

Retaining Volunteers in a Non-profit

Kristina Ward

A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2017

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the
Honors Program of Liberty University.

David Duby, Ph.D.
Thesis Chair

George Young, Ph.D.
Committee Member

Robert Ritchie IV, M.A.
Committee Member

Cynthia A. Goodrich, EdD, MSN, RN, CNE
Assistant Honors Director

April 25, 2017

Abstract

Non-profits are a vital part of today's society. Non-profits fulfill a vital role in today's society, providing much needed services that the government cannot or will not provide. These services include health care, education, religion, and humanitarian aid which are all imperative to any society. These organizations are unique in that they run primarily on the volunteer work of others. This type of system is very different from any other kind of organization in the world. Non-profits are powered by the motivation of people to help people. Understanding the volunteer is the key to understanding how a non-profit can thrive in today's society. Being able to motivate a commitment to continued volunteer work is a needed element for non-profits to continue their important work. As a result, it is critical to understand the reasoning behind the following questions: why people are willing to volunteer, why they stop volunteering, and why they continue to volunteer. If a non-profit can understand the answers to these questions, they can maintain a healthy and happy set of volunteers that will serve them well in the coming years.

Keywords: Non-profit, volunteer, motivation

Retaining Volunteers in a Non-profit

In today's business world, there are two basic types of companies: non-profits and for-profits. The main difference between non-profits and for-profits is that non-profits do not make revenue for themselves or shareholders, but instead make their revenue for the benefit of others. Non-profits include humanitarian organizations, hospitals, churches, and schools. Since there are 1.5 million non-profits in the United States, non-profits are an important part of the world of business (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2014). Because people have different motivations for volunteering at a non-profit versus working for a for-profit, one must examine the differences between these two. As of 2014, about 25% of the population over the age of sixteen have volunteered in a non-profit annually (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2014). This number has remained relatively constant throughout the years, but the need for volunteers increases every year as more and more non-profits are started. With every new non-profit that is started, a company becomes more at risk of losing its volunteers. Because of this, volunteering becomes more consumer driven. This means that volunteers have more choices to fulfill their desire, obligation, or need to volunteer, hence, it becomes more about what the non-profit can do for the volunteer than what the volunteer can do for the non-profit. Consequently, a company needs to know how to retain the volunteers they already have. However, retaining volunteers becomes more difficult when they are unpaid and less tied to a position, unlike someone working for a for-profit and being paid. As non-profits increase in number, more volunteers are needed and consequently the motivations of volunteers become critical. This paper will seek to answer the following research questions: how to retain volunteers within a non-profit through examining why someone would volunteer for a non-profit initially, and why they might stop volunteering and why they continue to volunteer.

General Volunteer and Environment Observations

There are some general observations from research that can be made about those who volunteer. One study found that 84% of volunteers said that their main duty in the non-profit was to provide services to the users of that organization (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). There is also typically a stereotype that those who volunteer are a do-gooder and not an average person. However, research suggests the image of the “do-gooder” is no longer the typical volunteer and the type of person who volunteers is shifting (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). It will be interesting to see how the type of person who volunteers shifts in the future because this will affect how non-profits need to market themselves. Also, volunteering is typically thought of as a highly individualistic activity, but many countries that are not individualistic in nature have volunteers so this may not be entirely accurate when dealing with global non-profits (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Seemingly, individuals who volunteer are typically motivated individualistically, but the type of person who volunteers is changing.

Concerning the non-profit environment, many volunteers feel that the terms of their work are not well laid out and they do not have the expenses or the training they want. Ninety three percent of volunteers in Wardell, Lishman & Whalley’s study did not have a formal working agreement (2000). However, work contracts may become necessary for the non-profit to avoid liability. Unfortunately, formal structure is a discouragement to people who are motivated altruistically and like a less formal work environment (Sellon, 2014). Further, half of the same volunteers received expenses for travel and other various costs, but two thirds of those surveyed believed they should have these expenses for their various positions (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). A question for further research might be for what acts or items volunteers believe they deserve expense accounts. Expenses also may not be as likely to be awarded in a

smaller non-profit verses a larger one, because typically larger non-profits have more money. Simple lack of funds could prove to be a disadvantage for smaller non-profits. Also, eighty-four percent of volunteers had not received any training at all for their tasks (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Lack of training is unfortunate because it is important to retention, as will be explained later (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Non-profits should consider the ramifications of failing to provide work agreement, expenses, or training and the effect that could have on volunteers. Ultimately, one must understand the volunteer generally and the non-profit environment before they can properly understand the motivations of volunteers.

Why People are Motivated to Volunteer

According to one study, the kind of volunteer a non-profit is looking for is one who desires to be needed, wants to contribute, and receives satisfaction from changing the world (Rafe, 2013). Understanding the kind of person that fits this criterion is critical to finding the right people for one's non-profit. Discovering the right people can be accomplished by analyzing the motivations of volunteers. Furthermore, understanding motivation is important for making sure the best fitted people are in the right roles. It is also important to understand the role that leadership plays in motivation as well as what generation they fall into and its effect on why people volunteer.

Types of Motivation

If one were to search journal articles about non-profits, they would find motivation is one of the largest categories of literature concerning non-profits. Though there are many different opinions, ultimately motivations typically fall into three categories: social, material, and altruistic. However, there are some other overarching categories within research that should also be addressed.

Overarching Motivations. *Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.* One set of overarching motivations falls under intrinsic and extrinsic categories. Someone is intrinsically motivated when they enjoy or find their volunteer work interesting (Bidee, Vantilborgh, Pepermans, Huybrechts, Willems, Jegers, Hofmans, 2012). Extrinsic motivation comes from a person who participates in an activity because they can gain something from it (Bidee et al., 2012). The three main motivations that will be discussed later, material, social, and altruistic motivations, also fit well underneath these two overarching categories. Someone could be intrinsically motivated and fall under any of the three categories, however someone motivated extrinsically could only fall under the material or social motivation. Social motivation comes from a desire to connect with a group of peers or friends, while material motivation comes more from the desire to gain the respect as someone who volunteers or that it will appear on future job applications. Both categories of motivation can be either extrinsic or intrinsic. Altruistic motivation, however, does not come from a place of gaining something, but instead comes from a place of selflessness and hence could not be extrinsic. Though this view of motivation may be simplified, it is important to see the difference between internal and external motivation within a volunteer. These motivations are something non-profits must work to understand before they put the person in a role.

Regulated motivation. There are also types of motivation called regulation. The first type of regulated motivation is introjected regulation. The volunteer is controlled by an obligation to do good deeds and relieve the anxiety or guilt of not volunteering. Controlled motivation makes the person feel relief only after they have helped others (Bidee et al., 2012). It is more about the guilt than them legitimately caring about volunteering in the first place. Controlling motivation may be seen when a person volunteers only because they feel if they do not no one else will.

Second, when a person volunteers because it has significance to them, it is referred to as identified regulation which is different from regulated motivation that comes from guilt (Bidee et al., 2012). Regulated motivation could be any of three overarching types of motivation, as well because they care about the cause itself. However, this type would typically fall under the umbrella of material reasons. Third, identified regulation occurs when the person does the action because it is important to them and they are aware that it is (Bidee et al., 2012). This is also typically a material or altruistic motivation. People will volunteer out of free will when they are intrinsically motivated because they enjoy the high that surrounds being a volunteer (Bidee et al., 2012). The motivation behind this could be any method of volunteering; however, it usually is caused by the material because it tends to be for the “good feelings” rather than the work itself. The more a volunteer is autonomously motivated, the more effort the volunteer puts into their work across different organizations (Bidee et al., 2012). Continual volunteering is important because a non-profit desperately needs hard workers to keep the organization going. However, there is a lack of research to suggest that those whose motivations are controlled are less motivated to work hard than their autonomously motivated brethren (Bidee et al., 2012). Ultimately regulation is important because the type of regulation can affect the length of the volunteer time as well as the how hard they will be motivated to work.

Three main motivations. According to one study, the motivations to volunteer in a non-profit will always fall into the categories of material, altruistic, or social and no matter what the identified reason for the motivation (Paco & Agostinho, 2013). However, the only form of motivation that seems to have any long-term effect is altruism, since it is rooted in a deeper commitment to being selfless (Paco & Agostinho, 2013). In some cases, both social and material aspects may affect the person’s willingness to volunteer, but the question is how much it affects

their choice. In one study, motivations were classified as 49% intrinsic which could also be called altruistic (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). This means that they believe in the work that they do. Thirty two percent were motivated socially to build relationships, or to feel closer to their community. Finally, nineteen percent were motivated by service, or the ability to increase their skills, which could fall into the material category (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Material, altruistic, and social categories of motivation are used across literature to define the reasons why people volunteer and will be seen throughout this paper.

A few more detailed reasons people volunteer is laid out by Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, and Miene which suggest there are six core reasons why a person volunteers (1998). These values were studied in adults, and college students who had volunteered and those who had with relatively the same outcome. The first reason people volunteer is because of values through which their altruism can be expressed (Clary et al., 1998). Values, of course, fall under the altruistic category of motivation. Second, people might volunteer to gain understanding; that is to have more life experiences and abilities they might not have otherwise (Clary et al., 1998). To gain knowledge would fall under the overarching material category. Third, some may volunteer in a social sense to be with their friends or to be viewed more highly in a social setting (Clary et al., 1998). Volunteering for the sake of friendship or social setting, of course, falls into the social category. Fourth, a person may volunteer to get career-related benefits (Clary et al., 1998). Future career benefits would also fall under materialistic reasons. Next, a person may volunteer to reduce guilt over having more than other people (Clary et al., 1998). Volunteering for this reason could be a mix of social and material depending on the reasoning of the person. Finally, a person may volunteer to put themselves in a good mood or to increase their ego or self-esteem (Clary et al., 1998). What can be gleaned from

these reasons is that reasoning for volunteering is often not just altruistic. Though material and social reasons are not bad, they may not help long-term retention for volunteers.

Social Reasons. There are many social aspects of wanting to work at a non-profit. Some of these aspects include pride and a desire for respect or leadership (Boezeman & Ellmers, 2014). Another social aspect of volunteering is the belief that volunteers fall into specific categories or stereotypes and that only these types of people volunteer. Per Boezeman & Ellmers, these stereotypes of volunteers include the “older charity shop worker, the sweet singleton, the environmental protestor, the ordinary volunteer, and the non-volunteer” (2014). These stereotypes may limit people from volunteering if they feel they do not have these characteristics. However, there is also growing data that a stereotype no longer exists for volunteering (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Data does not keep people from believing that this stereotype still does exist though. Further, one might volunteer to increase their social status, to not be lonely in the case of the older individual, or have a desire to spend time with friends who are volunteering. Either way, many people volunteer for social reasons under the guise of building relationships with others or simply to spend time with current friends.

Material Reasons. Similarly, there are material reasons as well as social ones. This may mean that a person volunteers because they are skilled in volunteering or desire the experience. Material reasoning may simply be an outflow of their values, their desire to learn, or they may wish to have the benefits that working for a non-profit can bring such as resume experience. They also may volunteer to feel good about themselves. It could be argued that these qualities could be found in both workers in a non-profit and for-profit setting. However, Paco & Agostinho state that the difference in people who volunteer in for-profit companies and those who volunteer in non-profits is a necessary distinction (2013). Material reasoning for

volunteering is not uncommon and not necessarily a bad thing. Although they may start with materialistic intentions, volunteering can provide those who volunteer with a unique perspective on other people that would never have had without acting on their desire to improve their resume or to improve themselves.

Mixing of Motivation. There is also another kind of altruism which functions under the guise of material and social. One article argues that the seemingly unwillingness to help people is a mask under which altruistic people can hide (Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2001). Hiding in this case means though one may seem like they do not care, they do. Further, they act as though it is something they must do, when inwardly they enjoy it. The study found that participants were more likely to donate when they were offered a product for their donation even if they did not care about that item. It seems that people want to explain their acts of kindness with one that emphasizes self-interest instead of the interest of others. Some examples given by the article for a person volunteering was “It gave me something to do,” “I liked the other volunteers,” “It got me out of the house” (Holmes, et al., 2001). For some reason, people seem to avoid language that they did it to help others or that they were moved to volunteer. It is as if people want to convince themselves they are acting in their own self-interest instead of helping others. Ultimately, they hid their altruistic motivations under social and material reasoning. Tax deductions for giving to charities are a good example of this (Holmes, et al., 2001). Consequently, motivation is not always clear on the surface and cannot always easily be put into categories.

Holmes and others also suggest the reason for people to hide their altruistically motivated inclination to help is because they believe if they help in one scenario it would mean they must help all people which the person does not want (2001). Hence, they only want to help when they want to and do not want to be put into a stereotype of one who volunteers. Another reason could

be because Western culture so often emphasizes individualism over collectivism as if caring too much for the fellow man would seem out of place (Holmes, et al., 2001). The study found if a donation was returned with some economic item, even if not worth very much, they could be altruistic but not to an unreasonable point. These principles can be applied to volunteerism because if the non-profit emphasizes how it will fulfill the volunteers needs and not another's, it could theoretically increase the number of volunteers. Ultimately these items or emphasis gives a person "license to act on their sympathies" (Holmes, et al., 2001). It is suggested it may be better when motivating volunteers to not give them more reasons to volunteer, but remove those obstacles which keep them from volunteering in the first place (Holmes, et al., 2001). In this case, the obstacle is simply the appearance of looking too gracious, which is not what one might think typically. Avoiding this stigma may relate to a desire not to appear as their flawed definition of a stereotypical volunteer.

It would be incorrect to say that someone volunteers their time or gives to charity based on just benefit to others, but also on benefit to themselves. Another name for this is "impure altruism" that does help others but also provides the person with positive mood effects, prestige, or sometimes an item of exchange (Paulin et al., 2009). Per the same study, the strongest form of personal motivation comes from behaviors where that person experiences "learning, accomplishment, and stimulation" (Paulin et al., 2009). It can also come from when a person has made those behaviors into part of their identity. A person making volunteering part of their identity can be seen in the church and in religion most dominantly where serving the community is typically considered important because of who they are instead of simply something they want to do. Once again, motivation is not always clear cut on the surface and must be investigated to

truly understand. There may also be reasons that people volunteer that are very specific to the organization or to their generation.

Motivation by Leadership

People can be motivated to volunteer by leadership who cast vision and get people to want to volunteer. Much like a for-profit company, it is important that leaders remind volunteers where the organization is going in the future and why it matters to them (Rafe, 2013). Casting vision will become important, especially if a person is volunteering for altruistic reasons.

Volunteers want to know the work they are doing is serving their community or others. To get people to volunteer they need to believe it will provide them with need fulfillment, which could be social, material, or altruistic needs, as well as others which is communicated by leadership (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). However, it is also important that the leader always be candid in explaining the need and whether there are any negative aspects (Rafe, 2013). Thus, while leadership attempts to motivate people to volunteer, they must still be honest about what the job entails and allow them to make their own choice. While attempting to persuade a person to volunteer, attitude, the right words, and actions come together to be quite successful (Rafe, 2013). Because of this, the leadership of the non-profit must be vision casters. The question, however, is specifically what type of leadership would be best to inspire a following for each situation since non-profits vary so much (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2014). There may be no single type of leader that does this job best, instead a non-profit may need many types of leaders to motivate many types of people. However, it does not all fall upon the leader's shoulders.

Organizations that have a history of promoting certain values, effecting communities, and using symbols have an advantage in the volunteer sector (Curran et al., 2016). Hence, good leadership who are skilled at what they do can motivate people to volunteer.

Motivation through Social Media with Millennials

An interesting question of motivation arrives with Social Media, specifically with the millennial generation. In a study done by Paulin, Ferguson, Jost, and Fallu, they found that with two causes, breast cancer and youth homelessness, it is better to appeal to the benefit of others rather than the benefit of themselves (2009). They also found that self-motivation was a strong predictor in a person wanting to support the cause and those supportive intentions were predictors of people taking action (Paulin et al., 2009). It was also found that because millennials engage in “impression management” because they want their support to be celebrated (Paulin et al., 2009). It is important to attract these millennials if non-profits are to continue doing their essential work. Social media cannot be avoided in today’s world as it is the way most people communicate. Though there are many timeframes between which the millennials are believed to fall, Twenge, Campbell, and Freeman define millennials as being born between 1982-2003 (2012). They also classify the differences between those who believe millennials are “Generation We” or “Generation Me,” which means that millennials are often torn between selfishness of youth and their strong desire to help others (Twenge, et al., 2012). It is the hope that a non-profit can tap into the “Generation We” aspect of millennials and motivate them to volunteer. Though perhaps the millennial generation is defined by some as egotistical, they might in fact volunteer out of a place of pure altruism because they truly believe in the cause and the help it will bring others (Paulin et al., 2009). Since altruism is the best kind of motivation, the millennial is an important vein to tap in the coming days of recruitment.

People want to feel that they are making their own choices and thus social media is a good way to reach out to volunteers and donors, specifically of the millennials, because the person must choose to pursue the cause, instead of it being forced on them. People are also more

likely to help those they believe are in their peer group than those that are not (Paulin et al., 2009). Though the millennials in the study were probably not at risk of having breast cancer or of being homeless, if they believe they could find themselves in that condition someday it can compel them to act. Ultimately, social media can be a good motivator for millennials because they can take ownership of the opportunities for themselves.

Older Volunteers

The “baby boomer” generation began reaching retirement age in 2011. This is important because a large group of possible volunteers may be going untapped. These older people have gained the skills of life that helps them bring a unique perspective to volunteering. They are also more likely to continue volunteering, unlike younger people who often leave for other jobs or to pursue more schooling. Seven best practices for recruiting older adults are “personal invitation, role flexibility, stipends, social interaction, support from staff, meaningfulness, and recognition” (Sellon, 2014, pg. 421). As can be seen, many of these are shared with younger volunteers, but this is good because non-profits do not have to make changes to market specifically to older persons. A personal invitation from a friend or family member is a critical part of getting an older person to volunteer (Sellon, 2014). Many older people feel that they do not belong, but a personal invitation can change that for them. They also, like those motivated altruistically, want flexibility in their roles. Another important aspect of getting older people to volunteer is to provide an outlet where they can socialize with others (Sellon, 2014). They also want social interaction with other volunteers, so it is not just one type of motivation, but a mixing of the two. An important aspect of getting an older person to volunteer is to provide a place where they can participate in meaningful work that makes a difference (Sellon, 2014). Much like younger

volunteers they want to feel that what they do matters. Older volunteers are becoming an untapped resource that have experience to be quite useful to non-profit organizations.

Why People are Initially Motivated

When summing up the question of why people are motivated to volunteer initially, several things can be surmised. People volunteer for altruistic, social, and material reasons. Though none of these are bad per se, the one that will motivate volunteers for the longest time is altruistic, and therefore non-profits should search for these people. However, material and social motivations can morph into altruistic intentions over time, so they are still an important part of the organization. It may also be difficult to place people into one category or another at times because people can act as if they are volunteering for one reason, when it is actually for another one. People also want to see both reasons that their volunteering will benefit them as well as how it will benefit others. Ultimately, no matter who the volunteer is, they desire to feel that their work matters no matter whether they are a millennial, and older person, or anyone in between. Non-profits must keep these things in mind when motivating people to volunteer for their non-profit.

Why a volunteer stops volunteering

Because retention of volunteers is one of the most important aspects of a non-profit, non-profits must take care to understand why a volunteer stops volunteering. When asked why they might stop volunteering, 30% said it would be because of coworkers, 19% to take employment positions elsewhere or go to college, old age at 24%, work commitments at 3%, and family commitments at 4% (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). The high number of those who leave due to other people is very interesting because it may not be the first thing of which one would think. Old age and family commitments would typically effect older people, while the going to

college and taking other employment positions effect the younger millennial generation and should be applied depending on where the non-profit hopes to draw their volunteers from in the future.

Reasons a volunteer discontinues his service, according Starnes and Wymer, can be put into uncontrollable and controllable categories (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Controllable reasons are ones that the organization can change to keep volunteers volunteering, however, uncontrollable reasons are leaving the area, going back to school, health issues, death, or a lack of funds (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). As implied by the name, there is little a non-profit can do to change the uncontrollable reasons. It is important to distinguish between the two though so the reasons that can be controlled can be removed and hopefully improve retention.

In terms of a volunteer leaving the organization, short term changes typically occur right after three, six, or twelve months possibly because they realize that the service was not what they expected (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Other volunteers suggested that the task itself had become boring or they wanted change, or that they did not like the structure of the organization itself (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). This may be critical in the future because this job hopping is something that millennials are known for as well.

Ethics Violations

Another reason that a person may stop volunteering is due to ethics violations within prominent companies that are supposed to promote good values. Though there will always be ethics violations in the world if there are people, for non-profits where all profit is supposed to go to humanitarian needs, these violations cannot be tolerated (Bell, Bell, & Elkins, 2005). The importance of instilling ethics into a non-profit's volunteers is crucial. Though there is not one single way to instill values into volunteers, it is necessary for the success of the company (Bell,

Bell, & Elkins, 2005). A company must discover a way to properly instill ethics, and it must start with upper management. Though it might be difficult, those who are either paid or chosen to be in management positions must have good ethics. Having good ethics is nonnegotiable if one wants their non-profit to be successful (Bell, Bell, & Elkins, 2005). Ethics training must be shown to be valued from the president of the company, all the way down to the volunteer. This is important because it is a controllable area for management and thus it is important for retention.

The need for ethics are especially needed in the non-profit sector because they work with the most vulnerable people (Brudney & Martinez, 2010). Although there are individual standards for different people, such as for counselors or doctors, there needs to be overarching standards of ethics instilled in all those who are part of a non-profit (Brudney & Martinez, 2010). These are hard to define in a world that is overcome with moral relativism. Non-profits are held to an even higher standard because they are dealing with volunteers that are not paid so they could be exploited. They also involve services that deal specifically with people and services, and not a product and therefore have more responsibilities (Brudney & Martinez, 2010). There is greater responsibility for non-profits than for-profits because for a for-profit they are only responsible to their shareholders, and if they fail then shareholders will back out. However, with non-profits, they provide services that the government does not, and it is also more difficult to measure (Brudney & Martinez, 2010). Ultimately, ethics training is critical to keep the right kind of volunteers volunteering.

Lack of Strategic Management

In a non-profit, whose focus is people, strategic management becomes crucial. The most important element of a non-profit is human capital. Since many non-profit workers are volunteers, it is important to actively try to increase their numbers and therefore grow the

company. Growth may include quality of management and organizational structure. A non-profit must gain involvement in their volunteer's lives, assess the value, and instill principles to grow their value (Domanski, 2009).

Volunteers also value knowing where they are going in the future. If they do not feel a connection to their volunteer work, they may stop volunteering prematurely. Strategic management involves having a clear mission and vision statement that knows where the company is going in the future and therefore, is very important to non-profits. These statements are especially important because non-profits provide such important services, and without them it could be detrimental to certain members of society, such as homeless people, and many others. To properly cast vision in a company, they must know where they are going, which is why the vision and mission statement are key. Volunteers work better in an environment where they understand the reasoning of their tasks and have good communication (Bidee et al., 2012). These tasks can only be defined if the company themselves know the purpose of them. Thus, strategic management is critical to not lose volunteers.

Lack of Leadership

Leadership plays a large role in influencing those aspects of retention that are controllable. Rafe suggests that one of the fastest ways to lose volunteers is to put them in a job without giving them enough support or instruction (2013). A secondary issue that volunteers had was a lack of training (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Failure to train again falls on leadership to be supportive of their people and to train them to be able to do their tasks efficiently and effectively. There is also something to be said about selecting the right people for tasks. Some volunteers expressed distress against doing administrative tasks because it is less rewarding (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). While some others enjoy the administrative

side of life, many do not; therefore, it is critical to discover what tasks a volunteer is most suited for. Ultimately, it is very important that the volunteer find that their work helps others, otherwise they will become discouraged and stop volunteering. As a result, connecting their task with the ultimate mission and vision of the non-profit is critical. Curran and others also suggest that those volunteers who are harmful to the organization may be separated from the heritage of the company, and therefore, unengaged (2016). It is up to leadership to make sure these things are clear to those who are working for them. Some volunteers have expressed distaste with certain volunteers doing all the work and committing the most hours of service (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). It is easy to assign the hardest work, and most work, to the best people because they are hard workers. However, this kind of pattern of employment will cause the most effective volunteers to become overworked and in the long run will make them ineffectual. It may even lead to a cessation of volunteering all together. Thus, the leadership of an organization must make sure that the right people are being assigned to the right tasks, mission and vision are being communicated, and they that watch for burnout among their employees.

Preventing Millennials from Defecting

As millennials begin to age, they will become increasingly more important to the non-profits, and therefore understanding the millennial thought process is critical. Gallup describes the millennial generation as being the job-hopping generation (2016). Millennial tendency to do this is important because it will from this group that most of the volunteers come from in the coming years. millennials are more likely to volunteer because of their compassion, but become bored easily and may change from organization to organization, or stop volunteering all together. Sixty percent of millennials are open to a new job, which is the highest of any other generation (Gallup, 2016). A reason millennials switch jobs is because they are also the least engaged

generation within their workplace (Gallup, 2016). To combat this, non-profits must make sure the volunteers are engaged in their work possibly through job rotation and cross-training. Many sources agree and emphasize the importance of volunteer retention in a successful non-profit. The attitudes of the millennial generation pose a threat to successful non-profits in the future if these job-hopping habits continue.

Keeping Older Volunteers Motivated

As the baby boomer generation retires, they bring valuable expertise to the volunteer workspace. It has become vital for organizations to understand why older people stop volunteering. According to one study, the primary reason that an older adult stops volunteering is that they value something else more, their health is declining, or problems with the administrators of the program (Tang, et al., 2010). Some of these are very like young people's complaints such as issues with other volunteers or bosses, but health is typically confined to the older generation. Obviously, health is something that cannot be controlled, but problems with bosses typically can be. Another way to reach out to the older generation is through transportation. Perhaps the organization could provide transportation to the site, or even provide a way for the older volunteers to help without leaving their homes. A good move for non-profits in the future may be to provide a way that older volunteers could help without having to leave their homes or provide transportation to the site. As the "baby boomers" retire, there are many people who have retired but still want to have a purpose for their life. Non-profits can step in here and hopefully keep older volunteers from leaving once they start their volunteer work.

Why People Stop Volunteering

Ultimately, when asked if the volunteer could see a time when they would stop volunteering, one third said that they could (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Non-profits

must work to reduce this number or face the ramifications of not having enough volunteers.

Some strategies that non-profits can pursue to fix this problem are creating better ethics training, focusing on strategic management, and mission and vision, and having good leadership in all areas of the non-profit. Non-profits also must analyze the reasons for generations defecting and consequently hurting the organization. The final question to be asked is why people are motivated to continue to volunteer.

Why Volunteers Continue to Volunteer

Just as it is important to analyze why a volunteer might leave a company, it is also important to analyze why they would stay. Paco and Agostinho state that the motivation to start working for a non-profit, and continuing to work there, are two different kinds of motivation (2013). Hence, it is important to analyze them separately. Motivation to continue to volunteer could vary from age group to age group and within different kinds of non-profits. For example, one problem organizations face is that if they market themselves towards millennials, they might alienate older volunteers and vice versa (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Some principles, however, seem to overarch every kind of volunteer. Rafe suggests it is more about what they are doing for the cause, than doing for an individual that will motivate the volunteer (2013). However, either way, many sources reference the importance of retention. Retention is critical to the non-profit organization (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000; Starnes & Wymer, 2001). In particular, retention also effects specifically older adults (Sellon, 2014). Thus, retention is critical, but there are many aspects of creating retention.

Retention

Retention is important long-term because volunteers with a lot of experience were the least likely to withdraw (Tang, et al., 2010). Consequently, if retention can be maintained, a non-

profit will have many experienced volunteers. Another important consideration is that the more a volunteer is engaged in the organization, the higher the mark left on the volunteer is (Curran et al., 2016). Per Starnes & Wymer, research suggests the longer a person volunteers, the more committed they become to everything about that organization (2001). Hence, the longer a non-profit can get the volunteer to stay, the more likely they are to continue to volunteer. Because of this it is important to discover the motivation behind the volunteer staying in the first place. If a volunteer was motivated by values, they were more likely to stay, whereas, career motivation was negatively related to staying (Garner & Garner, 2010). So, if a person is motivated by career advancement, or material motivation, retention will not be as high as someone motivated altruistically. The type of program itself may increase turnover specifically if those programs involve high skill level or experience to interact with the subjects (Tang, et al., 2010). As mentioned previously, if certain volunteers have the hardest and most technical jobs, they may burn out quickly and the organization will lose some of its best people.

Volunteer retention is also affected by “motivation, satisfaction, and responses to frustrating events” (Garner & Garner, 2010). Clearly, retention is multifaceted in nature. Bang suggests job satisfaction is an important area of retention (2013). There are many people who stay in their jobs they might not like that pay them because they are receiving something for their work, but in a volunteer situation, they are only receiving satisfaction with the knowledge that what they are doing is the right thing. However, Garner and Garner’s study found the only area of satisfaction related to volunteer retention was satisfaction with integration (2010). Thus, what increases satisfaction with the company is feeling they belong within it.

One study suggested the biggest reason why people continue to volunteer is because they have had a positive experience, which is one that the volunteer feels needed, appreciated, and

accomplished (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). In this way, they are motivated to give back because someone gave to them. Also, they want to feel their work is appreciated, provides satisfaction, fulfills an expression of one's beliefs or goals, makes them feel like a team player, or offers a social fulfillment aspect (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Other literature further explains that retention may involve making sure volunteers feel supported and connected to others in their place of volunteering (Garner & Garner, 2010). It may be possible to observe this in any work environment; however, without the additional pull of pay, this may be very important for non-profits. Though it is important to note that support of the volunteers and reminding them of their value in the non-profit may not be enough, if there are other aspects of volunteering that affect them negatively (Garner & Garner, 2010). Some of these could involve negative experiences with other volunteers, managers, or just bad experiences with volunteering in general. Although if volunteers do have negative experiences those who feel they can voice their dissatisfaction are more likely to continue volunteering (Garner & Garner, 2010). Consequently, even if the situation is perfect, there are still aspects that could cause volunteers to leave the non-profit no matter what. However, it is important that the non-profit makes sure they control the controllable aspects of retention. Conversely, controllable reasons are other time commitments, communication, issues between volunteers and clients, expectations are not met, role confusion, and lack of training (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Ultimately, volunteers desire a positive work experience and one free from negative people or leadership.

Another aspect to consider within retention is the effect of altruism on retention. When asked why they continued to volunteer, 56% responded for social reasons such as friendships made, and 40% for intrinsic (altruistic) reasons (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). One might suppose that altruism would be the main reason, but this is not the case. Instead of simply

altruism, there is a focus on the benefits of the volunteer such as learning new skills so many volunteers want to know what volunteering will give them instead of what they can give (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Even though non-profits are aware that many young people must have volunteer experience to get into a good college or get a good job, they still must compete with many other places to volunteer. A problem might be that someone who is motivated altruistically may want it to be more an informal experience, which non-profits are increasingly not that way (Wardell, Lishman & Whalley, 2000). Ultimately, motivation is murkier than one might assume on the surface, and altruism not only effects the original decision to volunteer but also the decision to continue to volunteer.

Age

Age seems to be one of the strongest correlations for retaining volunteers (Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2010). The older someone is, the more likely they are to stay with an organization. This may be because younger people do not always see volunteering as a lifelong endeavor and are looking forward in life, whereas an older person is looking back. Marketing specifically to a certain age group will become very important in coming years as the “baby boomers” become volunteers. However, giving a stipend to older volunteers would increase the length of their volunteer work (Tang, et al., 2010). Support from staff is also an important aspect of maintaining relationships with older volunteers (Sellon, 2014). Although this is true as mentioned previously for all volunteers, this is especially important because older people often feel as if they do not belong, and consequently need extra attention. Recognition is the final element that increases the retention of older volunteers (Sellon, 2014). This is also important for all volunteers; however, it can especially affect older volunteers. Ultimately, retaining older people is very important for the future.

Practical ways to retain volunteers

Keeping volunteers from burnout. A few items recommended by Rafe to keep volunteers from burnout were to develop “understudies” for a volunteer’s roles, as well as changing the role of the volunteer before they have been doing it for two years (2013). This is important because if a volunteer stays in the same position they lose their chance to grow, and provide themselves more satisfaction. An example of this is to limit their time on a certain committee to prevent burnout and ultimately maintain retention (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). The longer a person stays in a position, the more likely they are to get burned out. Job rotation can keep this from happening. The same effect can be achieved by using role flexibility, which means one can change their schedule or choose the activities in which they volunteer could also increase participation of volunteers (Sellon, 2014). Non-profits may see the benefits of this because as previously mentioned, those who are altruistically motivated may want a more flexible volunteer experience no matter what. Per Sellon, role flexibility and stipends are the most important for reducing the barriers that keep a volunteer from participating, while recognition, meaningfulness of volunteer work, the support from staff, and the social aspects are important to retain, and meaningfulness and the social interaction is used for both (2014). To retain the best volunteers in a non-profit, the organization must work to keep their volunteers from burnout.

Leadership and Relationships. Relationships and good leadership is essential to retaining workers in non-profits. The importance of relationships to retain volunteers may be due to an unavoidable organization culture. Sixty-two percent identified as “clan culture” which shows attributes of “cohesiveness, participation, teamwork and sense of family” (Pinho & Dibb, 2014). However, if the employees do not see their corporate culture this way, managers also need

to know how to shape the culture and as a result retain volunteers (Pinho & Dibb, 2014). Culture can be created through several ways, including rituals. Heritage can be built in the company through ceremonies or other activities which will cause volunteers to feel like they are part of something, but it must be genuine not forced (Curran et al., 2016).

The right kind of leadership, and the way they support their people is critical to non-profits. Providing organizational support is important to reduce turnover rates which can be accomplished through good leadership, communication, relationships, and supervision (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Ultimately, it all leads back to retention which is a critical issue for non-profits. Excellent leaders are the ones who ask good questions. Four key words for a manager of volunteers are “ask, listen, act, [and] reinforce” (Rafe, 2013). They ask good questions, but also listen to the answer before making decisions. Finally, they reinforce the good principles they instill in their followers. Good leaders do this through motivating employees through complements and positive reinforcement. They also make sure that the volunteers know all the work they do is significant to the cause and show appreciation whenever possible (Rafe, 2013). Keeping the importance of non-profit work on the minds of its volunteers is important because non-profits can increase the longevity of their volunteers by making sure they understand the importance of the non-profits work and the importance of the volunteer’s time (Garner & Garner, 2010). As a result, leadership in general increases retention and further, good leaders who build relationships are important to maintaining volunteers in their organization.

Screening. Another suggested strategy for retaining volunteers is screening them selectively, matching volunteers to roles per the volunteer needs, age, and experience, and putting a cap on how long a person may volunteer (Starnes & Wymer, 2001). Although this may seem counterintuitive, because one can assume that any volunteer is better than no volunteers,

having bad volunteers can damage the company or cause good people to leave. Screening may also include asking volunteers their motivations for volunteering in the first place. Not enough of non-profits are asking their volunteers their motivations for doing so which could change their length of volunteer time, as well as likelihood to quit (Garner & Garner, 2010). Ultimately, a non-profit must make sure they are screening their volunteers to find the right volunteers for the job.

Training. Effective training for these workers is crucial to maintaining them long-term. However, in one study, while training was well received, it did not boost retention. Only formal training was executed; however, not informal training, so it is hard to say exactly what effect that would have (Chen, Chen, & Chen, 2010). However, because many volunteers desire good training, as was mentioned previously, this is very important for retention.

How organizations can continue to motivate the volunteers to stay with their organization is a critical question. Retention, one of the most important elements of a non-profit, may be influenced by age, as well as keeping volunteers from burnout, leadership and relationships, good screening techniques, and training. Ultimately, there are many routes that a non-profit can take to motivate their volunteers, and they must ask themselves how they can improve on what they are already doing.

Conclusion

People typically volunteer for three reason: social, material, and altruistic. Although these can be further broken down into further categories, they are the overarching themes of volunteer motivation. It is important to understand the motivation of volunteers to market their organization to the right kind of people. People are also motivated to volunteer by the right leadership so it is critical to have an excellent staff of leadership in place. Social media may be a

way to motivate millennials to volunteer, while interpersonal connectedness may be a way to motivate older volunteers.

Volunteers may cease their volunteering if their circumstances no longer allow them to do so, whether because of returning to school or pursuing other employment. There may also be health issues if the volunteer is older. They also may terminate their volunteer work if they are burnt out because of the task or bored, which would apply specifically to millennials. Ethics violations are a further reason a volunteer may discontinue their service because they lose faith in the organization. Leadership also plays a key role because they are the ones who understand their people and puts them in the correct roles.

Retention is critical in the non-profit setting. Without retention, companies will constantly be focused on training and looking for more volunteers, which is not an effective use of resources. Some factors that may affect this are the motivation behind volunteering, as well as age. Further, to retain retention it is important to keep volunteers from burnout, have good leadership in place who want to form relationships, as well as offer organizational support. This can be accomplished through good screening and the training of potential volunteers.

Non-profits are essential to the economy. They provide humanitarian services as well as education and health care. Knowing why a person wants to volunteer can help a business to predict who will leave the company. A company also needs to know why someone would want to leave their company at all. Finally, they must learn how to retain these employees if they want to succeed. Human capital is the most important asset to non-profits and thus must be managed well.

References

- Bang, H. (2013). From motivation to organizational commitment of volunteers in non-profit sport organizations: The role of job satisfaction. *Journal of Management Development*, 32(1), 96-112.
- Bell, J. R., Bell, R. R., & Elkins, S. A. (2005, autumn). Embedding ethical frameworks in the leadership system of not-for-profits: The special case of volunteers. *SAM Advanced Management Journal*, 70(4).
- Bidee, J., Vantilborgh, T., Pepermans, R., Huybrechts, G., Willems, J., Jegers, M., & Hofmans, J. (2013). Autonomous motivation stimulates volunteers' work effort: A self-determination theory approach to volunteerism. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Non-profit Organizations*, 24(1), 32-47. doi:10.1007/s11266-012-9269-x
- Boezeman, E., & Ellemers, N. (2014). Volunteer leadership: The role of pride and respect in organizational identification and leadership satisfaction. *Leadership*, 10(2), 160-173.
- Brudney, J., & Martinez, M. (2010). Teaching administrative ethics in non-profit management: Recommendations to Improve Degrees, Certificates, and Concentration Programs. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 16 (2), 181-206. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25676122>
- Chen, Y., Chen, Y., & Chen, J. (2010). The influence from the dynamics of training and volunteers' characteristics on volunteers' retention in non-profit organizations. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 8(1), 33-43.
- Clary, E. G., Snyder, M., Ridge, R. D., Copeland, J., Stukas, A. A., Haugen, J., & Miene, P. (1998). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: A functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1516-1530.

doi:10.1037/0022-3514.74.6.1516

Curran, R., Taheri, B., Macintosh, R., & O’Gorman, K. (2016). Non-profit brand heritage.

Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 45(6), 1234-1257.

doi:10.1177/0899764016633532

Domański, J. (2009). Value management in non-profit organizations-The first

step. *Foundations of Management*, 1(1), 83-94. doi: 10.2478/v10238-012-0006-y

Gallup. (2016). Millennials: The job-hopping generation. Retrieved from

<http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/191459/millennials-job-hopping-generation.aspx>

Garner, J. T., & Garner, L. T. (2010). Volunteering an opinion. Non-profit and voluntary sector

Quarterly, 40(5), 813-828. doi:10.1177/0899764010366181

Holmes, J. G., Miller, D. T., & Lerner, M. J. (2002). Committing altruism under the cloak of

self-interest: The Exchange Fiction. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38(2),

144-151. doi:10.1006/jesp.2001.1494

National Center for Charitable Statistics. (2014). *Quick facts about non-profits*. Retrieved from

<http://nccs.urban.org/statistics/quickfacts.cfm>

Paço, A., Agostinho, D., & Nave, A. (2013). Corporate versus non-profit volunteering—Do the

volunteers’ motivations significantly differ? *International Review on Public and non-profit Marketing*, 10(3), 221-233.

Paulin, M., J. Ferguson, R., Jost, N. and Fallu, J.-M. (2014) Motivating millennials to engage in

charitable causes through social media’, *Journal of Service Management*, 25(3), pp. 334–

348. doi: 10.1108/josm-05-2013-0122.

Pinho, J., Rodrigues, A., & Dibb, S. (2014). The role of corporate culture, market orientation

and organizational commitment in organizational performance. *The Journal of*

- Management development*, 33(4), 374-398.
- Rafe, S. C. (2013). Motivating volunteers to perform. *Non-profit World*, 31(5), 18-19. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1442986879?pq-origsite=summon&accountid=12085>
- Sellon, A. M. (2014). Recruiting and retaining older adults in volunteer programs: Best practices and next steps. *Ageing International*, 39(4), 421-437.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12126-014-9208-9>
- Starnes, B. J., & Wymer Jr., W. W. (2001). Conceptual foundations and practical guidelines for retaining volunteers who serve in local non-profit organizations: Part II. *Journal of Non-profit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9(1/2), 97.
- Tang, F., Morrow-Howell, N., & Choi, E. (2010). Why do older adult volunteers stop volunteering? *Ageing and Society*, 30(5), 859-878.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X10000140>
- Twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Freeman, E. C. (2012). Generational differences in young adults' life goals, concern for others, and civic orientation, 1966–2009. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102(5), 1045-1062.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0027408>
- Vantilborgh, T., Bidee, J., Pepermans, R., Jurgan, W., Huybrechts, G., & Jergers, M. (2013). Revisiting the relationship between personality and psychological contracts: A moderated mediation model explaining volunteer performance. *Social Service Review*, 87(1), 158-186.
- Wardell, F., Lishman, J., & Whalley, L. J. (2000). Who volunteers? *British Journal of Social Work*, 30(2), 227-248.