



## Volunteer Recruitment, Development & Retention



### Volunteering and Its Benefits

We all know that snowmobile trails don't just happen. It takes resources and many volunteer hours to maintain 12,000 kilometers of snowmobile trails in the areas of signing, grooming, equipment maintenance, shelter upkeep, etc. Why volunteer? People volunteer for many different reasons. For some, it's to help others and give back to the community and club. For others, it is to build self-confidence, gain personal growth and learn new skills. We know for some it's important to get outside during winter and enjoy all that Manitoba has to offer. Giving of your time lends you a sense of well-being and connectedness to others and certainly fights boredom. It allows one to share his/her talents, abilities and experiences while at the same time learning new skills from others. And don't forget volunteers can have fun and enjoy themselves by making new friends. We should ensure that volunteers feel needed, useful and appreciated.



### Recruitment is Key

If you are a volunteer leader or club officer, realize a few things about your crew. Volunteers have volunteered for your club because they love snowmobiling, want to contribute, have a little spare time to give and have a need to give back to the club. If you ignore any of these reasons, you won't retain volunteers. Most volunteers need a good thank you and rewards for giving you a chunk of time out of their busy life. In the process, be nice, be fuzzy and get them to come

back season after season. Some of the reasons why volunteers drop out of their roles are: a lack of organization and leadership; lack of a feeling of contributing to the cause; lack of recognition; lack of feeling productive; and/or lack of partners sharing the workload with them.

### Running Better Meetings

The quickest way to run off good volunteers is to give them a bad meeting. Use simple rules for your meeting including time, agenda, roles, actions and commitments. Keep your meeting on time by setting a time to start and a time to finish and stick to the schedule. You may also want to put time limits on each item to be discussed. Publish an agenda prior to the meeting and email it to participants as this gives them the opportunity to prepare for anything that affects them. It will save time and it will let volunteers know their role in the meeting. It's also useful to assign agenda items to individuals so that all get to participate and feel valued.

At the end of the meeting, make a list of action items and review them as well as assign individuals or crews to the items with a deadline for reporting back or completion. The action item should follow the components of who, what and when. Following the meeting, email the list to the participants.

### Leverage Volunteer Skills

When looking for diversity in your club look for hidden skills of your volunteers such as website management, social media or financial expertise. While it may be someone who signs or cuts wood for the shelters, they may have other skills that a club can utilize. When volunteers aren't asked to use their skills they may not stay with your club.

### The Importance of Creating a Job Task List including Training

Job task lists are incredibly useful tools for recruiting and managing volunteers, and a good one will help you retain your volunteers for the long-term. Every list should explain the specific tasks and the skills and abilities, including the training (if necessary) to complete the work that needs to be done.

Some task lists that are needed in a snowmobile club are for signing, grooming, trail maintenance, shelter upkeep & stocking and board positions. For some of these positions there is training available through the Snoman website, such as trail signing, chain saw safety, hand tools, working alone, trail groomer operator, etc.

For positions, such as events coordinator or board members, include number of events, number of meetings per year and length of meetings, as well as what is required outside of the actual meeting time.

What to include in a volunteer task list:

Job title (this clarifies the position and gives dignity to the position);

Purpose (include why this position is needed and its importance to the club);

Duties & responsibilities (specific tasks);

Time requirement (include hours per week or month, expected start date, whether or not it's seasonal);

Skills & qualifications (list only the skills and experience that you absolutely need as training can be provided – this will extend your

Example excerpt: Pointing the Way - Trail Signer Position  
Trail signing is a crucial part of the snowmobile trail system and it is required throughout the trail system. As a trail signer, you get to take the online trail signing course free of charge through Snoman. Prior to opening a trail, it must be signed and groomed. Time requirement depends on the length of trail to be signed. A current volunteer will be available to assist you for the first signing and as needed until you are comfortable with the position

reach rather than being very specific);

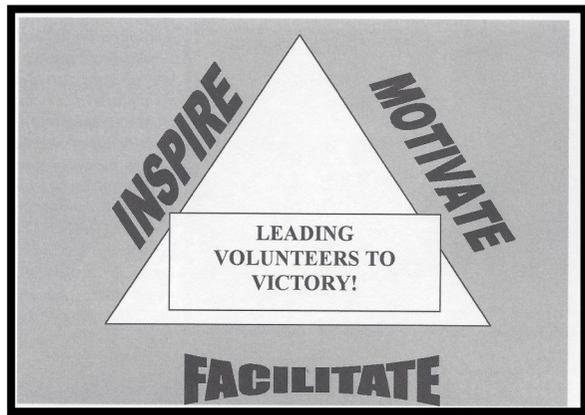
Orientation & training (include courses that can be taken for each position as indicated above which are free of charge to the volunteer, as well include on-the-job training opportunities); and

Working conditions (where will the volunteer be working, weather conditions, physical strength, etc.).

Include in the introduction to your search for volunteers some information about your club including when it was established and the importance of your club to recreational snowmobiling!

### Leading & Managing Volunteers

Leading volunteers is really about achieving expectations, both of the volunteer and of the leader. The best method to meet expectations is to write them down, which is a way to ensure that they are not neglected. Objectives are another tool in successful volunteer management. An objective is providing a “who, what, when and where” scenario and is measurable. A big part of leading and organizing volunteers has to do with the leadership triangle.



The left side of the triangle tells us to inspire others. Inspire means to impel, to influence, to produce/cause, or to stimulate creative and effective effort. Being an inspiration means being the type of

person that others look up to. Share your ideas, have a plan and lead by example. When you make a mistake, as all of us do occasionally, admit it and own it. The same is said for giving credit. Give credit where it is due and make it a rule to never accept credit for something that wasn't your idea.

The right side of the triangle tells us to motivate others which means to incite or impel to action, to be the incentive and/or to cause motion. Don't be afraid to delegate to others so that they can learn and develop into leaders.

The bottom of the triangle tells us to facilitate others which means to make things easier. Life has enough hassles and our recreation should be fun. If we are warm and fuzzy to our volunteers then it means not sounding like a boss but sounding like a peer and someone that can be trusted.

When you have fun events, ensure that all of your volunteers are invited and encouraged to attend. This will give you the opportunity to publicly thank them and recognize their achievements. There may also be a representative from Snoman available to attend and show appreciation. A big thank you goes a long way!



## Your Role as a Leader

Leaders must have a commitment to a vision, an ability to clearly communicate that vision, a consistent posture, and a clear picture of one's own strengths and weaknesses (Warren Bennis, 1984). As a leader, you provide the vision and the direction, while at the same time allowing for input from others and the strength to accept input and give credit for it.

By allowing others access to your time, it motivates them. Although you're the leader, be a part of the team. Treat everyone equally with respect as it is a group effort to get the trails up and running.



As your habits carry over into other aspects of your every day life, you'll find that you'll be treating everyone with respect, no matter their position in your life. A good example is being respectful of everyone, whether they are a CEO or the shelf stocker at a grocery store. Remember people's names and use them. It's the sweetest thing they hear all day. When you adopt this as a basic practice in your everyday life you will feel more fulfilled as an individual.

## Follow-up and Stay in Touch

Volunteer retention does not end after the volunteering is over. In fact, that's just the beginning of your volunteer management strategy. Here's how you should follow-up with volunteers during the off season. Thank them. Your volunteers are donating their time and skills to your club. Make sure they know they're appreciated! Illustrate your volunteers' impact when possible. For example, if they helped organize an event, let them know how much money that event raised and how the money will be used. Promote future volunteer opportunities. While you're telling volunteers how awesome they are, be sure to include any upcoming volunteer opportunities. Hearing about their impact may inspire them to sign up again! Get to know more about them. If you weren't able to talk about their interests before a project, this may be a great time to get to know more about your volunteers.

Volunteer retention and volunteer management should be about building a relationship with your volunteers. Communication is key to building relationships with your volunteers, so be sure to touch base with them often to keep your club in mind.

## Volunteer Recognition

The most important thing your club can do to improve volunteer retention is to say thank you and to say it often. During your snowmobile season your club may want to recognize a volunteer of the week on facebook using a photo of them using their skills. An additional way to recognize volunteers

**Thank  
You!**

is through the Snoman Excellence Awards that are open for nomination year-round.

### When a Volunteer is Ready to Retire

The wealth of knowledge and skills that retiring volunteers have is invaluable. As a club, you can garner those skills by having the retiree move into a volunteer mentoring capacity for a pre-selected period of time. This will allow the club to have resources that they can use for training to build on their current volunteer base.

### Club Volunteers

This photo illustrates that you're never too young to help out!



### End of Season Activities

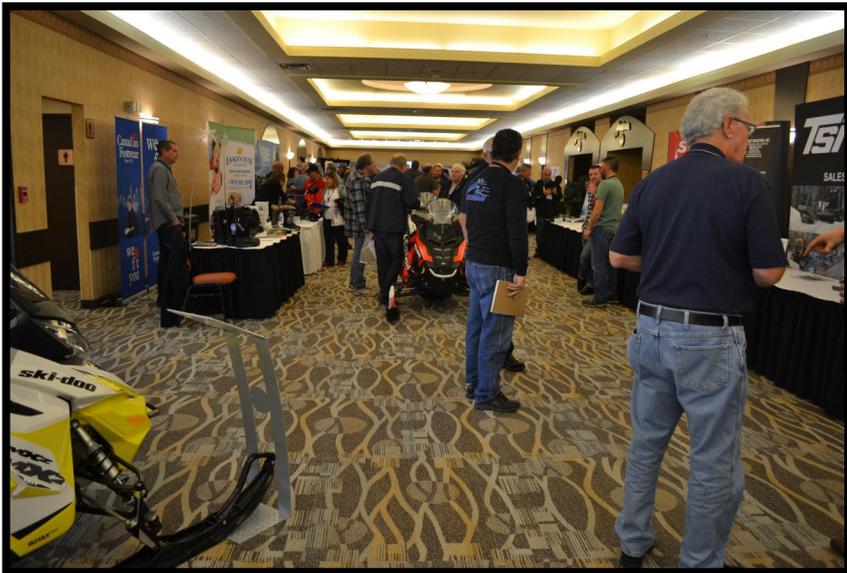
While it's the end of the snowmobiling season and it seems that everyone scatters to do their summer activities, it is important to celebrate the season that we had. A lot of clubs have windup dinners where they invite volunteers, club members and landowners. This can serve as an opportunity to do a quick paper survey with the volunteers focusing on what they think went well, areas where there may have been shortfalls and improvements that could be put in place for next season.

The results of the surveys can then be compiled and reviewed at the first club meeting following the event and again at the first meeting in the fall. The club can decide what actions they can take based on the outcome of the survey. For example, there may have been a lack of signage on hand which can be easily fixed by ordering additional signage through Snoman.

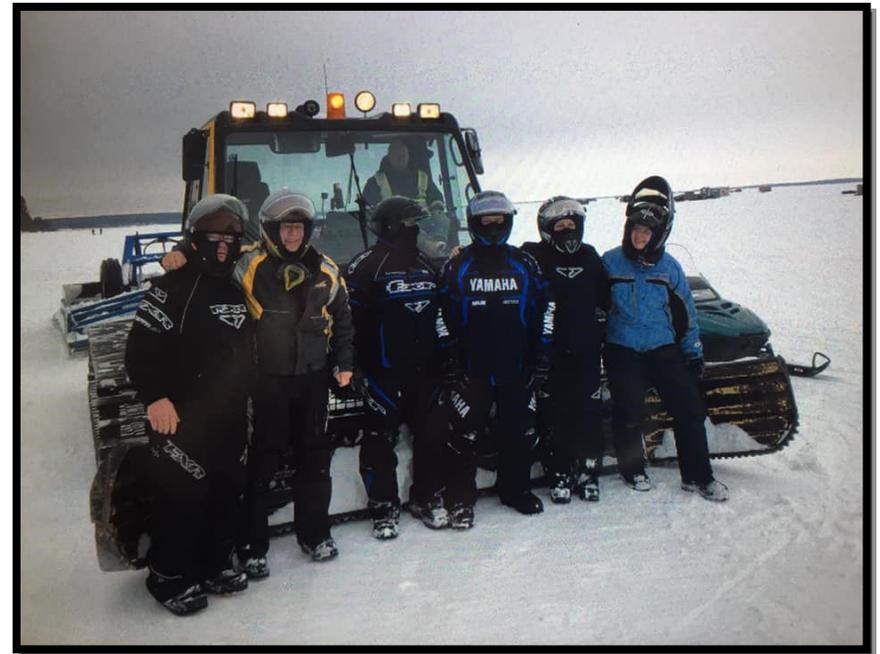


## Waiting for Snow

Before the first meeting of the season, compile a list of volunteers and their responsibilities to be reviewed at the meeting. Also, prepare a list of positions where there are gaps in personnel. For example, you need another person to sign. In the event that a volunteer is away or unable to perform the duties, it is important to have back-ups for the positions. This will fill a void if someone is injured and/or off sick for an extended period. This is where cross-training plays an important role. By tagging along with an existing volunteer, one can be trained for the duties that have to be performed, for example signing a trail. The volunteers should also participate in the Snoman educational sessions at the annual congress to take advantage of training opportunities at no cost. This also is a great opportunity to chat with club members throughout the province and learn from others.



Snoman (Snowmobilers of Manitoba) Inc. is dedicated to providing strong leadership and support to its member clubs to develop and maintain safe and environmentally responsible snowmobile trails to further the enjoyment of organized recreational snowmobiling throughout Manitoba.



(May

2121 Henderson Hwy

Winnipeg, Manitoba R2G 1P8

[www.snoman.mb.ca](http://www.snoman.mb.ca)

204-940-7533

[info@snoman.mb.ca](mailto:info@snoman.mb.ca)