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Volunteer recognition and appreciation

Get Out
Get Active

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There are many ways to express thanks and gratitude and celebrate the impact volunteers have.

1. Show them they are a very welcome part of the team

Creating a true sense of belonging will help disabled volunteers feel valued and appreciated. Consider offering rewards that are inclusive to all of your volunteers, not just the majority e.g. ensure events are accessible and certificates are available in all formats. Good communication is important - make sure organisational newsletters are available to all and consider having a specific version for volunteers. Providing a platform for volunteers to share experiences can be beneficial however it is vital that it is correctly moderated by an employee to ensure that any problems or issues raised can be appropriately addressed.

2. Training

Recognising the importance of volunteers through training and development shows that they are valued and that the organisation wants to invest in them. GOGA has found this is especially interesting for volunteers motivated to improve their skills and employability, or those applying for higher education/employment. Plus, training volunteers is a win-win situation!

3. Make it personal

This is the easiest and probably most effective way to recognise your volunteers. Saying thanks to individual volunteers often in a sincere and specific way helps people to feel appreciated. You can do this in person, on the telephone, email or card and/or formally at special events.



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4. Celebrate volunteers throughout the year

It's important that these are not just an annual or one off occasion. Make it meaningful and consider linking them to key national awareness dates such as Volunteer's Week in June (1-7 June).

5. Volunteer awards scheme and certificates

Showing appreciation through regular awards and certificates can be great for morale, but be mindful that they are fair and above all, fun! Carefully consider how you structure these - i.e. will you create achievements that are visible and can be worked towards by all volunteers, for example? Supplementing other, often smaller acts of appreciation throughout the year with awards often works really well. Also having a volunteer of the month scheme helps to express regular thanks.

Certificates are a simple and effective way to recognise and provide something for volunteers to keep as thanks for their contribution. Organisation-branded items such as a badge or a tote bag are nice incentives for volunteers as well as being a good marketing strategy. Having something tangible for the hours put in can often make all the difference to a volunteer and act as not only an incentive, but a source of pride.

6. Navigating social media

Whilst social media can be a great and public way to thank and celebrate volunteers, you should be mindful that unless they are checking your organisation's social media accounts, your gratitude can easily get missed. It's also best to not assume that everyone is active on social media and has access to the internet. Consider sharing photos of them receiving awards or other thanks, for example, instead.

7. Social events

Many volunteers are motivated to get involved to meet new people - this is something GOGA has found increasingly with disabled people and those who are retired. Organising a volunteer social activity is a great way to bring all volunteers together, and regular interaction with other volunteers helps to keep them inspired and motivated.

8. Volunteers are ambassadors!

A happy volunteer is the best ambassador for your project and organisation. If you have not done so already - thank the volunteers today!

Resources

[Volunteers Week website](#) ▶



[How to thank volunteers NVCO](#) ▶

[Recognising and valuing volunteers - Volunteer Scotland](#) ▶

[National volunteering forum: incentivised volunteering and rewarding volunteers](#) ▶

[Volunteer case study template](#) ▶



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Top tips!

Here is a list of some things that can be done by every organisation, even those with limited time and resources:

- Have a defined role and clear structure - be organised and have tasks and responsibilities ready for the volunteer when they arrive.
- Ask if there is any training or skills development they would like and assess what training they actually require.
- Say thank you after the session or completion of volunteer hours and tell them what they did well that day.
- Offer to give a reference when they apply for a job.
- Send out a thank you card.
- Pay expenses on time - it's best practice to pay volunteer's expenses promptly.
- Nominate a volunteer for an award and/or offer a volunteer of the month reward programme.
- Organise a mutually inclusive social event e.g. a movie night or outdoor activity.
- Exit interview - volunteers will leave eventually, so take time to have a chat with them to get their feedback. Did they feel supported and recognised?
- For Get Out Get Active Volunteers, join the #VolunteerStory campaign and celebrate your volunteers.
- Thank volunteers on a day of significance for your organisation or charity, such as Volunteer's Week (June) and International Volunteer Day (December) as they are also good occasions to pinpoint.
- Take note that when rewarding or incentivising volunteers that they are not unwittingly rewarded for something that could be classed as 'consideration' and cause legal issues.
- Always check that volunteers are happy being included in a media or social media campaign, as not everyone will want to be publicly recognised.



#GetOutGetActive

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 www.getoutgetactive.co.uk

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