



Finding the Right Form of Recognition

Many *caregiving* volunteers are recruited from congregations and interfaith networks. So many of these volunteers are likely to be motivated by a religious and spiritual calling to do “good works.” These volunteers receive powerful intrinsic rewards when they fulfill their call to service and act on their faith through volunteering. Giving volunteers a time and place to share and celebrate together may deepen their faith through community service.

Some ways to do this are--

- Have an interfaith prayer or meditation
- Share teachings and traditions of various faiths during training or other meetings and in newsletters and correspondences
- Host recognition events at various houses of worship

There are many other motivations also at work within each volunteer recruited through interfaith coalitions, as well as volunteers of no particular faith affiliation or belief, that work with *caregiving* programs. These motivations reveal individuality and reflect why some may fulfill their call to service as an office volunteer while another is a dedicated friendly visitor or a member of an advisory board.

When planning recognition, consider these varied motivations in the building of your activities, practices and events. One size does not fit all—some volunteers love celebrating and recognizing each other’s work together at a social gathering. These volunteers are motivated and rewarded by “**affiliation**.” Other volunteers are thrilled to be recognized for their accomplishments and sharing the story of the *caregiving* volunteer program in their local community newspaper. These volunteers like to feel useful and seek “**empowerment**.” Still others love receiving the “Good Samaritan” award for outstanding service and are motivated and rewarded by “**achievement**.” Please note these classifications are not to “stereotype” particular types of volunteers, as most volunteers have these three motivations to varying proportions. But these classifications can provide insight and clues about what might be valued and appreciated by people who are driven most by a certain motivation.

Volunteers motivated strongly by **affiliation** generally:

- Are pleased to work on group projects or committees and to have opportunities to build strong relationships with others like serving on congregational care teams.
- Seek opportunities to interact with others and make new friends.
- Appreciate a personal relationship with their supervisor and others with whom they work.
- Appreciate recognition during group events that allows others to see what they have done and socialize with them.



- Are touched by personal recognition such as thank you letters from the care recipients or notes to significant people and groups in their lives about how they have helped others.

Volunteers motivated strongly by **empowerment** generally:

- Want assignments that allow them to influence others and make a difference.
- Appreciate a supervisor that is available to touch base with, but does not micro manage them.
- Make excellent event and committee chairs that balance the needs of others with the goals they are to accomplish.
- Are empowerers of others and therefore are good teachers and motivators, and are listened to and looked up to by others.
- Are in favor of recognition that uses the opportunity to tell the story of the program or the needs of the care recipients to the public at large.
- Appreciate recognition given to them by people in authority or of higher status.
- Consider more access to authority or information as recognition.

Volunteers motivated strongly by **achievement** generally:

- Are goal oriented, problem solvers, looking for measurable results.
- Are pleased to be considered for more challenges or selected to accomplish a complex responsibility like serving on a board or chairing a special event that includes goals to achieve some specific results or accomplishments.
- Like to have a supervisor that can give clear goals and describe outcomes that are expected.
- Are honored to receive awards, certificates or other recognition that are tied specifically to their accomplishments.

Keep in mind that the intent of these classifications and purpose for thinking about individual volunteer motivation is to consider how recognition can be tailored to best reach volunteers thus increasing the likelihood of their valuing the recognition activity, gift or gesture.

When planning to recognize just a few volunteers or one or two particular volunteers, design very personal ways to recognize each one based on their motivation. When recognizing a larger number of volunteers, an ideal recognition plan will require a mixture of activities and ways to say thank you to the volunteers that focuses on various motivations or volunteer personalities.