

The Decision to Volunteer

Bressler, Jeanette. Attracting Older Adults and Baby Boomers as Volunteers.

Newsline [National Center for Family Friends, Online]. Winter 2005, 13(1):4-5.

http://www.family-friends.org/pdf/newsline_winter05.pdf

The Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University conducted focus groups with older adults and baby boomers to find out what this group wants in a volunteering experience. People who volunteered spoke more about personal gains than about societal gains. Prospective volunteers want opportunities for short-term commitments, want to feel appreciated, and want opportunities to socialize and receive relevant training. Barriers to volunteering include perceived conflict or cliquishness within an organization, disorganized agencies, lack of transportation, young staff who don't know how to work with seniors, and female-run organizations (for male volunteers). Personal outreach is powerful in finding senior volunteers, and those ages 50-59 like being called "Baby Boomers" rather than "seniors." Organizations that wish to attract and keep older volunteers must offer them choice in assignments and scheduling along with opportunities to use existing skills and develop new ones.

Casner-Lotto, Jill, Non-Profit Firms Face Many Challenges and Some Opportunities with Advent of Retirement of Baby-Boom Generation. *PR Newswire US*, May 31, 2007.

According to a 2007 literature review and report for The Conference Board, the advent of retirement for a vast number of baby boomers brings opportunity for nonprofit organizations. Many boomer employees in the private sector are considering using their skills in the public sector after retirement—so nonprofits need to move quickly to meet the needs of this group, including offering flexible work options, telecommuting, and the chance to shape their positions' responsibilities. Retiring boomers will be looking for a mix of activities that combines paid work for an employer with volunteering for a nonprofit whose mission they care about. Nonprofits that understand the needs and value of mature employees will be more successful in recruiting this source of talent.

Clary, E. Gil and Mark Snyder. The Motivations to Volunteer: Theoretical and Practical Considerations.

Current Directions in Psychological Science [Online], October 1999, 8(5):156-159.

<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-8721.00037?journalCode=cdir>

Why do significant numbers of people engage in the unpaid helping activities known as volunteerism? Drawing on functional theorizing about the reasons, purposes, and motivations underlying human behavior, the authors have identified six personal and social functions potentially served by volunteering. In addition to developing an inventory to assess these motivational functions, their program of research has explored the role of motivation in the processes of volunteerism, especially decisions about becoming a volunteer in the first place and decisions about continuing to volunteer.

Clary, E. Gil, et al. Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach.

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology [American Psychological Association] 1998, 74(6):1516-1530.

The authors applied functionalist theory to the question of the motivation underlying volunteerism, hypothesized 6 functions potentially served by volunteerism (values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement), and designed an instrument to assess these functions (Volunteer Functions Inventory, VFI). Results showed that volunteers who received benefits relevant to their primary functional motivations were not only satisfied with their service, but intended to continue volunteering in the future. These investigations provide empirical support for a functional approach that focuses on the psychological purposes served by participating in volunteer activities, and emphasize the importance of individuals playing an active role in setting and pursuing agendas in volunteering that reflect important features of self and identity.

Clary, E.Gil, Mark Snyder and Arthur A. Stukas. *Volunteers' Motivations: Findings from a National Survey.* Nonprofit Sector Research Fund Working Paper Series [The Aspen Institute, Washington, DC], Spring 1998:1-24.

This study used responses to a 1992 Independent Sector national survey of giving and volunteering in the United States to address questions about the motivations of volunteers. Drawing on the functional approach to volunteers' motivations and use of the Volunteer Functions Inventory, relations between motivations and various aspects of volunteer behavior were examined, along with associations of motivations and demographic variables. Analyses revealed that: current volunteers and non-volunteers differed on motivations; people with different volunteering histories revealed different motivational patterns; unique combinations of motivations were associated with different types of volunteering activities; and motivational differences were associated with different demographic groups. The implications of the findings for understanding the nature and function of the motivations to volunteer, and the applications to the practice of volunteerism, are discussed.

Cravens, Jayne. *Involving International Online Volunteers: Factors for Success, Organizational Benefits, and New Views of Community.* *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* [Online], July 2006, 24(1): 15-23.

http://www.ijova.org/PDF/VOL24_NO1/IJOVA_VOL24_NO1_Intl_Online_Vols_Jayne_Cravens.pdf

Research was conducted to assess current common practices among organizations that are successful involving international online volunteers; to explore the role online volunteering may play in building a more cohesive global community; and to assess the relationship between involving online volunteers and building organizational capacities. The paper offers a brief history and overview of online volunteering practice and details survey results of organizations that involved online volunteers named as "Outstanding" in 2002-2005 by the United Nations Volunteers program, part of UNDP. Among the factors for success are effective communication with online volunteers, not recruiting without being ready to involve responders immediately, and having a champion in the organization who makes the extra effort to keep online volunteers engaged.

Esmond, Judy, and Patrick Dunlop. *Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia.* Research Project funded by Lotterywest Social Research Grant (unpublished), 2004.

This project aimed to develop a self-report inventory of volunteer motivations to determine the key factors that motivate volunteerism. Results showed that values, based on deeply held beliefs of the importance of helping others, was the most important motivation, followed by reciprocity (the belief that helping others is helpful to oneself), and recognition. Career development, social, and protective factors were found to be less important motivators. In order to convert non-volunteers into potential volunteers, there is a need to demonstrate the meaningfulness of the tasks they would be undertaking and address their feelings of being time-poor or being too busy. The Volunteer Motivation Inventory used in this study has contributed to an increased understanding of the complex motivational drives of volunteers.

Greenslade, Jaimi H. and Katherine M. White. *The Prediction of Above-Average Participation in Volunteerism: A Test of the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Volunteers Functions Inventory in Older Australian Adults.* *Journal of Social Psychology*, 2005, 145(2):155-172.

This study of 81 older volunteers from a nonprofit organization in Australia compared the predictive utility of the theory of planned behavior (which states that people make decisions rationally by systematically using accessible information, and that the causal antecedents of behavior are a logical sequence of cognitions) with the functional approach to volunteering (theorizing that volunteer behavior is preceded by a cognitive evaluation of the benefits derived from volunteering). The study provided some support for the utility of both approaches to understanding the determinants of above-average participation in volunteering, and indicated that by encompassing a broad range of behavioral decision-making determinants, researchers can gain a greater understanding of the processes underlying people's decisions to volunteer.

Jordan, B.K., David Weitzenkamp, Beth Gazley, et al. Baby Boomer Volunteering Research and Analysis (unpublished draft report prepared for The Corporation for National and Community Service), December 2005.

This 2005 report seeks to increase understanding of how to capture the experience and energy of baby boomers and engage them to help solve critical social issues through community service. Findings suggest that men, minorities, single people, those with low levels of education, and those without school-aged children are less likely to volunteer, so agencies might look for new recruiting strategies to target these groups. Agencies may need to more actively approach women, Whites, married people, and highly educated people, since these groups show the greatest inclination to volunteer. Echo Boomers, the children of Boomers, appear to be more committed to community service than their parents, and may be able to attract boomers to become more critically involved.

Kulik, Liat. Expanding Responses to Volunteering: An Ecological Model. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* [ARNOVA], June 2007, 36(2): 239-255.

The author examined responses to volunteering as expressed in satisfaction with volunteering and burnout. The research sample consisted of 275 volunteers in various types of social service organizations in Israel. Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, the author examined the contribution of variables from three ecological systems to explaining the outcome variables: (a) the ontogenic system (gender, age, education, and economic situation) and personality characteristics (self-esteem and empowerment), (b) the micro system (family context and volunteer context), and (c) the macro system, including variables reflecting cultural norms, as expressed in ethnic origin. Empowerment, self-esteem, and sociodemographic variables were the main variables related to volunteer satisfaction and burnout.

Price, Bob. Social Capital and Factors Affecting Civic Engagement as Reported by Leaders of Voluntary Associations. *The Social Science Journal* [Chicago], 2002, 39: 119-127.

In recent years, there have been substantial changes in levels and types of participation in voluntary associations. This paper reports findings from a series of in-depth interviews with the leaders of 32 state-wide voluntary associations in Texas. While the most influential studies of civic engagement and social capital have emphasized the role of culture and values, the data presented here indicate that economic variables are also of central importance. Work-related time constraints lead to decreased engagement. Developments such as forced voluntarism, the growing number of retirees, and corporate-sponsored volunteering are changing the nature of civic engagement in some voluntary associations. There is evidence that younger volunteers are increasingly concerned with volunteering opportunities as means to pragmatic ends, such as resume-building.

Ramirez-Valles, Jesus. Volunteering in Public Health: An Analysis of Volunteers' Characteristics and Activities. *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* [Online], October 2006, 24(2): 15-24.

http://www.ijova.org/PDF/VOL24_NO2/IJOVA_VOL24_NO2_Ramirez-Valles_VolunteeringinPublicHealth.pdf

Despite current interest in social capital and health, little is known about volunteers in public health causes. This study describes public health areas and activities in which individuals volunteer, and assesses the volunteers' characteristics. Data were collected from a cross-sectional sample of 605 Illinois residents through a random-digit-dialing telephone survey in 1999. Ninety-nine (16.3%) people volunteered for a health organization. The most common areas for volunteering included cancer and the elderly. The most frequent activities were fundraising and support to the sick. Higher income was the only significant predictor of volunteering after controlling for age, gender, race, marital status, and education. Public health-related organizations and volunteer administrators need to promote volunteerism among the disadvantaged.

Skoglund, Andrea Galiette. Do Not Forget About Your Volunteers: A Qualitative Analysis of Factors Influencing Volunteer Turnover. *Health & Social Work* [National Association of Social Workers], August 2006. pp.217-220.

There is a twofold challenge for those who manage volunteer programs—orienting, training, and monitoring volunteers as well as retraining them. There seems to be a cause and effect relationship between these two facets of volunteer program development. An effective orientation and training program results in volunteers' willingness to participate for a significant period of time. However, a lack of focus on retention—or taking steps to make volunteers feel good about their assignments and themselves—will undermine your organization's volunteer program. Volunteers require ongoing training, professional development, and recognition to continue to feel satisfied with their commitment to service.

Starnes, Becky J. and Walter Wymer, Jr. Conceptual Foundations and Practical Guidelines for Retaining Volunteers Who Serve in Local Nonprofit Organizations: Part II. 2001, The Haworth Press, Inc., pp.97-118.

This paper provides volunteer program managers (VPMs) with an academically sound source of strategies for retaining their volunteer corps. This is accomplished by defining the term "turnover" (the number of volunteers leaving an organization who have to be replaced), describing how volunteering changes individuals, explaining motivations for continuing or discontinuing services, and identifying strategies for retention. Among the strategies for retention are selectively screening potential volunteers for past volunteer experience, altruistic motives, belief in the organization's mission, and overall satisfaction in life; as well as matching volunteers with assignments they will particularly enjoy or are well suited for.

Taniguchi, Hiromi. Men's and Women's Volunteering: Gender Differences in the Effects of Employment and Family Characteristics. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* [Online] March 2006, 35(1):83-101.

<http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/35/1/83>

This study focuses on gender differences in the effects of employment and family characteristics on volunteering among White adults using data from the National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS) 1995-1996. There is a statistically significant difference in the way employment status affects men's and women's volunteering behavior. Relative to full-time employment, part-time employment encourages women's volunteer work but not men's, while unemployment exclusively inhibits men's volunteering. A significant gender difference is also found in the effect of elderly care. Only among women is the time spent on elderly care significantly and negatively associated with volunteering. Women typically spend more time providing unpaid care to aging family members, and this will further contribute to the gender gap in volunteering among family caregivers to the elderly. Implications of these and related findings for volunteer work organizations are discussed.

Look for a new study on the decision to volunteer, coming in August 2008.