

THE COMMUNITY BUILDER

Volunteers in Community Association Life

Volunteers serve a hugely important role in the life and health of an Association. After all, the Board members are all volunteers. All Committee members are volunteers. Where would your Association be without them? They are very important to a well-run Association.

To attract and keep volunteers, it is important to understand what causes a person to volunteer his or her time. Once you understand what motivates a volunteer, it will be easier to attract them and utilize their time and talents for the benefit of the Association.

A number of factors influence a person's decision to volunteer:

- Fulfilling a Request
- Personal Achievement
- Personal Recognition
- Personal Agenda
- To Create Change
- Friendship, Bonding and a Feeling of Belonging

Many people will volunteer simply because they are asked. Be sure that when you ask someone to give their time, ideas and skills that you utilize them.

Conduct an interview to see what their special skills are, what they did or do for a living, what their interests are to determine how to best apply their skills for a successful outcome.

In order to create a sense of achievement and fulfillment, make sure that the project is achievable, that a realistic, solid plan has been identified and codified in writing and most of all, have a definitive timeline for the research or project to be done and the results to be presented for consideration by the Board.

Recognition is incredibly important to all volunteers in a community. Personal, public and individual praise energizes every volunteer. It can be as simple as a Thank You note, a mention in the community newsletter or as elaborate as an awards ceremony. Be sure the recognition is in scale with the accomplishment. If



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the accomplishment was by committee, recognize all committee members, unless of course, it is the committee who makes an individual distinction.

Volunteering can provide a social component to some residents lives, meeting new people and making friends working to build their community. Some people volunteer simply because they believe in giving back to the community.

Whatever the reason, a good volunteer base in a community is a major benefit to every community and can become a "second set of eyes and hands" for the community manager. Handle with care and do not take them for granted. It is easier to retain a volunteer than it is to recruit a new one and while new blood is a positive and is welcomed, your veterans provide knowledge and historical depth and continuity.

