able to be provided with a positive experience when it comes to receiving feedback regarding their performance.

1. Be Immediate

The time to give any form of feedback is as soon as possible after a situation or event has occurred. The immediate acknowledgement of a job well done is an important and effective way of recognising the efforts of a volunteer. Positive feedback in this manner demonstrates that the contribution made by the volunteer is indeed valued and appreciated.

In relation to providing negative feedback, once time has passed it is likely that the memory of the people involved in the situation, will fade. Therefore it is likely they will be unable to recall the facts as clearly. Even though it can be quite hard to give negative feedback it is unlikely to get any less difficult over time. The sooner a situation is dealt with the sooner the volunteer will be able to move forward. It is important to ensure that negative feedback is given in the appropriate setting and the volunteer is allowed time to process the feedback as well as make comment, if they so desire.

2. Be Prepared

Prior to scheduling a time to provide feedback make sure that you are in the right frame of mind. It is particularly important when approaching a situation which is likely to involve criticism of a volunteer's performance to be very clear about your own intentions for providing feedback and your personal feelings towards the matter to be discussed. If you are angry and have feelings of resentment then it is not the best time to provide feedback. It may be helpful to roleplay with a trusted colleague, club member or volunteer if you are unsure of how your feedback will be received. Should you decide to role play, confidentiality is crucial.

In order to best demonstrate to an individual volunteer that they have had a positive impact on the club and its community it is important to be conscious of their personal feelings concerning recognition and the most appropriate forum in which to give feedback. For example, some volunteers would be more comfortable being given feedback privately as opposed to in front of other club members or volunteers.



3. Be an Active Listener

When a volunteer is provided with positive feedback it is an opportunity to encourage and instill effective communication on an ongoing basis. Take the opportunity to listen to how they view their current experience as a volunteer at the club. This can enable both the club and the volunteer to benefit from sharing ideas and making relevant decisions for planning in the future.

In responding to a situation that has occurred which may have a negative impact on the club often the most effective and efficient feedback will come from the volunteer themselves. Prior to giving the volunteer your perspective about a situation, ensure that they have the opportunity to tell you what they personally feel about it.

Should the response from the volunteer be in line with what you were intending to provide feedback for, you can use this as an opportunity, to ask them what they think would be the best way to solve the situation at hand or to change their initial response to the set of circumstances.

4. Be on Task

In order to provide feedback to a volunteer that has performed well, ensure that what you are trying to convey is meaningful, relevant and to the point.

Always stick to the facts when giving a volunteer feedback. Do not assume you know why something happened when reviewing a situation that may be seen as negative. Only discuss what you or another individual or group of people witnessed or reported to you. Provide the volunteer with the opportunity to explain, for example, why they may have behaved a certain way or why a task was not completed on time or to club requirements.

5. Be Objective

The method in which feedback is provided will directly impact on the way in which the volunteer will interpret their need to make changes or respond differently in the future. This method is relevant in regard to a volunteer who has been perceived as displaying either a positive or a negative work ethic.

A particular method that is recommended is to make sure that you pause after you have given the feedback to the volunteer, therefore allowing them time to process the information. As well as giving them the opportunity to respond without interrupting them.

In your own words, repeat back to the volunteer what you have heard them say. If what the volunteer has reported to you has resulted in you feeling angry or upset allow yourself a moment to calm down prior to further discussion. This may mean that you will need to schedule another time to continue the discussion and possible resolution of the problem.



6. Be Positive

When conversing with a volunteer whose contribution has been of benefit to the club it is good practice to be sincere, upbeat and to the point.

In an attempt to decrease the negative response that a volunteer may have when receiving constructive criticism, it is a good idea to always open with a positive statement. This is equally as true when closing the discussion that it is important to end on a positive note. Such as explaining to the volunteer that you believe in their ability to do better in the future and to use this as an opportunity to improve and develop their skills.