

SAMPLE POSITION CHARTER

Effective recruiting demands a clear, complete, and brief presentation of a volunteer position's roles and responsibilities. The most effective way to begin this process is to develop a position charter.

The following two-step process provides a simple way to develop a complete and mission-driven position charter.

STEP 1

The first step is to develop the objective, or mission, for the position. Use the following five questions to develop the objective. The following is a sample from the volunteer receptionist for the ABC Adult Day-Care Center. Sample answers are in italics.

1. What's the position?

Receptionist for ABC Adult Day-Care Center.

2. What are the duties?

Answer the phone, take messages, take orders, distribute mail, make coffee, and buy donuts.

3. What's unique about the person in this position?

An enthusiastic and positive person, with a great telephone voice and skills. Loves people and has a "knack" for details. Gets phone messages correct.

4. What value does this position contribute to the mission of the organization? (What are the benefits of this job to customers?)

Customers feel great when they finish talking on the phone with ABC Adult Day-Care Center. They have the confidence that their messages are going to be delivered. The office is always warm, friendly, and neat for all internal and external customers, which also makes it a fun place to work.

5. Who are the customers?

Internal: Staff members. The receptionist seeks to serve staff by delivering correct messages and making the office a fun place to work. The receptionist should have a friendly and positive greeting as each person comes in the door.

External: All current and prospective clients. The receptionist seeks to know them all, keep up on their current business needs, and keep records of what they need and make sure that requests are directed to the correct staff member.

Put these answers together in a few-sentence objective statement for the position. Start the statement with the words, "To contribute to the patient care of ABC Adult Day-Care Center by..." An example for this position follows:

Position Objective: To contribute to the quality patient care of ABC Adult Day-Care Center by assuming the primary responsibility for front-line contact with every vendor, customer, and employee. The receptionist will accomplish this by building confidence and trust with each person who calls and visits ABC Care Center, communicating to all internal and external customers how important they are to us, and that we value their service. The receptionist will

seek to build a trusting relationship with each patient, vendor, customer, and employee to ensure long-term satisfaction and to optimize the chances of add-on business and of the positive referral of new business to ABC Adult Day-Care Center.

STEP 2

After you've written the position objective, outline the roles and responsibilities of the position. The following categories can help you develop these. Here are sample roles and responsibilities for the volunteer receptionist for ABC Adult Day-Care Center. Sample answers are in italics.

Position Title: *Volunteer Receptionist*

Responsible to: *Administrator*

Key Objective: *To contribute to the quality patient care of ABC Adult Day-Care Center by assuming the primary responsibility for front-line contact with every vendor, customer, and employee. The receptionist will accomplish this by building confidence and trust with each person who calls and visits ABC Care Center, communicating to all internal and external customers how important they are to us, and that we value their service. The receptionist will seek to build a trusting relationship with each patient, vendor, customer, and employee to ensure long-term satisfaction and to optimize the chances of add-on business and of the positive referral of new business to ABC Adult Day-Care Center.*

General Duties (same for all volunteers):

- 1. Attend all volunteer staff meetings*
- 2. Fill out weekly staff report*
- 3. Turn in expense vouchers*
- 4. Coordinate schedule with supervisor*
- 5. Be at the receptionist desk 15 minutes early for a once-a-week, four-hour volunteer shift*

Specific Duties for This Position:

Greeting

- 1. Greet visitors, staff members, and volunteers as they enter the building*
- 2. Offer visitors a cup of coffee*
- 3. Seek to help visitors by answering questions and directing them toward their desired need*
- 4. Have all visitors sign guest log*

Answer the phone

- 1. Answer before the third ring*
- 2. Take messages—always writing down the phone number*
- 3. Set up priority for answering the phone (who answers when the receptionist is on the phone?)*
- 4. Set up system of delivering phone messages*
- 5. Monitor the answering machine*

Filing and mail

- 1. Update all files*

2. *Open mail and distribute*
3. *Record and file all receipts for volunteer expenditures*

Coffee Time

1. *Prepare conference room for volunteer and staff 10:00 or 3:00 coffee break*
2. *Pick up “goodies” for breaks*

SAMPLE YOUTH MINISTRY

“VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS”



Jonathan writes:

This simple form was something I gave to volunteers interested in volunteering with the campus ministry I led. It provided a glimpse of the ministry to help volunteers decide if it was where they wanted to serve. You might adapt it or create something similar for your own organization.

This ministry has many different opportunities available to help make a difference in the lives of kids. We have short-term project teams, set-up teams, and “help” roles—usually for people who can only help during certain hours of the week. We also have a role that we call our “volunteer staff.” This page lays out the expectations we have for these volunteers.

Our volunteer staff members are people who commit to hanging out with kids regularly. This hanging out breaks down to three different times:

1. One-on-one times apart from youth group
2. Weekly youth group
3. Events and activities

I list these expectations for volunteer staff not so they can see the “rules” they must abide by, but so that they can evaluate and budget their time and energy effectively to include this ministry in their schedule. Prospective volunteer staff also need to see what kind of time commitment and duties can be expected.

One unique thing about being on the volunteer staff is the nature of the work we do. Being with kids, praying with others, and doing recreational activities is exciting. At the end of a rough day or week, this ministry isn’t another pressure or loathed time commitment; it’s a time when you can put all else aside and allow God to work through you while doing something you enjoy.

1. “ONE-ON-ONE” TIMES WITH KIDS

More than anything else, spending “one-on-one” time with kids is the most important thing we do. These kids are reaching for attention. They all want to be listened to, noticed, and appreciated. Many of these kids don’t get any individual attention at home. They don’t know what it is to be liked, heard, or cared about. We can help fill that void in their life.

Each staff person needs to be in contact with kids weekly. Sometimes this might just be a phone call or a “text” to see how things are going or if they are coming to the next event. At least once a month we need to see a kid outside of ministry events and activities. My hope would be that some staff could meet with kids weekly or every other week. These times include any activity with just one

(sometimes two) kid(s). Staff members can take kids out for a milkshake, go shopping with them, go to the DMV to stand in line with them...almost anywhere! Some kids that drive you nuts during youth group are wonderful “one on one” because they are totally different away from their friends.

2. WEDNESDAY NIGHTS

In order to provide more nights free, we have been having our staff meetings and actual youth group on one night. In addition, we have dinner together as a staff every once in a while on a Sunday night; it's a fun time to fellowship and plan ahead.

Youth group is from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. every Wednesday. It is an important time to attract kids, bring them in, and have a chance to get to know them.

3. EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Trips to Disneyland, monthly events, ski retreats, camping, etc. are not only free to staff members but also an excellent time to spend major, bonus hours with kids.

SAMPLE PROJECT CHARTER

A sample project charter for an "Increase Membership" Task Force

WHAT IS A PROJECT CHARTER?

A project charter provides an understandable framework for all participants. It might be written for a large volunteer project (a seasonal convention) or it might be designed to resolve a particular problem.

The project charter:

- Describes the scope of the project and the desired outcomes
- Identifies the authority and resources delegated to the project
- Defines participants and their roles and responsibilities
- Identifies the guidelines in which the project will operate

WHAT'S THE STRUCTURE OF A PROJECT CHARTER?

The project typically consists of four primary sections:

1. Project identification and scope
2. Authority and resource-need definition
3. Project roles and responsibilities
4. Project structure and schedule

The following sample project charter is for a membership recruitment task force. The sample answers are in italics.

1. PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND SCOPE

Project name/title: *Membership Recruitment Task Force*

Background/Introduction/Purpose: *In the past two years, membership has decreased five percent. This team is being called together to develop a strategy to increase member retention and to add 100 new members in the next two years.*

Scope statement (expected results/desired outcomes): *The membership committee will develop a strategy and action plan to increase member retention and add at least 100 new members by June 2008.*

2. AUTHORITY AND RESOURCE-NEED DEFINITION

Who has the authority to make decisions and allocate funds? *The committee has the authority to spend up to \$5,000 for this project. The committee is empowered to do what it takes to get the task done (be creative).*

What personnel resources are needed (expertise on the project team)? *A consultant who is a specialist on membership retention and recruitment, one proactive member from each*

of the regional chapters (8 people), a marketing specialist from our membership (1 person), a past president (1 person), and a team leader (1 person). Total 11 team members plus a consultant.

What's the budget? *Determined at the first meeting—this team determined the following budget at its first meeting.*

- *Consultant (\$2,500)*
- *Marketing materials (\$1,500/ mailing)*
- *Meetings (\$1,000)*

What time is needed? *Six months.*

3. PROJECT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Tasks to be performed (note how all begin with an action verb followed by an object, those responsible, and a checkpoint date):

1. *Present the problem of a decreasing membership to the team at the first meeting, and have team members brainstorm ways to increase membership.*
2. *Research and select a consultant to work with committee (Tom, Mary, and Bill; by January 1)*
3. *Develop membership calling campaign in each region (8 regional committee persons responsible; membership phone campaign in June)*
4. *Develop marketing materials (Tom; by April 1)*
5. *Mail out marketing materials to all present and past members (all committee members; in May)*
6. *Develop survey for members about why people join, leave, benefits, etc. (Bill, Joan, Jerri; by February 1)*

4. PROJECT STRUCTURE AND SCHEDULE

When the action steps are outlined from the brainstorming session, a timeline is developed.

January 15: Consultant retained

February 10: Survey completed for approval

March 1: Survey mailed out; rough draft of marketing material ready for approval

April 1: Marketing material completed

May 1: Mail out marketing materials

June: Conduct phone campaign

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT CHARTER:

In this position charter, the scope of the charter is clear (increase membership by 100 members). The committee has a \$10,000 budget to work with and a suggested outline of the people to pull into this project.

The method is wide open. The committee is empowered, within those

guidelines, to brainstorm and develop an effective plan. If the committee comes up with a need for more resources (money, personnel), they can present their plan to the board for approval. The committee needs to develop their own plan and business processes (sections 3 and 4 of the project charter). In this way, they own the solution to the problem.

SAMPLE YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Mr./Mrs./Ms.

Date of Birth:

Phone:

Address:

City:

ZIP:

Spouse's Name (if applicable):

Occupation:

Children's Names & Ages (if applicable):

Will your family/spouse support your involvement in this ministry? Yes No

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

High School:

Year Graduated:

College: Degree:

Date Completed:

Other: Degree:

Date Completed:

Do you plan to pursue further education? (*please circle*) Yes No

Present Occupation:

Employer:

Address:

Phone:

Type of Work/Job Title:

List types of work experience on this job:

Military Service: Branch, Type of Discharge, Date:

VEHICLE INFORMATION

Any traffic violations/accidents within the past 3 years? Yes No

Do you own a car? (*please circle*) Yes No

Are you willing to drive for ministry functions? (*please circle*) Yes No

CHURCH BACKGROUND

Church currently attending:

List responsibilities or positions you have at church:

What other organizations or programs are you involved in?

Describe your personal relationship with Jesus Christ:

Have you led someone to Christ? Describe the setting:

VOLUNTEER/MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

Briefly describe your volunteer experience:

How did you hear about volunteering for this ministry?

Why do you want to volunteer for this ministry?

What two greatest strengths do you bring to this ministry?

What are your two greatest weaknesses you feel may hinder your ministry?

What training (other than what you have already mentioned) have you had in the Bible, theology, or counseling?

MINISTRY INTERESTS

How many hours per week can you spend in this ministry?

2-4 4-6 6-8 8-10 10 or more

Have you been disciplined by a local church for anything that would hurt this ministry or tarnish the reputation of this ministry?

If yes, please explain.

Rate any of the following areas of student ministry you would like to help with (leave blank if you have no interest in it):

1. I believe God has gifted me, and I have a great vision for this service, ministry, or duty.
2. I'm interested or would like to grow in this service, ministry, or duty.
3. I am capable in this service, ministry, or duty and will help out when needed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setup and tear down of student ministry room | <input type="checkbox"/> Media booth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greeting students at the door | <input type="checkbox"/> Event security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MC (opening prayer, announcements, offering) | <input type="checkbox"/> Games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worship (singing or playing an instrument) | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking/teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior High camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Altar ministry (prayer) | <input type="checkbox"/> "Church Days" representation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls' overnights and similar events | <input type="checkbox"/> Paintball |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls' mentoring or small group discipleship | <input type="checkbox"/> Birthday Bash (quarterly fun night) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guys' overnights and similar events | <input type="checkbox"/> Amusement Park Day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guys' mentoring or small group discipleship | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Convention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High/MidPoint Middle School Sunday class | <input type="checkbox"/> Creativearts/drama |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior High/S4 (Supersonic Senior High Sunday School) | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism/outreach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor ministry (cards to visitors, follow-up calls, etc.) | |
| Other _____ | |

REFERENCES

- | | |
|---------|-------|
| 1. Name | Phone |
| Address | |
| 2. Name | Phone |
| Address | |
| 3. Name | Phone |
| Address | |

CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes No If so, please explain

Have you ever been formally accused of child abuse? Yes No If so, please explain:

Have you ever received psychiatric care that would affect your relationship with our church? Yes No If so, please explain:

RESPONSIBILITIES

I agree to allow you to do a background check. Yes No

Signature

PRAYER SUPPORT

I agree to find three individuals committed to pray for me and my ministry.

1. Name
2. Name
3. Name

Signature

I agree to your statement of faith. Yes No *(Please read and sign.)*

STATEMENT OF FAITH

[place your church/organization's statement of faith here]

WAIVER AND CONSENT

I understand that by filling out this application, I waive any rights to confidentiality concerning the contents of this application. I authorize [CHURCH NAME] to contact the personal references I have identified and to conduct a reasonable investigation into my suitability for youth work. In signing this document, I also show that I subscribe wholeheartedly to the [CHURCH NAME] Statement of Faith as written above.

Applicant's Signature

Date

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HIRING A PAID “VOLUNTEER MANAGER” USING BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The most important decision you make in managing volunteers is hiring your paid staff to supervise and manage volunteers. Many volunteer managers make the mistake of asking hypothetical questions in the interview such as, “How would you handle a high-maintenance volunteer?” You don’t need to know what the prospective volunteer coordinator would do. You need to know what the prospective volunteer coordinator has done in the past. When you use behavior-based questions rather than hypothetical questions you focus on past job performance because past job behavior is often the best predictor of future performance.

SAMPLE BEHAVIOR-BASED QUESTIONS:

1. Tell me about your previous experience working with volunteers and how you feel it prepares you for this staff position.
2. How have you handled volunteers who don’t follow through?
3. How have you increased your effectiveness with the work of volunteers?
4. Tell me about an exciting experience you had in working side by side with a volunteer in your past work experience.
5. Tell me about an unsuccessful experience you had in working with a volunteer in your last job.
6. Describe a time in working with a volunteer when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
7. Tell me about a time when you had to use spoken communication skills in order to get a point across to a volunteer.
8. Tell me about a job experience when you had to speak in order to be sure that the volunteer knew what you thought or felt.
9. Give me an example of a time when you felt you were able to build motivation in your volunteer team.
10. Give an example of a time when you had to use conflict resolution skills to solve a problem with volunteers.

SAMPLE YOUTH MINISTRY REFERENCE

Confidential Recommendation Form

TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT:

Name of Applicant: _____

Last Name, First Name, Middle Name: _____

TO BE COMPLETED BY REFERENCE:

Our ministry would appreciate a confidential statement from you concerning the applicant named above, evaluating his/her ability to undertake Christian ministry and his/her potential as a Christian leader. Please complete and return in the envelope provided.

Rate as follows:

Superior/Above Average/Average/Below Average/Don't Know

Kindness & generosity

Moral integrity

Patience

Perseverance

Self-discipline

Willingness to oppose injustice

Desire to serve God

Spiritual influence on others

Spiritual maturity

Theological insight

Completes assigned tasks

Leadership potential

Plans ahead

Punctuality

Wise use of money

Wise use of time

Working with others

Comments:

1. What are the applicant's greatest strengths? (Be as specific as possible.)
2. Have you any reason for lack of confidence in this applicant?
3. In your opinion, is the applicant able to be a positive role model to youth?

Please indicate whether your recommendation is given:

_____ Enthusiastically _____ Strongly _____ Fairly Strongly

_____ Without Enthusiasm _____ With Reluctance

OTHER REMARKS

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Position: _____

CONFIDENTIAL Do not return to applicant. Please mail this statement directly to:

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERS

As you interview potential virtual volunteers, you want to explore additional areas of volunteer responsibility that you wouldn't probe for face-to-face volunteers. The following is a sample outline of questions to ask potential virtual volunteers.

ORGANIZATION PHILOSOPHY

1. Why do you want to volunteer for our organization?
2. What about our mission excites you?
3. Tell about an experience you've had as a volunteer or staff member for an organization with a similar mission.
4. How did you hear about us?

COMPUTER EXPERIENCE AND EQUIPMENT

1. What kind of computer do you have?
2. Do you have a personal e-mail account (home or work)?
3. Are you connected to the Internet, both via e-mail and the Web?
4. Do you know how to use Web search engines? Which ones do you use regularly?
5. Do you know how to zip/unzip or stuff/unstuff a file?
6. Do you know how to e-mail a document as an attachment?
7. What word processing software do you have? spreadsheet software?
8. How experienced are you with each of these software packages (e.g., database software, artwork software)? List the software packages your organization uses.
9. Do you know how to convert documents to other formats (e.g., one kind of word processing document to another? a word processing document to a spreadsheet? one kind of database to another?)?
10. Do you know how to import data into a database from another file?
11. Do you know how to export data from a database?

(Adapted from Susan J. Ellis and Jayne Cravens, *The Virtual Volunteering Guidebook*, Impact Online, Inc., 2000, p. 35, <http://www.serviceleader.org/new/documents/vvguide.pdf>.)

SELF-MOTIVATION

1. Give me an example of a self-motivated project that you completed.
2. Tell me about a time that you had a project and how you organized your time to get it done.

3. Tell me about your weekly schedule and when you get your volunteer projects done.
4. Since most of our communication will be via e-mail, send me an example of your writing skills and attention to detail. (Many volunteer managers create a topic for the prospective volunteer to address in an e-mail.)
5. Tell me about your work space and how you keep from distractions.
6. Tell me about your other commitments. Can you commit the _____ hours a week required for this volunteer assignment?
7. Tell me how you make sure that you answer each e-mail in less than 48 hours (two working days).

SAMPLE BOARD “CODE OF CONDUCT”

If your organization has a policy against individual members of a board of directors for nonprofit organizations not receiving personal or business gain because of their position on the board (such as an insurance broker writing a huge policy because of his or her position on a board), you might want to institute a “code of conduct” that board members sign. The following is an example from the California Society of Association Executives.

The Board expects of itself and its members ethical and business-like conduct. This commitment includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum in group and individual behavior when acting as Board members.

- Board members must represent, with unconflicted loyalty, the interests of the membership. This accountability supersedes any conflicting loyalty such as that to advocacy or interest groups and membership on other Boards or staffs. This accountability supersedes the personal interests of any Board member acting as an individual consumer of the Society’s services.
- Board members must avoid any conflict of interest with respect to their fiduciary responsibility.
- There must be no self-dealing or any conduct of private business or personal services between any Board members and the Society except as procedurally controlled to assure openness, competitive opportunity, and equal access to “inside” information.
- Board members must not use their positions to obtain for themselves, family members, or close associates, employment within the Society.
- Should a Board member be considered for employment by the Society, he or she must temporarily withdraw from Board deliberations, voting, and access to applicable Board information.
- Board members and members at large may not attempt to exercise individual authority over the Society or staff except as explicitly set forth in Board policies (*California Society of Association Executives Board Policy and Procedures Manual*, California Society of Association Executives, 2006, p. 14).

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

Agenda of Questions

A strategic planning retreat is a must for visionary boards. Use the following agenda of questions to facilitate a board through a vision retreat.

INTRODUCTION:

The ground rules during these days together include:

- Everyone should feel safe.
- There are no generals and privates at this retreat. Everyone shares as a genuine equal. Titles and positions are left at the door.
- We want to chase elephants, not rabbits. Anyone has the right to challenge the group if he or she feels the group is chasing rabbits. The group must then stop and vote without debate whether to continue that discussion.
- We want to keep the focus on our mission, not on private turf. Threatened people seldom make good decisions. We are in this together. To the degree possible, personal feeling should not impede the free exchange of information and opinion.

DISCUSSION:

1. Where are we now?

The World We Face: The broad environmental analysis

- What is going on in the world today (politically, socially, economically, demographically, culturally, educationally)?
- Will tomorrow's environment be different still?
- Can you give relevant statistics and information from media and other sources?

The World of [the Field Our Organization Is Within]

- What is happening in other like industries?
- What can we learn from their strengths and weaknesses?
- Who are the competitors in the field? What do we need to know about them?

Who Are We and Why Are We Here? Internal analysis

- SWOT analysis form—Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (see page 163 for this form)

What Do We Value?

- What values have guided us to this present time?
- Do we still hold these values?

2. Why do we exist?

Focus Question: What is our mission?

Use these questions to help write a mission statement. Answer each of the questions in seven words or fewer:

- What are we?
- What do we do?
- Who are our customers/the people we are trying to reach?
- What is the benefit to our members?
- What makes us unique?

If you have a mission statement, affirm that statement.

3. Where do we want to be?

Our Vision for the Strategic Plan

Key Questions:

- What is our vision for the future?
- What should be our focus for the coming years?
- What vision do we have for our organization in the next five years?

Criteria:

- Criteria should focus on vision—not process. (For example, the assembly line was a process—not a vision. Henry Ford’s vision was to put a car in every garage. He developed the assembly line as a way to accomplish his vision.)
- Criteria are measurable.

Focus Question: Brainstorming exercise

What’s our vision in the next year (two years)? Again, think vision—not process.

4. The gap: How do we fill the gap from where we are and where we want to be?

Focus Questions:

- How wide is the gap between where we are and where we want to be?
- How do we measure that gap?
- What barriers keep us from reaching our vision?
- How can we bridge those barriers?
- What steps can we take to fill the gap?

Step One: Critical Success Factors

- Think of the goals to accomplish this mission
- Not the how, but the what (statements of hope)
- Necessary and sufficient rule: each is necessary, and all are sufficient
- All must have “We must” or “We need”
- No less than four or more than eight
- Each should address a single issue (avoid the word *and*)
- All must have a consensus; all must agree on what is vital to this mission

Step Two: Business Processes to Achieve These Goals

- What are the business processes that we need to achieve each Critical Success Factor (goal)?

- What plans do we have to make?
- What people resources do we need?
- What financial resources do we need?
- Are any new structures necessary? If so, what are they?

For each critical success factor:

- Each should have an owner—the person responsible for carrying out the strategy.
- The owner should be a member of the board present at the meeting.
- Each success factor should begin with the words “We must.”
- No owner should have more than three or four strategies.
- Each should address a single issue.
- All must have consensus—all agree on what is vital to the mission.

5. Wrap-Up

Given who we are and what we represent, what could we do to establish this mission and attain these goals? Where do we go from here?

SWOT ANALYSIS FORM

In the boxes below, list in descending order of importance the three greatest strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing our organization. As used here, strengths and weaknesses should refer to facts or behavior **INSIDE** the organization; opportunities and threats are used for factors **OUTSIDE** that affect our organization in some way. There are no right or wrong answers.

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
I N T E R N A L		
	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
E X T E R N A L		

ICEBREAKERS AND OPENERS

These questions or activities will help you “break the ice” in meetings and planning events. Most of these give people an opportunity to share, listen to others, and get to know one another in a fun way.

DOOR-OPENING QUESTIONS

Volunteers often don't really know much about each other. We can help by using a “disclosure” question to break down the masks that people often wear at meetings. When people get to know one another at a more personal level, they have more fun when working.

If this is a meeting of a dozen people or fewer, have everyone share the answers around the room. If you have a large group, divide everyone into groups of about six or eight.

Depending on the format, you may want to kick off your meeting with just one of these questions:

1. In high school you would most likely find me _____.
Have each person fill in the blank. Many of the answers I have heard are the following:
 - In the bathroom smoking
 - In the dean's office
 - On the stage
 - In the gym
 - In the quad talking
2. What's the longest you've ever worn your hair? When?
3. What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?
4. What was your most prized toy as a child?
5. If you could have a T-shirt printed with a message, what would it be?
6. If you were stranded on a desert island:
 - What three items would you take with you?
 - What three people would you take with you?
7. If you discovered that you only had one year to live, what would you do differently?
8. Is there one thing you're not doing that—if you did it—would have a great impact on your life?
9. If you could have one superhero power, what would it be and why?
10. If someone made a movie of your life, what actor/actress should probably play you?

These answers open the door for follow-up questions. Another variation of this icebreaker: Have people write down their answers on a 3x5 card.

Collect the cards, shuffle them, and hand them out. Participants guess whose card they have.

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Participants say three things about themselves—two true and one lie. Others guess which of the three statements is the lie.

THIS AND THAT

Gather in a circle and select someone to begin, and then move clockwise around the circle. The first person says two similar items, like pizza and ice cream (both foods). In three seconds or less, the second person has to say which of those two he likes better. If he beats the time limit, he gets to say two things to the next person. But if he doesn't make it, the next person says two items. Carry on with this game around the circle.

HIGHS AND LOWS

Participants share their high of the week and their low of the week. What experience was the best one of the week—your high? And what was the worst—your low?

MY FAVORITE

Participants write down their answers to these questions:

- What is your favorite food?
- What Web site do you enjoy the most?
- What is your favorite TV show?
- What is your favorite hobby/pastime?
- What is the last CD you bought?

Participants sign their names and don't let anyone else see their answers. The leader then reads the answers to the whole group, and participants try to guess who each set of answers belongs to. Award a point for each correct guess. The person with the most points wins a prize.

COMMON TRAITS

Give participants a list of five to 10 traits that they must find in common with the people around them. For example: "Find someone who was born in the same month," "...someone who lives in your state, or "...someone who drives the same model of car." Participants with the most in common win a prize.

WHAT DO WE HAVE IN COMMON?

Instruct participants to gather in groups of three. Their assignment for the next two minutes is to find five distinctive things that the three of them have in common. The three things cannot be job-related or obvious (all are women).

Common items are the following:

- All born in the same state
- All parents of three boys
- All drive a Toyota

Have the first groups that finish sit down. When the two minutes are up, tell the first three groups to introduce themselves and find out what they have in common.

THE HOT SEAT

Participants sit in a circle, and, one by one, each takes the hot seat. The person in the “hot seat” has to answer a series of questions asked by another participant. Some sample questions:

- What were your greatest disappointments in the first third of your life? second third? recently?
- What was the greatest achievement you experienced before the 12th grade?
- What would you do if you won the lottery (\$1 million a year for the next 20 years)?
- If you could have dinner with any person who has ever lived, who would you choose and why? What questions would you ask that person?

It's impossible to listen to the honest reflections of another board member without being drawn to that person.

OUR ORGANIZATION CAN...

This opener can help set the stage for an event or planning weekend. Divide the room into four sections like a 40-yard football field (use blue masking tape, which doesn't leave a residue). Label the far left section “strongly agree.” Label the middle left section “agree.” Label the middle right section “disagree.” And finally label the far right section “strongly disagree.”

Now, make statements such as:

- Our organization can change the world.
- Our organization has a focused mission.
- Our organization is facing a major threat.
- Our organization is living in the past.
- Our organization stands on the threshold of opportunity.
- Our organization is alive and growing.

Come up with other statements unique to your organization. Have participants move to the part of the room matching their opinions. Once there, the people in that section should discuss why they chose their response. One member of each group can share with the larger group the consensus of why the individuals answered the way they did. Do this process with each statement.

SIMPLE LEAD-INS

- Ask participants to state one or two “burning questions” they'd like an-

swered in this session.

- Have participants describe one strategy/resource they've used successfully (relevant to the topic of the meeting/training).
- Have them state their personal definition of the topic (i.e., team, community, mission, a cause).

THE CHECK-IN

Instruct each person to say, "I am _____ percent here today. The rest of me is [WHERE]." (Someone might say, "I am 40 percent here today. The rest of me is thinking about my family right now. We had a big fight last night.") Let each person talk about where his or her mind is. As a leader, you discover how big a job you have to get participants focused on your meeting agenda.

TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Some of these simple activities can help teams learn to work together. But some of these involve much more (for example, “Building Interdependence” is a very serious exercise). Find more of these free ideas on www.TheSource4YM.com.

BLIND SQUARE

This is a quick but effective team-building activity.

Supplies:

1. As many blindfolds as you have team members
2. 1 large rope at least 40 feet in length

Simply blindfold all your team members, and throw a rope on the ground next to them. Tell them to make a square, using the full length of the rope lying on the ground next to them. Give them no further instructions.

There’s no trick. It’s just great to see who takes charge, how they organize the corners, if one person facilitates from the middle, etc.

HUMAN MACHINE

This can be done with large or small groups.

If you have fewer than 10 people, you’ll create one machine. If you have more than 10, you’ll want to divide into teams of 10 to 20 people and have each team create a machine.

Give participants the following instructions: You are to make a human machine using all of your team members. Choose an appliance, machine, or contraption of any kind, and act out all of its parts with all the members of your team. For example: If you were to choose an electric toothbrush, several people could lie down to be the handle, while others would be vibrating bristles.

It’s best to let groups come up with their own ideas. But here are a few great ones you can suggest if a group seems stuck:

- A pinball machine (with one person rolling around as the ball)
- A ski lift (with participants being scooped up by others with locked arms)
- A washing machine
- A car wash

SOUND EFFECTS

Supplies Needed: a blank tape and tape recorder or digital recorder for every team.

Instructions: Your group has 15 minutes to record the sounds listed below and any other sounds that they want to add. The sounds must last at least 10 seconds but not more than 15. All members of the group must contribute.

Here’s the catch. Teams aren’t going around and recording the real sounds. Instead, teams “simulate” the sounds themselves. For example, if the list calls for

a bunch of barking dogs, the team doesn't go find real dogs. They bark like dogs and record that sound.

Assign each team a different room so they can "create" the sounds undisturbed.

- Herd of cows
- Cat in a dog kennel
- TV show theme
- Lovesick coyotes on a moonlit night
- A worship song
- Room full of babies
- Traffic
- American Idol audition
- A typical day in a crowded public bathroom
- A pet dolphin trying to warn his owner that a kid is drowning
- A couple in marriage counseling

BUILDING INTERDEPENDENCE

Objective: If a group of people typically operates independently, use this exercise to help them work interdependently and become a synergistic team.

Copy the following instructions, and hand them out to each participant.

- You each have four 5x7 cards. Write one name on each of the cards of the other team members.
- On one side write all the things that you appreciate and admire most about this person.
- On the other side answer this question: "If we are to move from where we are today to become a synergistic, interdependent team, what do I need from this person that I'm not currently getting?" (In other words, what behaviors must this person change if we are to become a high-performance, trusting team?) Be specific.
- Take about 20 to 30 minutes to fill out the cards. Give each one careful thought.

Now participants give the cards with each person's name to that individual.

Response: When you receive your cards, take 20 minutes to read them carefully, and then write a response. As you write your response, think of these questions:

- Were you surprised by any of the affirmations on the first side of the card?
- Were you surprised by anything on the second side of the card?
- Are there any recurring themes?
- Are all the team members saying the same thing?
- Does one team member want something totally different than the others?
- What will it mean for you to provide the things requested by other team members?
- Are you willing to make these commitments to the team members for the sake of the team?
- Be prepared to read or present your response to the other team members.

SAMPLE TRAINING EXERCISE—

A Case Study: Symptoms of Staff Resistance

The following case study provides a good training tool for volunteer managers who are struggling with their roles when they have so much else to do. They might feel, “Let’s just hire someone to do the job—it would be so much easier.”

Or you can use this case study as an example for writing your own case study of a problem that your volunteer managers are struggling with.

DIRECTIONS:

Training Objective: To discuss the problems of developing an effective volunteer program when the paid staff do not see “volunteer management” as part of the job description.

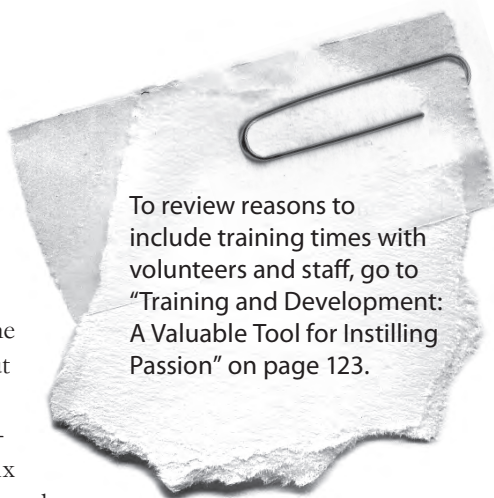
Training Method: Have each person read the case study and answer the questions at the end of the study (about 4 to 5 minutes).

If you have more than eight people, divide into groups of four to six people to discuss the case study. Give each group 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the questions.

In groups:

1. Pick a discussion leader
2. Discuss the questions
3. Prepare a report to the group of your answers

If you don’t have that many people, then lead the discussion in one group.



UNPACKING THE CASE STUDY

As groups report back the problems, ask them what can be done. As a leader, you’ll learn a lot about what people are feeling regarding the issue of staff resistance. You can also take this opportunity to talk about what you should be doing to help your staff become better volunteer managers.

CASE STUDY

Calvin, a manager in the Centerville City Library, just came back from a meeting of librarians. He’s pumped about how many libraries use volunteers to staff many positions. He visited the City of Huntington Beach library and was taken aback by the volunteer room. The volunteers had their own room for processing

books. About 15 volunteers were working on the many books, videos, CDs, and DVDs donated to the library. In visiting with one of the volunteers, he found out that more than 100 people volunteer for the library, and the money they save on staff enables the city library to increase hours for the public.

Calvin assigned one of his library employees, Tony, the job of developing a similar volunteer program. Tony was livid. His feeling was, “I’m already six weeks behind, and now you want me to recruit, motivate, and manage a bunch of volunteers who won’t show up half the time? You’ve got to be kidding.”

Calvin told Tony that if the library didn’t start using volunteers, funds could be cut even more. Volunteers provided a way to offer more services to the public. Calvin took on some of Tony’s responsibilities and assigned Tony the new task.

Tony gave it his best try, and in six months brought Calvin a request for resources to accomplish their tasks. In order to develop the volunteer program, Tony felt he would need the following resources:

- office/workshop space
- access to telephones, photocopiers, Internet, e-mail
- furniture, stationery, tools, and other materials
- premier parking spaces
- special library privileges

Calvin told Tony to make it work, because the volunteer program was working in other libraries. While Tony agreed that the volunteers would bring a lot of enthusiasm into the library, he was afraid of being frustrated. Through his research, he learned that volunteers often didn’t show up in libraries that used them. As he went back to his desk, he muttered, “Why can’t we go back to the good old days when we had plenty of money, a lot of staff, and I didn’t have to think about working with volunteers?”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What went wrong? List all of the problems you see in this case study.
- How could the problems have been avoided?
- Just because a volunteer program worked in one county library, will it work in every county library? Defend your answer.
- What insights do you gain about dealing with staff resistance to managing volunteers rather than just hiring to get the job done?