

Supervision Skills

Finding and Keeping Volunteers

Notes on the meeting with John Hudy
September 11, 1996

- Organizations fall into habits that perpetuate the organization's culture, good and bad. The ability to listen to each other is the key to finding ways to break bad habits and revitalize the culture.
- All members of an organization should share the same common goal so individual teams don't disintegrate into counter-productive factions.

The breakdown of volunteer work at WildCare is:

Distribution of WildCare Volunteers			
Administrative (5)	Development/ Membership (Beastie) (100)	Education/ Nature Guides (75)	Hospital (225)

Our common goal: To help people and native wildlife live together.

- **Animal Rehabilitation:** We maintain a hospital for sick, injured and orphaned native wildlife. (Clinic & Birdroom)
- **Human Education:** We educate people about wildlife so they will understand animals and not harm them or their habitats. (Nature Guides, Telephones and Hot Line)

The purpose of the screening is to let them de-select themselves before the already-committed staff is put to the stress of training them.

A recommended book that deals with some of these issues is:

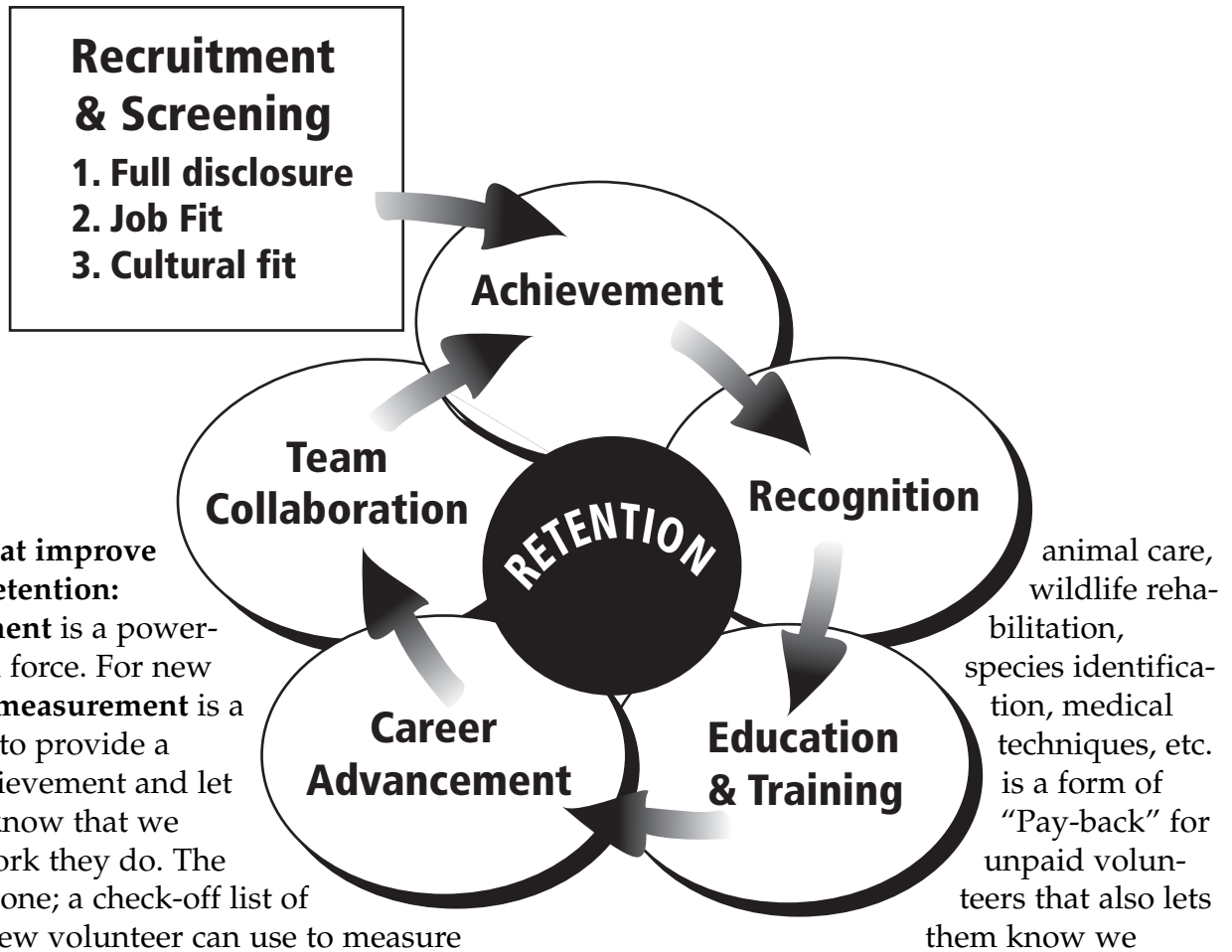
**"If it Ain't Broke,
Break It"**

If you are not retaining volunteers, the first thing to look at are your Recruiting & Hiring Practices.

Volunteer interviewing and screening should include:

1. **Full disclosure of the job.** They should get a very good idea of what the work is like and what the expectations are. Job Description, a clear picture of the work environment, a list of the negative aspects of the work as well as the benefits and rewards.
2. **How the applicant fits the job:** They should be given a list of skills necessary to do the work, such as having an available schedule, physical requirements of the work, a list of skills necessary.
3. **How the applicant fits the group culture:** They should be given a clear picture of the culture of our company— both the pluses and the minuses. "loose/fun/educational/rewarding—dirty/stressful/guilt-driven/non-people-oriented" etc.

Model for an Effective Cycle of Motivation



Elements that improve Volunteer retention:

1. Achievement is a powerful retention force. For new volunteers, **measurement** is a simple way to provide a sense of achievement and let volunteers know that we value the work they do. The job board is one; a check-off list of tasks each new volunteer can use to measure his or her own progress is also helpful.

2. Recognition of the achievement is the next step in building commitment and volunteer retention. Supervisors can “give” people some successes. “Catch people doing things right.” Make them feel like winners. Management can provide recognition for hard work by handing out; “free” privileges like the “Friday night Beer Bust,” “dress-down day,” or end-of project pizza lunches.

3. Education and training is another benefit that keeps people motivated. People often volunteer to work in an area they want to know more about but have no skills for. Supervised training lets the new volunteer know that the work (s)he is doing is valued and important. Classes in the basics of

animal care, wildlife rehabilitation, species identification, medical techniques, etc. is a form of “Pay-back” for unpaid volunteers that also lets them know we value their time enough to want to give them something back for it.

4. Career Advancement is another motivator. Volunteer work has traditionally been a method for people in transition to explore new fields of interest. Not everyone will end up working for money in exactly this field, but the volunteer work they do here will often allow people to look at new career options and gain skills that would transfer well to a related field.

5. Team Collaboration completes the cycle back to achievement by enabling a group of people to achieve more than any one of them could. At this point, the additional benefit of a sense of community, social interaction and friendship helps confirm the commitment.