

How We Engage Volunteers

Blog

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Knowledge Philanthropy Spotlight



At Vantage Point we are advocates of skilled volunteering – which we call knowledge philanthropy. In the spirit of National Volunteer Week, we wanted to revisit what this concept means to us as an organization.

What is Knowledge Philanthropy?

Knowledge philanthropy is the intentional practice of engaging someone’s experience, skills or talent to create a better world – and it’s an incredible way to expand the capacity of not-for-profit work.

Each of our volunteers – or knowledge philanthropists – lends their skills and talents to our mission and we consider them to be truly transformative change agents. Our volunteer team is made up of highly skilled facilitators, consultants, emerging and senior leaders in the community. When we welcome a new volunteer, they become an integral part of our team.

In 2013 we released the [Abundant Not-For-Profit: How talent \(not money\) will transform your organization](#), which outlines our philosophy on knowledge philanthropy in great depth. As volunteers began to evolve into the “21st Century Volunteer”, with the rise of the knowledge worker, we recognized not-for-profit organizations had to completely redefine the way they aimed to engage and leverage volunteer contributions.

We started within, by shifting our own volunteer engagement processes to assure volunteers could contribute in all areas of the organization – from front-line operations to management and governance. With a 75-year history of promoting and supporting the engagement of volunteers, this evolution was an important way to continue our legacy as a volunteer centre forward.

Who are Our Knowledge Philanthropists?

A large majority of our knowledge philanthropists are facilitators and content experts that develop and deliver our programs. In addition to involving knowledge philanthropists in program delivery, staff members actively identify skills-based roles for many other volunteers, including in the areas of human resource management, government relations, marketing, coaching, membership strategy, and many more.

How We Recruit and Engage Skilled Volunteers

One of the most important pieces of bringing on a new knowledge philanthropist is ensuring that we truly understand both their experience and skills as well as their goals and interests, so that we can ensure every volunteer engagement is truly created as a win-win.

We layout a role description and agree on the expectations in the role – both for the volunteer and what they can expect from Vantage Point. The role description reflects their level of experience as well as their goals as a volunteer. And, of course, we ask how they would like to be recognized – because everyone is different!

At Vantage Point all knowledge philanthropy roles have a start and end date, as well as a rough number of hours expected. This way knowledge philanthropists can see how the role fits into their schedule. It’s amazing how often this one piece can make a role much more appealing! And, to assure strong accountability on both sides, we capture all of this in a letter of agreement that both the knowledge philanthropist and Vantage Point sign.

Take Action to Integrate Knowledge Philanthropy

If you are an organizational leader ready to leverage your number one competitive advantage: people, through integrating knowledge philanthropy into your organization, we have a few resources!

We have an August workshop on [Engaging Skilled Volunteers](#), and several resources including:

- From Our Vantage Point Podcast on [Win-Win Volunteer Engagement: Knowledge Philanthropy and Recognizing your Volunteers - Just say No to "Years of Service" Awards](#)
- [Salaried Employee & Board Handbook for Working with Knowledge Philanthropists](#)
- [Window of Work for Engaging Knowledge Philanthropists](#)
- [Steps to Responsive Volunteer Engagement](#)