

NAEA 2012/Thursday, March 1 at 1:00pm

Discover your Inner Docent Whisperer

Tackle the challenges and embrace the successes of your museum's docent program. Join a panel of experienced volunteer managers to collaboratively explore best practices in recruitment, training, and retention.

Full Description

Find your inner docent whisperer. Fulfillment, meaning, and purpose are the greatest rewards we can offer museum volunteers. By using the ideas of Daniel Pink's "Drive," which focuses on the great value of intrinsic motivation, we can learn how to best attract, develop, nurture, and sustain volunteers. Throw out any assumptions (or frustrations) you have about managing docents, especially the old carrot-stick reward model. Rethink your approach to recruitment, training, and retention by investigating what volunteers really desire from their experience. Discover how to uncover volunteers' passions and re-awaken their curiosity through programming, dialogue, and collaborative learning. Presenters will discuss the successes and failures involved in transforming their docent and volunteer programs and then open the discussion to the audience where educators from across the country can share what has (and hasn't worked) for them and their volunteers.

1:00PM	<p>Intro Welcome What are docents seeking through the time they volunteer at your institution? Their answers are as diverse as the reasons we choose to pursue work in the field. How can you tap into their intrinsic motivation and wide ranging experience outside the museum to inform the recruitment, training, and retention process? We, the panelists, are not here to provide universal tips that will work with all docents or a top 10 list of ways to keep your volunteers happy, but we will share from our experience what has worked, what hasn't, and what we have learned by listening to our docents. Managing volunteers never offers one-size-fits-all solutions. Compromise, cultivating buy-in, and collaboration are key to success. We will explore the whole life cycle of a docent from recruitment to training to retention and (potentially) retirement. After we share some of our experiences, we will open up the discussion to the group to learn from your experiences.</p>	Jenni
1:05 PM	<p>Presentation by Pam/Recruitment In 2007 called a committee of docents to help recruit the next class. One member, HR director before retirement, proposed we use business strategy to guide recruitment process. We assembled a team of docents and ed staff to identify qualifications we wanted and needed in our docents. This helped target the recruitment effort and assured that recruits would understand expectations and requirements before they joined and be committed to the position and extra responsibilities (such as board positions). This process required self-reflection and -evaluation. From conversations and small group work we identified seven characteristics of a successful UMMA docent and wrote a mission statement. <i>UMMA Docents engage the community and each other in the exploration and enjoyment of art, stimulating new ways of seeing and fostering new</i></p>	Pam

	<p><i>possibilities for understanding the world.</i></p> <p>One of the key phrases they used to describe themselves was “a community of learners.” See that in the mission statement. (MASTERY)</p> <p>From the characteristics and mission statement we wrote recruitment material including questions for use in the interview process. In the next slides see how the form of the UMMA docent program are included in characteristics of a successful docent and how the interview questions are framed to help find the appropriate people.</p> <p>----A successful UMMA docent is flexible and adaptable. “Tell us about a time when your plans did not work as you anticipated (& turning invisible was not an option). What did you do? Looking back, what would you change?”</p> <p>----A successful UMMA docent works effectively as part of a team “Tell us about a time that you had to work within a group to reach an agreement, gain cooperation or resolve a conflict.”</p> <p>----A successful UMMA docent is comfortable interacting with people of all ages and backgrounds “Tell us about a time you needed to connect with a group of children or adults with whom you were unfamiliar. How did it go? What did you learn from that experience?” (AUTONOMY)</p> <p>----A successful UMMA docent is willing to take initiative, ...volunteer for special projects. “Elaborate on a situation or action you identified in your application and tell us about the outcome.” (PURPOSE)</p>	
<p>1:15 PM</p>	<p>Presentation by Jenni</p> <p>Started with evaluation 3 years ago to figure out where docents were coming from, what they enjoyed, what frustrated them, etc.</p> <p>Problem-Solution model. Took on long standing issues that people had come to accept as an inherent problem and sought solutions by asking questions of docents across the docent corps including those who had chosen to leave the organization. Benefits were not just getting to the heart of the issues and learning the history of the problems, solutions that had been implemented but were ultimately not successful, but also really getting to know my docents.</p> <p>Found multiple solutions for the problems reflecting the multiple perspectives of the members of the Docent Council. Used a multi-pronged approach to attack each of the issues, built upon the successful approaches, abandoned those that were not successful. Docents felt listened to and validated.</p> <p>Example #1 Low Attendance at Meetings Solution: Year #1 Docent Voices-Found ways to incorporate docents into the meeting programming. Highlighting their outside experience. Example: Had an artist talk with Violet Hopkins who had created paintings with rorschach imagery. Two of our docents (one a psychologist, one a psychiatrist) offered the group some context on the rorschach test, the history, its role in diagnosis, etc. Docents were asked to take a more active role in programming. Interacting with artists, providing hands-on workshops based upon their areas of interest, etc.</p>	<p>Jenni</p>

	<p>Solution: Year #2 Introduction of new program Monday Mashups, in addition to regular meetings</p> <p>Example #2 Docents felt underappreciated by staff (outside of education) Solution: Introduced Annual State of the Museum Address where they hear from all department heads regarding the year ahead and how docents can contribute Solution: Negotiated with the Development Department for the opportunity for docents who achieved all their hours or sat on the Docent Board to attend the VIP opening reception (generally only open to high level donors/ sponsors) Solution: Offered increased opportunities for staff and docents to interact (ie inviting director-level staff to all docent events and actually get them to attend)</p>	
1:25 PM	<p>Presentation by Emily/Retention Guide Program evaluation with additional input from Museum Guide Council to establish needs and wants (from both the Museum perspective and Guide perspective) for the Museum Guide Program. This helped to establish the reformatting of the recruitment and initial Guide training class being clear that the Museum would provide both a purpose, and proper training for Guides to obtain mastery and autonomy within the program. Catering to the Guides needs of purpose, mastery and autonomy (motivating factors identified by Pink) through recruitment, training, and Guide program structures leads to higher retention. A few keys to retention that have been proven successful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased social opportunities (geared towards visual arts) ● Interaction with staff members beyond education department ● Honoring those that have been active with the program for a long period of time through Emeritus status ● Allowing sabbatical to cater to varying schedules of volunteers (1 year leave) ● Requiring only 20 tour hours a year, so Guides may self-select which exhibitions to train ● Guides may choose their own tour routes on the 'floor' ● Recently changed training sessions to be more group focused ● Offering varying opportunities in which to participate (snowshoe tours for the active, Tours for Seniors with Alzheimer's, assisting with Family activities and tours, working with artist public programs, etc.) 	Emily
1:35 PM	Post-Its/Audience Forum/Q&A	Facilitated by all
1:50 PM	End of Session	

NOTES:

I think it would be helpful if people could bullet point their main ideas, so we see if there is overlap, repetition, etc.

Also, if there links or books that have helped to inform your thinking on this topic, I think it would be helpful to pull them together for a resource page. Feel free to just paste in the page below.

FINDING YOUR INNER DOCENT WHISPERER **resource guide**

PRESENTERS

Jenni Stenson, jstenson@ocma.net, School and Tour Programs Manager, Orange County Museum of Art

Pam Reister, preister@umma.umich.edu, Curator for Museum Teaching & Learning , University of Michigan Museum of Art

Emily Garner, egarner@decordova.org, Manager of Museum Guide and Public Programs, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum

Web Resources

Books

Conley, Chip. *Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007. Print.

Heath, Chip, and Dan Heath. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard*. New York: Broadway Books, 2010. Print.

Johnson, Spencer. *Who Moved My Cheese?: An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc, 1998. Print.

Pink, Daniel H. *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2009. Print.

Robinson, Ken, and Lou Aronica. *The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*. New York: Penguin Group, Inc., 2009. Print.