

VOLUNTEERING

Excerpts taken from the ARRL 1988 Communications Manual

A volunteer; A person who performs or offers to perform a service of his or her own free will, A person who renders aid, performs a service, or assumes an obligation voluntarily. Do you fit this description.

As Section Manager, I had asked the Section Cabinet when making first contact with them to make sure before they accepted the position that they were asked to take, to read the description before they made a decision. In accepting the volunteer position they were expected to do the work, knowing that circumstances do arise and may take weeks to a month or more to rectify and get back to normal. But all in the entire volunteer is to do the job they accept.

This can apply to you in your local club or ARRL Section appointments, such as ORS, OBS, PIO, GL, NM, and etc. They have asked you to take this position because they need it done and feel you were the best person to do it. Volunteers are the lifeblood of the ARRL. They are difficult to find, more difficult to keep, and at times, difficult with which to work. Volunteers come in a wide variety of shapes, colors, sizes, backgrounds, skills, experience, and levels of motivation. They have their own reasons for participating and their own specific needs which must be met if they are to continue to volunteer. Their needs, abilities, and accomplishments determine the ultimate success or failure.

They are human beings with human needs, goals, attitudes, abilities, strengths and weaknesses. Since volunteers will be the basic resource that we will be using, it will be to our advantage to get to know each of them as well as possible. Generally, volunteers will do precisely what they want to do - no more - no less. It is up to you to convince them that the assignment you have selected for them is both needed and appropriate. As each individual has his own likes and dislikes, it maybe necessary to talk volunteers into some assignments which are important though unpopular. Volunteers must be convinced that what you are asking them to do is really needed. Volunteers don't like to be underutilized, and tend to disappear when kept cooling their heels for a significant length of time. They will work for long hours under the worst conditions as long as they can see the need for it. Most will do anything you ask as long as they're treated properly. If you mistreat or abuse them, they may not volunteer their help again.

It would be physically impossible to discuss in this article every possible reason why people join a volunteer group. Generally speaking, they volunteer and join to satisfy a personal need. The majority of your volunteers, though, joined out of a desire to serve the public in a way they best know how: as communicators. These are the volunteers you should direct your efforts toward. Find out why your volunteers joined your group. You've got to find out what their needs are before you can attempt to satisfy them. In short, the best way to find out why your members volunteered is to ask them!

As volunteers they have a right to expect courteous, considerate, fair and impartial treatment from the leadership. Courtesy is always in order; rudeness will cost you dearly. In addition to learning and compensating for their weaknesses and being tolerant of their faults, you must also consider their feelings. Don't forget that you are taking precious time from their families. They also have the right to expect you to make a reasonable effort to learn and apply the skills and techniques of communications management. You will be expected to make mistakes, admit them openly, and learn from them as you grow into your new role. You will also be expected to keep them informed as to what is happening and why. Unfortunately, some members will expect much more of you than they have a right to expect, and often more than you can do. They may expect you to change situations over which you have no control, force other volunteers to change their habits, provide them with privileged treatment or status, fire a useful assistant because they happen to dislike them, or other equally inappropriate actions. In short, they will tend to forget that you deserve the same treatment from them that they expect from you. Each member has different job demands and family requirements, as well as other outside interests.

John D. Meyers, NB4K
Kentucky Section Manager
Great Lakes Division