

FROM COMPASSION TO ACTION

A guide to the management,
retention and engagement
of volunteers in
NFP organisations



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What is the problem?

Although organisations such as Volunteering Australia promote promising and bright results for the current state of volunteerism in Australia, the picture seems to differ greatly when focusing on organisations within the Muslim community.

The key to social change is in the power of volunteers. The loss of volunteer's motivation and commitment to organisations is truly disastrous.

86% of volunteer involving organisations need more volunteers

(State of Volunteering in Australia Report, 2016)

Case Study

Islamic Relief Australia is a non-for-profit humanitarian aid organisation. The efforts of volunteers are a crucial part of the organisations success. Unfortunately, like many other organisations, *Islamic Relief Australia* struggles with volunteer retention and involvement. Lots of people put their hand up to volunteer but their commitment and motivation to continue with their initial intentions can often wane.

The Melbourne branch of the organisation has over 300 volunteers registered on their database, however during various campaigns throughout the year a mere 3-4 dedicated volunteers can be found.

During a recent initiative run by the organisation, the program needed to be ceased because there were not enough volunteers. So, what is it that stops volunteers from committing time, effort and dedication to various organisations?

What needs to be done to ensure that organisations benefit from the wealth of knowledge, skills and experience to be offered by volunteers and in turn allow volunteers to fulfil their sense of moral and social responsibility? Here are some strategies used by *Islamic Relief Australia* to turn their volunteer retention around.

Solution:

- Identifying and acknowledging the prospective volunteer's motivations for volunteering and working as an organisation to satisfy these motivations in the volunteering experience.

"Volunteers are happier and intend to continue to the extent that they are able to satisfy their goals in the activity or task assigned to them."

- Bridging the gap between the volunteering roles being offered by organisations and the volunteer's skills, experiences and interests.

"Despite the rhetoric that the contribution of volunteers is valued equally with contributions of paid staff there are still many organisations who treat volunteers as individuals who will do all the tasks staff do not want to do."

Resource Pack

■ TIP SHEET FOR ORGANISATIONS

■ SAMPLE VOLUNTEER WELCOME LETTER

■ INTAKE AND EXIT INTERVIEW

■ PROGRESS SURVEY

QUICK TIPS:

- Volunteers need to be screened in order to ensure a safe working environment as well as recognising their experience, qualifications and skills.
- A position description needs to be provided.
- Develop an application form and volunteer code of conduct.
- Generate incentives for committed and key volunteers.
- Make a big deal of the volunteers and make them feel acknowledged and as important as paid workers.
- Provide training and professional development.
- Create a volunteer team, governed and run by volunteers. Volunteer coordinator, volunteer team leaders etc.
- Create an online acknowledgment system on the organizations website for volunteer of the month, their story, the work they've helped with etc.
- Include volunteers in decision making and take their opinions and ideas on board.
- Organize an important function for volunteers throughout the year, invite other members of the organization, include presentations by the volunteers etc.
- Create volunteer merchandise.
- Celebrate International Volunteer's Day and National Volunteer Week.

VOLUNTEER WELCOME LETTER

Example Letter for Islamic Relief Australia

Dear < Volunteer Name >

On behalf of *Islamic Relief Australia*, I would like to welcome you on board our team. Islamic Relief acknowledges the crucial role that volunteers play in our organisation. Without individuals like yourself, we would not be where we are today. Your efforts, contribution and skills hold great importance for us, as well as millions of people worldwide.

Your position commences as of <date of commencement>. We understand that you may have other commitments and responsibilities however, a minimum commitment of <no. of hours per week/fortnight/month> is required. Attached is the volunteer code of conduct which needs to be signed and returned to our office.

As a non-for-profit organisation, majority of our work depends on the valuable efforts of volunteers like yourself. To ensure the most enjoyable and rewarding experience we will offer occasional professional development and training as well as the opportunity to grow within our organisation. We aim to make the most of your ideas and abilities and help you discover the change that you can make.

Once again, I welcome you to *Islamic Relief Australia*. Our work is inspired and informed by ethos of social justice and values of excellence, sincerity and compassion. We envision a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as one to the suffering of others. We are assured that you will be an asset to our team and will play an important role in reaching our vision.

If you have any questions regarding your position, please feel free to contact our office. We look forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

<Manager Name>

VOLUNTEER ENTRY INTERVIEW

The aim of this volunteer entry interview is firstly to identify the skills and experiences of volunteers in order to assign volunteers tasks that complement their skills and further enhance their experience.

The second aim is to identify the motivations behind the individual's interest in volunteering in order to try to satisfy and fulfil these motivations throughout the volunteering experience.

Possible questions to ask include:

- What does volunteering mean to you?
- What is it that interested you about this volunteer position?
- What do you expect to achieve as a result of volunteering with us?
- What is it about our organisations mission or values that motivates you to volunteer with us?
- What is your previous/current study or work experience?
- What are your most noteworthy skills, abilities?
- In what particular field do you see yourself able to offer the most help and expertise?

VOLUNTEER EXIT INTERVIEW

A volunteer exit interview is a questionnaire administered to volunteers prior to ceasing their volunteering contract with an organisation. The implementation of volunteer exit interviews is a crucial part of success in the volunteer sector. Responses to these questions can provide organisations with insight into the areas in need of improvement as well as their current areas of strength. Possible questions to ask include:

- What is your primary reason for leaving?
- Did anything in particular trigger your decision to leave?
- What was most satisfying about your role with us?
- What was least satisfying about your role with us?
- What would you change about your role?
- Did you feel that your role fulfilled your motivations and intentions for volunteering?
- Did you receive adequate support to perform your role?
- Would you recommend volunteering at our organisation to your family and friends?
- How do you generally feel about our organisation, e.g. what did you like most/ like least?
- Is there another volunteer role you would like to perform at our organisation?

PROGRESS SURVEY:

It is essential to monitor the satisfaction, motivation and engagement of volunteers throughout their experience with the organisation. Administering a quick and simple online progress survey is a useful way of assessing the volunteer programs success and identifying areas of improvement before volunteers choose to discontinue. It is also important to ensure that the survey is completed anonymously so that individuals provide honest responses.

An example survey for Islamic Relief International included the following questions:



ASPIRE_Engagement Volunteer Survey

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.
We value your contribution to Islamic Relief and would like your opinion on how to better your volunteering experience.
The questions should take approximately 10 minutes to complete
Survey results will be used to identify strengths and areas for improvement for the volunteer experience at Islamic Relief

Thank you again for your time.

- How would you rate your volunteering experience with our organisation so far?
- Is there anything in particular that has facilitated or hindered your success?
- To what extent do you feel that your volunteering role is compatible with your skills and interests?
- To what extent do you feel that your efforts are acknowledged and appreciated?
- Do you feel that your motivations for volunteering are being fulfilled?
If no, why?
- To what extent do you feel that your opinions/ideas are heard and taken into consideration?
- Do you feel that you are making a difference and that you can see the result of your efforts?
- Overall, what feedback would you like to offer the organisation?