



Making it Easy for Men to Volunteer

Like it or not, more women volunteer than men and depending on who you talk to, you'll hear various explanations as to why this is. Perhaps it's because women were traditionally home-bound, and therefore had more time to volunteer with community organisations. Perhaps it's because women are biologically pre-wired to nurture, and therefore volunteering is simply an extension of who they are. Or perhaps women get their first taste of volunteering in support of their children and from there the volunteering bug is born.

Regardless of the psychology behind it, most community organisations are unconsciously geared toward catering for their female volunteers. If a lone male does dare to venture in, the experience can be quite daunting—even for the toughest of blokes. As a result, many organisations are alienating potential volunteers, without even knowing it. Check out our top tips (gathered from male volunteers!) to help you find, keep and support the men in your organisation.

1. Mind Your Language

Listen in on a conversation between a group of male mates vs. a group of female friends, and you'll notice there is a big difference in the language they use. Women will talk about volunteering, contributing or making a difference, whereas men tend to talk about helping out, lending a hand or pitching in. When you make your request for volunteers, make sure you're speaking the right language.

2. Get to the Point

If you have a husband or male partner, you will already relate to this. In a broad sense, men are less interested in the how's, why's and where for's—they simply want to know what you need them to do. Give your male volunteers clear, brief instructions and let them get on with the job.

3. Offer Physical Tasks

There is an exception to every rule, but generally speaking men enjoy doing physical tasks. Even men who usually have white-collar jobs agreed that they were more likely to pitch in with something active. That doesn't necessarily mean digging holes or mowing lawns, but they prefer to be out and about.

4. Put the Blokes Together

If you're lucky enough to have more than one active male volunteer, make sure you give them tasks or responsibilities they can work on together. While men don't need 'company' like women do, they do have a strong sense of 'mate ship'. Knowing they are not the only man out there makes them feel supported and a part of the team.

5. Provide Structure and Opportunities for Feedback

Men will want to tell you what they've done and the changes they have made to improve things. Make sure you have a structure in place to monitor their creative genius and a way to debrief at the end of the project. If your organisation has mostly female volunteers, the lone male will bring a new perspective and a different way of thinking to your organisation. Make sure you have systems in place to have those thoughts heard.

6. Feed Them

Simple but true. Yes, they want a 'thank you', but if they've been out there painting, digging, building, planting or raking all day—they'll take a pie over a 'thank you' every time.

7. Realise Their Value

The number one way to *keep* your male volunteers is to truly appreciate and value what you've got. Male volunteers tend to be hugely resourceful and once involved, become very committed to a cause. Treat your male volunteers like the rare treasures they are.

Source: *Exult NZ* (<http://www.exult.co.nz>)

September 2017