

Volunteer pay packet – it does exist!



A volunteer pay packet exists; it just doesn't contain crisp £10 notes!



At a time where volunteer participation is dropping and studies suggest 'a disconnect between the volunteer roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering' ([Time Well Spent](#)), it is time to reevaluate volunteer roles and how rewarding they are.

We all have friends who leave an organisation for reasons other than money. Money - as a reward for work - only goes so far to compensate for poor management, a dysfunctional team, and lack of support or development opportunities. Intangible aspects are vital components of an overall pay packet – or reward for work – and they certainly influences happiness and commitment to a role.

People leave roles when the intangible aspects of their pay packet become too negative to bear. What happens when a pay packet contains only intangible elements – as with volunteers?

The Social Exchange theory tells us there is a tipping point where negatives outweigh the positives and cause us to take corrective action. Without a cash component on the positive side of the scales, volunteers rely on intangible benefits in their pay packet to feel appropriately rewarded.

Which side of the scales would the following intangible elements of a pay packet sit for each of your volunteers?

- The joy of working with the team.
- The relationship with the volunteer manager.
- The opportunity for skills development or learning opportunities.

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How about:

- fulfilment of personal volunteer motivation
- staff attitude
- organisational culture
- support
- resources allocated to volunteers and their management
- management consideration and inclusion
- process efficiencies
- feeling of real value
- a tangible link to the cause they want to support

.... and every other reason that may keep your volunteers volunteering?!

You may be surprised how thin and precarious volunteer engagement is and how easy it might be for the negatives to outweigh the positives.

What negatives in your organisation are tipping the scales and devaluing the pay packet your volunteers receive? Remember there is no salary to compensate.

Fortunately, connection with a volunteer organisation's cause is a big contributor to a volunteer's pay packet. Seeing the difference they make as a volunteer is meaningful, valuable and is the top reason why volunteers keep volunteering. The more removed a role is from this, however, the more diluted this particular element of the pay packet becomes. Without a link to your mission (the reason your volunteer choose YOU to donate their time to) other elements become more important in the pay packet mix.

In addition to the list above, your brand and reputation also has a role in the pay packet mix. A study in the U.S. by [Corporate Responsibility Magazine](#) shows paid employees will sacrifice salary to work for a company with an excellent reputation. Volunteers are more emotionally attached to their Volunteer Involving Organisation - your reputation and their ability to be proud and talk positively about their involvement is another element that contributes to a volunteer pay packet.

Investigate what goes into YOUR volunteer pay packets. Ask questions such as: Are roles interesting and connected to the mission?

How do we accommodate different volunteer motivations? How well resourced and supported do volunteers feel? What erodes a volunteers feeling of value to the organisation? How included do volunteers feel? How resourced are our Volunteer Managers to enable them to support volunteers in the manner in which they deserve?

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I'm reminded of a comment a volunteer once said to me "The greatest compliment a not-for-profit can give to volunteers is to give time - time to manage - time to know - and time to appropriately recognise volunteer contribution".

Volunteer pay packets can be as individual as volunteers and as varied as their personal motivations for volunteering. Invest in knowing your volunteers and knowing what keeps them volunteering for YOU.

A one size pay packet does not fit all and you may be surprised what tips the scales!

Community Volunteer Service BaNES
Bath Central Library
Drop-in open

Tuesday – Thursday 09:30 – 3:30
Tel: 01225 338 105

email bathnes.volunteerservices@virginicare.co.uk
Website: www.bathneshealthandcare.nhs.uk

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Article by Penny York

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