

cultural volunteer ©

issue 9 – MAY 2004

WELCOME!

cultural volunteer (cv) is a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** is published six times a year and comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, arts management consultant, www.lynnblackadder.com. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

In this issue we consider **the ethics of volunteering as job substitution**, find out about the new body **Volunteering England**, hear about a recent report on **volunteering and social inclusion**, and get an offer of **free professional IT help**.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ cv ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't, but would like to find out more about volunteers.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers represent, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

FEATURE: Lynn Blackadder on volunteering as job substitution

The big issue

Substituting paid workers with volunteers is arguably the most taboo subject in volunteer management. More controversial, even, than whether volunteers should ever be paid (don't get me started!).

Most colleagues I work with would say that we should never replace paid members of staff with volunteers. They hold this view for the following reasons:

- Volunteers should be protected from exploitation (slave labour).
- Paid staff should not be made to feel that their jobs are threatened by more cost-effective workers.

But in what circumstances would the situation arise where volunteers actually replace paid staff? In order to state categorically that we can never replace a paid worker with a volunteer, we need to understand the situations in which this might arise.

Think about it

I can imagine several scenarios where paid staff might be substituted by volunteers (some more controversially than others!):

- Scenario A: where there is a lack of funds.
- Scenario B: where volunteers aren't a financial necessity, but the aim is to save money.
- Scenario C: where there are plenty of volunteers to do the job.
- Scenario D: where it is recognised that an operation runs best with a mixture of paid staff and volunteers, and where there is a policy of not necessarily replacing staff that leave with salaried staff.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

Scenario A

In an ideal world all organisations would be financially stable and staff would be well paid, with regular salary increases. The opposite is true for most of us. So, where an organisation has restricted funds, some roles may need to be performed by volunteers. Here, volunteers are not just supplementary, or adding value, they are filling core posts. I work with one small arts organisation where, until recently, the key role of PR was carried out as and when specialist volunteers could be found. They simply didn't have the money to pay for expertise. In this sort of situation, volunteers might already be involved. And if the financial situation worsens and a paid post has to go, it would seem sensible to try and fill the role with voluntary help – at least temporarily. Thank heaven for volunteers.

Scenario B

Some organisations might be able to afford staff but would rather fill some roles with volunteers to keep costs down. Most organisations, and particularly charities, are required to justify the need for every role and relevant salary to their members and board. If an organisation wants to involve volunteers, that's great. However, if it does so simply because it is free labour and will keep costs down, then there's a lack of understanding of what volunteering is about, which will make for a very unhealthy working environment for both paid staff and volunteers. This is job substitution at its worst and shouldn't be allowed.

Scenario C

This isn't really job substitution, but some people might think it is. It's where volunteers are doing jobs that could be filled by paid workers. Some organisations might not be motivated by their budget but simply find that there are pools of good volunteers who can do the job, eg museum tour guides or hospice volunteers. Even if these organisations had the money to replace the volunteers with paid staff, why would they? Perhaps only if the service was going to be improved, and in my experience of these two particular examples this would be a hard case to argue.

There are also a great many organisations that are entirely volunteer run. They generally spring up from the needs or interests of the local community. Often in these situations, the volunteers feel that personal interest and giving their time free is what drives the project, and it's not appropriate to pay people. Even when these groups are affiliated to a larger charity, attempting to introduce a paid member of staff to further the organisation's work can be very difficult indeed. Trust me.

Volunteers are motivated by things other than money: the need to feel useful, to be social, and to give something back. And it is simply a fact that a great many volunteers have the time and inclination to provide a service for free that some of us do in order (but of course not only) to make ends meet. If

volunteers who provide these services are not exploited, then none of the above can be described as job substitution.

Scenario D

Here we have an organisation that has both paid staff and volunteers working in a pro-volunteering culture, where volunteers not only supplement, add value and improve services, but where some identical roles are done by both staff and volunteers. In this situation, when someone leaves – either paid or unpaid – the post is reviewed to see whether it should be filled by a paid person or a volunteer. Imagine the scenario where volunteer Bob – who has taken early retirement and is keen to work part-time in his local library – offers to work free of charge. The local library has a vacancy for a member of staff, and Bob would be ideal. What is the argument against the library taking Bob on as a volunteer? It could be argued that, by taking Bob on, the library is depriving someone of a job that they need (this is also true of Scenario C). This is a fair point. So in order to be fair, perhaps organisations should decide what percentage of their workers will be paid and voluntary.

However, if the library fires Phyllis, Bob's predecessor, in order to take Bob on, this would be a clear case of how job substitution by volunteering is wrong. Why? Because the library would be employing Bob – first and foremost – as cheap labour. That would be their main motivation. Not because it's good to give volunteers opportunities, and to offer them something in return.

Getting it right

An organisation should have a clear policy that staff and volunteers sign up to when they join the team. In order to structure their expectations it should include:

- Why and how volunteers will be engaged, and a statement that all volunteers can apply for any vacancy.
- A statement to the effect that paid staff will never be sacked so that a volunteer can take their place, but that in the event of a member of staff leaving of their own accord, the post will be reviewed and may be filled by either a salaried or voluntary worker.
- A supporting statement from your staff council or union who will have been involved in the development of the policy (often easier said than done).
- A clear statement of what is expected from paid and voluntary staff, particularly when paid staff and volunteers are doing the same jobs. Make sure that volunteers are treated the same as paid staff but that they are not contracted and do not receive any benefits that are over and above what is required by their volunteering.

In summary, this is potentially a tricky area. Ensure you have a written policy and that paid staff and volunteers know what to expect.

NEWS: New Body for Volunteering in England

Volunteering England is the newly created organisation promoting volunteering in England. Three organisations came together to enable volunteering in England to be represented by 'one strong and coherent voice': Volunteer Development England, The National Centre for Volunteering and the Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering. The primary aims of Volunteering England are to make it easier for the public to understand what volunteering is, to learn about the volunteering opportunities available and to find out who to approach about becoming a volunteer. Volunteering England is a membership organisation and you can join for as little as £40 per year.

For further information visit www.volunteering.org.uk or call 0845 305 6979.

VOLUNTEERS' WEEK: 1 – 7 June

Don't forget to say thank you to your volunteers this June. Organised each year by Volunteering England, Volunteers' Week is a national celebration of volunteers and volunteering. The main theme for 2004 is recruitment, with a particular focus on employee volunteering and young people. Volunteering England provides a range of resources to help you organise an activity at www.volunteersweek.org.uk. Call the Volunteers' Week Team on 020 7520 8947 or email volunteersweek@volunteeringengland.org.

FREE IT HELP FOR CHARITIES: IT 4 Communities

IT 4 Communities is an initiative to encourage companies, employees and individuals with professional IT skills to volunteer these skills for the benefit of local charities and community groups. There is currently a register of 1,200 professionals signed up to help with a range of IT issues varying from introducing IT to the workplace to developing IT strategy.

If you are interested in having a volunteer to help out on an IT project, log on to <http://www.it4communities.org.uk/> and type in your details. The IT 4 Communities Co-ordinator will then contact you to discuss your request in more detail. If it's appropriate they will add the project to the e-newsletter circulated to registered volunteers. Any volunteers interested in helping will then contact the Co-ordinator and be put in touch with you (so it's anonymous for you up to that stage). Just so you know, IT 4 Communities do not security check their volunteers and, once the volunteer has contacted you, managing the relationship is your responsibility.

WHITBREAD YOUNG ACHIEVERS

Whitbread, in partnership with the Active Community Unit, have launched a prize of £5,000 for a young achiever aged between 16 and 25 who's made a real impact through volunteering in the community, environment, sport or the arts. To nominate someone visit www.whitbreadyoungachievers.co.uk or call 0800 904 7447 for a nomination form. The deadline is Friday 11 June 2004.

NEW REPORT

'Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social inclusion'

The Institute for Volunteering Research has just published a report that deals with important current issues such as:

- How to make volunteering more inclusive.
- How to reach and unleash the potential of people who for various reasons may be at the margins of society, facing social exclusion in other aspects of their lives, and who may not see the relevance of volunteering to them. It also covers those who have been made to feel that they have nothing to contribute.
- The barriers that discourage some potentially socially excluded groups from volunteering.
- The socially inclusive practices that organisations and individuals use to overcome such barriers.

The report claims that the findings, conclusions and recommendations are evidence-based, rooted in the practical experiences of people – both volunteers and non-volunteers – in excluded groups and of organisations and staff working with them. It sounds like a very interesting read, and **cv** will report on the implications for cultural organisations in the next issue.

To receive a free copy contact instvolres@aol.com or call 0845 305 6979.

'Lending Time'

CSV reported at the end of last year on their 'Lending Time' project which demonstrates the ways that volunteers can support and enhance libraries and bring benefits to library staff, library users and local people. It's a very interesting short report that covers issues like workforce mix, lifelong learning, reaching out to communities and social inclusion.

To receive a free copy contact information@csv.org.uk or call 020 7278 6601.

FUNDING: One-stop Shop for Funding

Did you know that a web site was set up at the end of last year to give easier access to information on funding? www.governmentfunding.org.uk provides details of £182 million of government grants in one place, and following further development it allows you to apply online. If you register your email address with the site, you will receive regular updates on the latest funding news. Very useful, and it seems to work.

NEXT ISSUE

In July **cv** will be looking at **the implications for cultural organisations of the new Volunteering and Social Inclusion report**, and we will be asking for your input into the consultation process for the **Excellence in Volunteer Management Programme** being developed by Volunteering England.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

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Circulation 747