

Volunteerism

Cherish, Conserve, Consider, Create

Does your guild Cherish your volunteers?

Are you examining what works, to Conserve it?

Are you Considering changes to *entice* volunteers?

How can you Create *the very best* guild experience for your volunteers?



Who Volunteers?

You've probably heard the statistic that **20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work** and within guilds the percentage might even be 10-15 percent. Accept that this is a fact—as the ground level for volunteerism in your guild. While specific small projects may pop up, and new people may volunteer to take those on, it's a core group of volunteers who have run things in the past *and who will do them in the future*.

They are the best group to analyze the work, the responsibilities, and to brainstorm for needed changes.

Expecting or demanding more volunteerism, from people who don't believe in volunteering, is not a productive path and the prospect of dire consequences, guilt, or monetary incentives do not motivate volunteers. To understand what motivates *your volunteers*:

Start with the people who already believe in volunteering.

Who Is On Your Team?

Identify your core volunteers - your ‘20% Team’. List them by name and positions they have held or tasks they have done. This gives you your “expertise pool” for advice, ideas, experience and brainstorming. Invite all past volunteers to be in your “Brainstorming Team”. *Do not include people who haven’t volunteered because you are looking for **expertise**.*

Several guilds describe their guild board roles as *Musical Chairs*. They proceed with the same core group, deciding among themselves who will “run” for which positions, year after year. They work as a team to perform their tasks and find incentives that work for them. This works well for their guild.

This is also called ‘getting the right people on the bus’ and in the right ‘steering’ positions. These volunteers are so good at what they do, and so practiced at managing their guild, that the work becomes second nature—their ‘calling’. They know each other’s strengths and weaknesses. They cross the lines of ‘position roles’ to share expertise and help each other. They have learned how to get along with each other and accomplish the position tasks with ease. If your bylaws prevent this, it may be time to reconsider the value of those rules. *This process also acknowledges each volunteer’s strengths.* Is having “Musical Chairs Board” a solution for your guild?

Bring them together for Crucial Conversations - and *Listen*

This may take a whole day or several hours over a few days. Remember to take breaks and offer some small entertainment - perhaps watching a YouTube of Jeanne Robertson, comedienne (clean) - <https://www.youtube.com/user/JeanneRobertson>

Remember, your 20% Team is GOLD. **They are the glue of the guild.** If you can think of a special treat for them to make this effort worthwhile, consider offering it.

Can you include volunteers who have left the guild, or who do not participate as much as they used to?

When you understand what's working, you can build upon it for greater success!
This is called the “**What's Working Snowball**” as opposed to focusing on what's not working, which doesn't solve anything.

- what volunteer position would you do again and which one(s) would you never do?
- what motivated you most, and rewarded you most, in the volunteer work?
- what was the best part of doing the work you did in positions you enjoyed?
- what other positions did you “team” with while doing the work in that position?
- what was the worst part of the job and how can that be eliminated?
- what expertise do you bring and what role does it suit best?
- what matters to YOU? This is one of the most important questions.

Why Do Volunteers Raise Their Hands?

Ask your 20%! Most importantly, **ask what they get OUT of volunteering**. That gives you the information you need to motivate them to keep volunteering and **reward them in ways that are meaningful to them..**

- It provides an opportunity to develop new skills, stretch me, or use my existing skills (*provide them with education to keep those skills growing*)
- It offers social opportunities to connect with other volunteers (*make sure they get that social time with each other*)
- I feel good knowing I'm doing good for others (*shower them with accolades*)
- I'm a born organizer (*let them organize*)
- I need to stay busy (*give them the work they like, that they can sink their teeth into*)
- I want the guild to [do something, offer something] and I'm willing to do the work to make that happen (*let them have their pet project*)
- It's a way to pass on my skills (*How is she accomplishing that? Can you expand on the rewarding part of doing this?*)
- I want to support the mission of the guild (same as above)

What can you change to give YOUR volunteers more of what they need to keep them volunteering?

Questions From the SCCQG Meeting July 2021

- 1 What motivates YOU personally to volunteer?
- 2 How has your guild melded volunteer duties; created **teams or partnerships**?
- 3 What process does your guild use to **match volunteers with tasks that excite them and uses the skills they have**?

Insights from Guilds Across the USA:

What works? Asking the people who are doing the jobs what they want most. Talking to people one-on-one to recruit them.

Using Teams for Tasks instead of expecting one person to take on work they aren't familiar with. Having many small committees that do a lot of work but are not Board positions.

Having a clear and specific set of duties and expectations for every position outlined and available.

Shadowing positions for a year before taking the position; Co-Chairing.

Bylaws that cover the basics and Standing Rules that cover the specifics.

What doesn't work? Bylaws that limit the number of years anyone can serve on a Board. Bylaws that are restricting. Sometimes one or two small issues within expectations keep people from volunteering. Can the expectations be changed?

Expectations

Use the information from your discussions to define what your guild expects from, and how you reward, volunteers. Ask your team to take a few minutes to draw a diagram of the workflow as they did their past positions, noting roughly the amount of time each task took, noting any specific tools they used to do the work. Compile the results or have teams do one diagram based on their combined experiences. This gives you the groundwork to explain expectations and time commitment of each position to new volunteers. *How can you expand on **what's working**, duplicating what works, to get more things working and more people volunteering?*

One thing volunteers have a right to expect is a clear outline, of tasks and the time they take, for what they are volunteering for. Does your guild have that outline?

Accept that change is inevitable and find ways to make work EASIER. Some guilds have turned into miniature governments. One of the biggest issues mentioned by people who join the Modern Quilt Guild is to “get away from the rules”. If rules are reducing the appeal of quilters joining your guild or volunteering, how are those rules serving the guild?

Ask what blocks are holding your volunteers back?

- What specific blocks are holding each volunteer back from doing their optimum work?
- What challenges keep volunteers from growing in their positions?
- What assistance would help them most?
- What tools or training can the guild provide to make volunteer work easier?
- What benefit would excite each volunteer, individually, to raise their hand again?
- Is the work better accomplished by a team, group or co-op than one person?

Analyze, Adapt, Acknowledge

Analyze the people you have versus the tasks that need doing, outside of specific roles, such as ‘president’, ‘secretary’, etc. What tasks are people willing to do? What can be shared? How can the tasks be streamlined? What technology helps accomplish the task? Is the task absolutely essential? Why?

Can you create teams to do the work needed? Some people prefer to work alone while others prefer to work with their friends or to just know that there’s help available and someone to talk to.

Adapt tasks to the technology that’s available and/or offer to pay for training on how to use it. There are wonderful sources of classes on Udemy and Skillshare. Are there tasks that can be done by a contracted individual instead of a volunteer? Are there tasks that don’t serve the majority? Can they be eliminated or pared down?

Don’t expect people to be good at something they are not familiar with or drawn to. One of the most common complaints is about people volunteering (or “guilted into volunteering”) to do work they are not capable of doing. They volunteer because they care but they are mismatched for the specific tasks needed in the position they volunteered for. **This causes even more work and stress for other volunteers.**
How can your guild best match volunteers to positions that use their skills best?

How Does the Guild Treat Its Most Valuable Assets?

Do you give your team the credit they deserve and the publicity to inspire others to be like them?

Are your 20% recognized as the “A Team” of your guild?

Are they acknowledged, given awards, have their photos in the newsletter and on the guild website, and recognized at meetings?

Is their hard work rewarded? Does your guild offer them discounts to workshops or retreats as a way of saying *“Thank you for all you do for us!”*

Is volunteering something people want to aspire to in your guild?

What if “Being on the A-Team” was something members strived for?

Review Budgets and Balances

It's important to look at all guild efforts—what you're asking your volunteers to do—versus the payoff to membership. Be sure it's worthwhile or you could lose volunteers. *What do your volunteers think about the budgets they work with and how the distribution serves the guild's purpose?*

If your guild focused on a quilt show for the majority of your revenue, what needs to change when shows are cancelled? If you are considering holding a virtual quilt show, I urge caution. Unless you have excess energy in your guild, the effort is not worth the payoff. In fact guild virtual quilt shows are NOT making money, they are losing it, and burning up volunteer energy. That volunteer effort is better spent on increasing membership, which is sustainable income.

If your guild is used to making money on workshops, your programs chair may have noticed that many teachers are now offering workshops directly to the public, or via virtual quilt shows such as Mancuso, Original Sewing & Quilting Expo, and others. Is the best use of her time trying to arrange workshops that members can attend at any time and that possibly compete with workshops offered by the guild? *Many guilds are eliminating workshops and focusing their efforts and budgets on lectures, demos and trunk shows.*

Look Outside of Your Guild

Are there other guilds nearby? Are members of your guild members of other guilds? Are the other guilds doing anything different from your guild? What can you learn from what other guilds are doing? Can you invite their board to an informal discussion meetup? Are there areas where the guilds can collaborate?

Start by attending the other guild's meetings and inviting their members to attend yours. Some guilds are offering reciprocal annual membership which gives members of each guild the freedom to attend meetings and make new friends. While you may hear opposition to this, if the alternative is disbanding your guild for lack of participation, it may seem a reasonable alternative.

Is it feasible to combine guilds or create a cooperative agreement between guilds? What if each guild held general meetings in alternating months? What about combining guilds to bring new people, voices, ideas and energy to the volunteer tasks and new friends to your members?

Review

Do Volunteers know what's expected of them and how long tasks might take?

Do Volunteers have the tools and knowledge to use them to do the work well?

Do they have the opportunity to do what each, individually, does best?

Have they received recognition or praise for their work in the last 30 days?

Do other guild members care about the volunteers? How do they show it?

Do the volunteers have a mentor or partner within the guild to help guide them, act as backup and provide assistance if needed?

Are volunteers given the opportunity and encouragement to offer exemplary, outstanding work?

Can the work needed be split into several “mini-volunteer” opportunities? Can the volunteer work be shared by a team?