

# How to Motivate Volunteers

1. Give people a reason. There has to be a motive if you want motivation. Motives vary from person to person and time to time, but all actions are driven by some motive. Appeal to compassion, pride, fun, fulfillment, significance, conformity, or whatever appropriate motive might get people to do as you desire. Base it on their wants in relation to your goals.
2. Be specific. People can contribute Time, Talent or Treasure but they need to know exactly what you want before they can determine how to best get it for you. Tell them what you need and by when. Show them or describe to them the ideal outcome you are seeking.
3. Have the attitude of gratitude. Being grateful is the psychological equivalent of magnetism. People are drawn to others who are appreciative. Thank people, point out what they have done and how it mattered. Show your appreciation for what you receive. "Give without remembering and receive without forgetting."
 

***"People do things for their reasons, not yours."*** Unknown Author
4. Inspect what you expect. Be a good supervisor. Show that you are concerned, involved and paying attention, but do not hover over others as they work and micro-manage with constant corrections. Agree with them as to how you will monitor their progress, in that way they will expect you to be watching but not become bothered by it.
5. Sell the vision and purpose. Continually talk about the bigger purpose behind the actions. Walt Disney showed everyone his dream of Disneyland. He built models, drew pictures, told stories and dreamed aloud so that everyone could see the goal and feel its value. They say that the person who knows how to do something may have a job but the one who knows why it matters will always be their boss.
6. Collaborate with your volunteers. Treat them as your equals. Show them that you respect them and appreciate the value of what they are doing. Ask their opinion. You don't have to always follow their suggestions but you should listen to them and seriously consider them. Most breakthroughs are achieved through the suggestions of the workers rather than their leaders.
7. Celebrate their successes. When something good is achieved take time to point it out and comment on it. Saying 'thank you' and 'good work' goes a long way to keeping people motivated. Remember, they are volunteers.
8. Treat failures and mistakes as teachable moments. Instead of blaming, accusing and criticizing, use these occasions to do an after-action review of what happened, why it happened, and what effect it had. Then look for ways to avoid allowing it to happen again. Determine whether it was due to something: personal, interpersonal, situational, technical, or systemic. Then correct the cause.
 

***"A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."***  
Benjamin Franklin
9. Document the actions and outcomes. Help people have a tracking system to assure that they know when they are on and/or off course. Things that are measured tend to improve, so be careful to set up measures. Know the progress and document what you have learned together.
10. Trust people a bit more than they deserve. Someone with no experience leading others would be ill equipped to take charge without some supervision, but if all they got was constant supervision, they'd never learn to lead. Give people enough room to take decisions and make mistakes but not so much room that you put everything at risk. There must be enough trust so that people find their own solutions, otherwise you will always have to supervise them. Remember; the role of a supervisor and motivator is to become progressively unnecessary. You will know you were successful when your motivation is no longer essential.