

Volunteer management

Using the 'praise and trouble' tool to support volunteers

Supervision provides an opportunity for volunteers to receive feedback, feel supported in their role and also provide an opportunity to be connected in larger conversations about the organisation. One-on-one supervision may not be an option when managing larger groups of volunteers. It is important to find ways to connect with all volunteers regularly and knowing how to provide feedback is one way of making the most of valuable time.



Technique

'Praise and trouble' is a framework to manage and positively reflect on different types of feedback. It provides the opportunity to discuss when and how an individual volunteer wants to receive feedback and how they can act on it.

The 'praise and trouble' tool can make even the most challenging conversations easier to manage constructively. As a volunteer manager it is important to raise negative issues, whether they are actual or perceived, particularly those that impact on the volunteer's performance.

- * **Starting out** – make sure that there is a shared understanding of the concept of 'praise and trouble'. Discuss what both of the terms mean, and agree on a definition. It can often feel less confronting to start this conversation with a group of volunteers. Use this exercise as a way of getting to understand and better support the group of volunteers.
- * **Praise** – positive feedback for something done well, something a manager or supervisor would like to see more of, and generally ideal workplace behaviour. Praise can come from different stakeholders or sources such as feedback from the manager or supervisor, colleagues or individuals supported by the volunteer.
- * **Trouble** – negative feedback or constructive criticism. This could be elements of a task that need to be done differently, critiquing a response to a situation, or a particular behaviour that a manager or supervisor would like to see less of (or not at all). As with praise, this feedback can come from different stakeholders or sources.

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Using this concept within supervision:

1. Either before or during the supervision session, ask the volunteer(s) to think about their most recent experiences and identify examples of feedback they have received. Using the 'praise and trouble' template, ask the volunteer(s) to note down examples of their work where they have received praise and trouble.

Research indicates that the optimum ratio is 5 appreciations to every criticism. If the criticism score is higher, you might need to carefully consider what approach to take.

Based on feedback provided during supervision or other feedback sessions, you will be able to understand what the volunteer perceives as priorities in their role. It is important to consider how the volunteer receives this feedback and how this reflects the priorities and values of the organisation.

Using a position description or a donut will assist with a 'whole of job' approach and in actively looking to provide feedback to the volunteer on all areas of their work.

2. The next step is to give the volunteer the opportunity to nominate some areas they would like to receive more feedback on, whether this is praise or constructive criticism.
3. The final part of the discussion is agreeing how a volunteer will best respond to feedback.

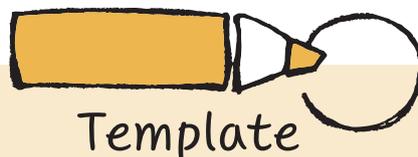
Consider asking them to think about feedback they have received in the past and what has worked and not worked.

This exercise acknowledges that we may not be able to avoid conversations that are perceived as 'negative', but the way we hold those conversations can be negotiated and improved upon to create the best possible outcome.

This information can be agreed on and built into the volunteer's one-page profile.

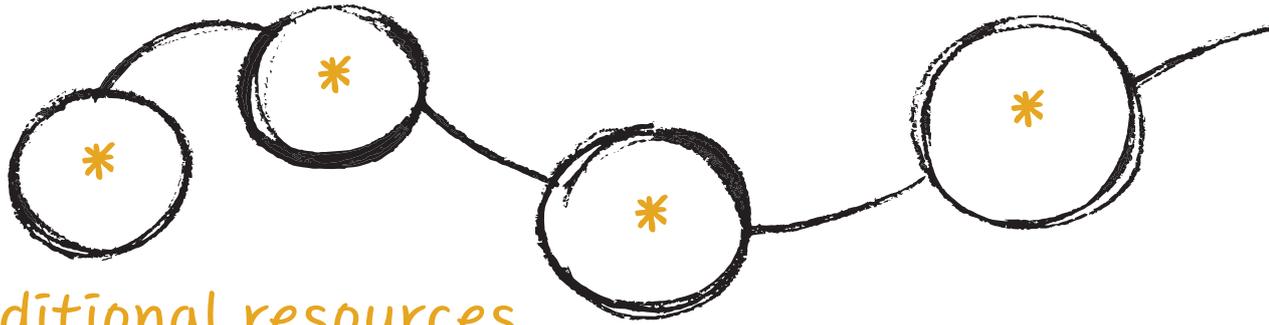
Praise and Trouble

Praise <i>Areas of my work that I have received positive feedback for</i>	Trouble <i>Areas of work that I have received criticism for/have been asked to change or do differently</i>
What I would like to receive feedback on	
The most effective way to provide me with feedback	



Template

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Additional resources

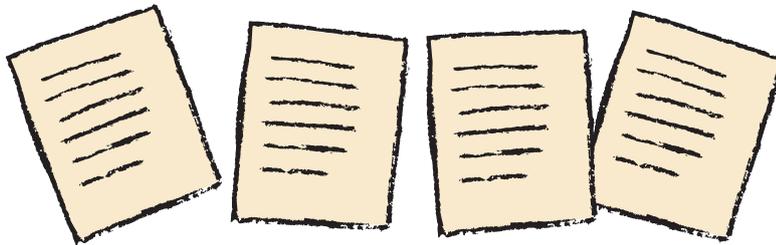
- * Technique and Tips - building on one-page profiles.
- * Tips - supervising volunteers.

Definitions

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The term **staff/employees(s)** refer to paid members of the organisations workforce. Employment relationships with the organisation may be permanent, casual, full-time, part-time, etc.

The term **volunteer(s)** refers to an unpaid individual willingly giving their time to provide a service or support.



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