



YOU GET  
WHAT YOU  
PAY FOR.

Volunteer  
programming that  
really works



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COLUMBUS HUMANE:

was founded in 1883.  
is a 501 (c) 3, private nonprofit agency.  
serves 8,000+ animals a year.  
has a budget of \$4 million annually.

Who the  
heck are  
we?



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COLUMBUS HUMANE:

employs 70 staff and  
420 volunteers.  
Our STEPS program is 16 hours.  
Volunteers pay \$30 to get the class,  
workbook, T shirt and Photo ID.

Our people.



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I HAVE VERY FEW FIRM RULES:

Be nice.

If you don't have anything nice to say,  
try listening.

Participate—it's better that way.

This is a safe space for honest dialogue.

All the rules.

For real.



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MORE THAN FREE LABOR:

Passionate & invested in our missions.

Donors!

Spokespersons with high credibility.

"Animal people."

Defining moments.



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A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AT BEST:

Maximizes staff impact.

Strengthens organization productivity.

Increases quality of care.

Spreads good will in the community.

Builds a foundation for future support.

Educates, inspires & equips.

When it's good, it's great.



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A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AT ITS WORST:

Frustrates & stresses staff.

Jeopardizes health, safety & quality of life for animals.

Creates negative press, poor community relations.

Compromises integrity for organization & future funding.

It's bad.

The low, low lows.



Seven horizontal lines for notes.

HOW MUCH DO VOLUNTEERS COST?

Financial Costs:  
Staff/ Salary for management  
Supplies & Equipment

Emotional Costs:  
Interpersonal relationships  
Managing drama & secondary trauma

Opportunity Costs:  
What else could we be doing with this time, money & energy?

"Free" isn't really free.



Seven horizontal lines for notes.

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

We emphasized the animals only.

Lack of resources means less training & engagement for people.

Sustained system of compassion fatigue.

System of trust is either not established or breaks down.

We break rule #1.

Whoops. We screwed up.



Seven horizontal lines for notes.

LET'S PLAY A GAME.

Humor me.



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

HOW IT ALL GOES WRONG:

Communication:  
"What is wrong with you?!"

Lack of Context:  
"I don't understand. That doesn't make sense."  
"You're doing it wrong!"

Drastic Conclusions & Assumptions:  
"She doesn't care."  
"He is lazy."

What just happened?!



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

HUMAN BEHAVIOR:

Our Default is Urgent Simplicity.  
Without context, circumstances appear clear black/white.  
"It's simple! What are we waiting for?"

We Fill in the Blanks.  
We review what we know, fill in the blanks & rush to judgement.

We Get Angry  
We get very upset when people mess with our Passions.

But, I want it NOW!

Capital P



Seven horizontal lines for writing.

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Know Who You Are.

Make sure you've defined your mission, visions & core values clearly.

Clearly Define Roles.

What are the roles and boundaries for staff & volunteers?

Confirm a Shared Vision of Success.

Make sure that everyone can close their eyes & envision the same picture of success.

Double check.



What are you trying to do?



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

ASSESS HUMAN CAPACITY:

What are your assets?

What time, skills, talents & experience do you already have to work with?

Where's the gap?

What & who do you still need on your team? Do you have to hire these skills or could someone volunteer?

Know your needs.



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

PREPARE FOR HELP:

Define what new team members need to be successful:

What managing & supervision will they need?

What supplies/equipment will they need?

What training will they need?

What emotional support will they need?

Before you get them.



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

GET THE HELP YOU REALLY NEED.

Clearly define your IDEAL volunteers:

Describe the work that needs to be done, when it needs to be done & which characteristics and/or skills are necessary.

Don't forget soft skills!

Use your shared vision of success to motivate & inspire participation.

Go get 'em.



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

SAY, "NO THANK YOU."

Not every animal lover is a match for you.

It's just as important to identify what you **don't** need.

Be nice.

"We aren't prepared to accept your generous offer."

Volunteers who are not a good fit are **VERY EXPENSIVE** to the organization.

Volunteer does not = entitled to do whatever I please. Do everyone a favor: hold volunteers **accountable**. Always.

Whoa. Not ALL of them!

Insert war stories here.



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

IT'S LIKE GETTING A NEW PUPPY:

Train -or- Complain.

(Don't be THAT person who complains about their adult dog with no manners.)

Make certain you're on the same page:

- Mission, vision, values
- Approach, philosophy
- Shared vision of success
- How you make decisions
- Clearly defined roles

It's your choice.



Seven horizontal lines for writing notes.

**"TRUST ME" DOESN'T CUT IT.**

**"Because" isn't a suitable answer.**  
We're messing with passions.  
This is a matter of life & death.  
Humans fill in the blanks on their own.

**Establish the default setting.**  
We do this. We don't do this. This is why.

**Clear & supportive builds trust.**  
With trust, we don't need all of the details, all of the time.

Trust me.

#blessed



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**GRATITUDE COUNTS.**

**Say, "thank you" & mean it.**  
It works every time.

**Be specific.**  
"Angela, thank you for cleaning Ruby's kennel on Tuesday. I could see she appreciated the TLC and I was so grateful for your help."

Is WAY better than...

"Dear volunteer, thanks for your service" once a year.

Hey, thanks.



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**REVIEW, RETAIN & RELEASE.**

**Monitor:**  
Review your program regularly.  
What & who is working out well & what/who isn't?

**Keep 'em.**  
Do everything you can to keep the volunteers who align with your mission, vision, values & your needs.

**Ditch 'Em. (nicely)**  
Do everything you can to get rid of the volunteers who don't align with your mission, vision, values & needs.

The circle of life.



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DID THIS HELP?!

What were your Ah-Ha moments?  
Did we solve any of your challenges today?

What's left to conquer?  
Try me! See if we can help resolve your "P"assion projects.

Let's dish.



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Feedback junkie.



Rachel D.K. Finney, CAWA  
CEO, Columbus Humane

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Thanks!



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