

10

STEPS FOR ENGAGING ADULTS

50+

**A RESOURCE OF THE
GEN2GEN LEARNING HUB**

Developed by

Encore.org's Gen2Gen campaign

and

The Alliance for Strong Families
and Communities' Second Acts Initiative

**STEP 9:
RECOGNITION
& COMMUNITY
BUILDING**



RECOGNITION & COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Recognizing and appreciating adults 50+ is one of the best ways to retain us as part of a motivated, engaged and committed team. Your efforts to show how much you value our contributions will be most effective if recognition is sincere, authentic, personalized and timely.

Recognition can be as simple as a handwritten thank-you note that references a particular moment or achievement. You can also recognize contributions by offering increased decision-making power, opportunities to explore passions, share achievements or develop leadership. And you can always offer stuff, like tickets, gift cards or access to events.

It's always nice to share successes in a public way. Use your website, social media, staff meetings, even notes on bulletin boards, to create daily, weekly, monthly buzz about individual and team success. Take time to honor contributions and celebrate good outcomes!

Another important strategy for retaining adults 50+ in your organization is to provide opportunities for us to build strong social connections with other staff and volunteers. The networks and relationships that develop in the workplace are often the most valuable aspects of the work experience.

Maintaining strong social connections is critically important for adults 50+, for good mental and physical health. Nurturing new relationships can be a powerful driver for adults 50+ in pursuing work and service opportunities. Satisfied volunteers/staff are more likely to stay with your organization. By creating opportunities for multigenerational social connection, teams can come together as a community, not just a workforce.

In addition to enhancing commitment and retention, a community-building approach can benefit your organization by:

- **EXTENDING YOUR REACH.** Connections that occur within the organization can extend outside the organization and help you build new or stronger networks. This can include sharing program ideas, materials, resources – or just having fun together.
- **STRENGTHENING INTERNAL VOLUNTEER AND STAFF CONNECTIONS.** Teams can become more cohesive and productive when we get to know and appreciate one another for more than our knowledge and skill.



STEP 9

Recognition & Community-Building

(continued)

Note: Volunteer Recognition Month is April; Intergenerational Awareness Month is September. You can use these occasions to bring attention to team members and to celebrate their contributions in a broader context.

TAKING ACTION

Identify from this checklist the steps you will take to recognize, show appreciation for and build community among your volunteers and staff, particularly adults 50+.

RECOGNITION & COMMUNITY-BUILDING CHECKLIST

RECOGNIZE

- Say hello, see how they are doing and say THANK YOU!
- Put your thanks in writing with cards (or holiday cards, e.g., Grandparent's Day, Valentines).
- Put a card, Post-It, or small treat on their desk acknowledging the good work.
- Social media fans love shout outs on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, websites.
- Invite local news coverage/media to cover special milestones/great work by staff/volunteers.
- Recognize highlights: years of service, volunteer hour attainment, special contributions.
- Tell a story about individuals' work at a team/staff meeting.
- Provide business cards and designated office/work space (especially nice for volunteers).
- Write a memo to your CEO or executive leaders about something great they did.
- Highlight individual profiles on web or in newsletters (interview them).
- Promote to new roles; increase wage/salary/stipend.

GIFT

- Provide T-shirts, lanyards, badges, etc. to identify with the organization.
- Provide gift cards to local restaurants, bars, book stores, etc.
- Provide tickets to concerts, plays, behind the scenes tours, etc.
- Provide reduced fees/discounted memberships to local gyms, yoga, or other services.
- Give items with your logo to use or show off, e.g., canvas bags, notebooks, mugs.



STEP 9

Recognition & Community-Building

(continued)

ENGAGE

- Provide access to courses and workshops at a local college or university.
- Invite to blog on the website or in a column in your newsletter.
- Invite to speak on a radio program or other outreach gig.
- Invite to present at local/national conferences.
- Engage as co-trainers for staff on topics that use their expertise.
- Train as community ambassadors/program recruiters.
- Provide relevant professional development opportunities.

CONNECT

- Encourage shared decision-making and collaborative problem-solving.
- Sponsor social events, like a picnic, happy hour, visit to a museum or a sporting event .
- Hold book discussions, musical recitals or an all-ages talent show.
- Organize intergenerational mentoring relationships to enable individuals to learn from one another and appreciate what each brings to the table.
- Encourage personal touches, remembering birthdays and other moments of significance.
- Ask your team members to think creatively about ways to stay connected.
- Host recognition parties/events to celebrate successes as a group.
- Create opportunities for adults 50+ to connect with other organizational staff and volunteers with whom they typically don't interact.

MORE INFORMATION

- [Boomer Volunteer Engagement Guide](http://bit.ly/gen2genvolunteer) (bit.ly/gen2genvolunteer)
 - Chapter 9: Sustaining the Collaboration: Ongoing Engagement. pages 129-133
 - Exercise: Acknowledgement Tailored to Motivation. page 160.
- [How Volunteers Build Community Across Generations](http://bit.ly/gen2gencommunity)—Interview with Sarah McKinney (bit.ly/gen2gencommunity)



GENERATION TO
GENERATION TO