



Today the increasing needs of human labor in conjunction with the limited resources available drive many non-profit organizations to a dead end. These agencies have started recruiting more and more volunteer workers to complement or even enrich their services to the society.

Volunteer labor is extremely valuable because it provides its management team with the ability to (a) sustain existing services, (b) expand the quantity, quality and diversity of these services, and (c) keep the budget in its pre-specified limits.

For all these volunteers associated with

sport-related organizations, offering time, services and expertise help them increase their self-esteem levels, seek out new social relationships, develop a variety of professional skills, maintain an active lifestyle, and reduce depression levels. However one of the most notable benefits of volunteering has to do with social and community cohesion. Communities facing challenging problems rely heavily on volunteers to overcome needs and difficulties, improve their public image, and promote social harmony, understanding, and tolerance.

Volunteering "is any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone, indi-

viduals or groups, other than or in addition to close relatives or to benefit the environment including animals." This definition of volunteering currently includes three important concepts: a) the provision of a service to the community, b) freedom of choice to become involved, and c) non-payment of the service provided (except reimbursement expenses).

## Volunteerism in US

According to the 2008 Bureau of Labor Statistics data, about 60.8 million (26.2%) of the civilian population, above the age of 16, volunteered for various organizations at least once during 2007. This volunteer labor force

## **Trends in volunteerism**

### **Short-term or "Episodic" Commitments**

Most new volunteers today seek assignments with a clear beginning, middle and end. One-time-only volunteering opportunities continue to expand. The good news in all this is that after people have gotten their feet wet in a successful volunteer effort, they often turn around and ask what they can do next. Volunteer program managers should start thinking of "retention" in terms of an ongoing sequence of short-term assignments.

### **Singles as a Target Audience**

Connected to the popularity of one-day volunteer projects, there's a new awareness of an old fact: people who volunteer make friends with other volunteers who share their interests. In a world in which young people delay marriage and in which divorce hits half the couples in the U.S., it isn't surprising that volunteering is being adopted as part of the singles scene. An increasing number of programs are targeting single volunteers, either as their only participants or for specially-designated work shifts.

### **Welfare Reform**

This is an issue with inconsistent effect on volunteer programs because each state handles it differently--as do a number of other countries around the world. As public assistance rolls are decreased by requiring able-bodied men and women to get a job or go to school, the question of where volunteering fits into the picture is raised. In many states, volunteering is a legally-approved alternative to a paying job or training, allowing someone to keep welfare benefits if s/he logs a certain number of community service hours which are viewed as benefiting the public. However, in some states, the opposite reasoning applies: if someone is volunteering, then they can't be seriously looking for a paying job, so community service is disallowed.

### **Internet-based Distance Learning**

The number and quality of Web sites, listservs and newsgroups offering resources for volunteer program leaders continue to grow. Several exciting uses of this electronic medium, including complete books are available at no charge online, increasing the use of audio, and the introduction of "streaming video" for distance learning options. Complete online courses in volunteer management are also available - with some institutions even giving academic credit - so now the challenge is to see how volunteer program managers can adapt the technology to train and update active volunteers.

### **Family Volunteering**


While receiving much lip service over the years, most agencies have not yet found meaningful ways to put family units to work as volunteers. Interest in this idea is increasing as evidenced by new guidebooks, training materials, and conference presentations. To make the idea work, they have to recognize the many variations that the word "family" covers today. Intact nuclear families today are in the minority. However, volunteer programs can tap into grandparents raising grandchildren, divorced parents, and homes with adults who are each other's "significant other."

spent a median of 52 hours on volunteer activities during the period from September 2006 to September 2007; multiplied by the estimated dollar value of a volunteer hour, currently \$17.55 showcases the tremendous financial impact volunteers have on the fabric of the U.S. society.

People in the age bracket 35-44 (30.5%) were found to be the most likely to offer time and expertise in order to serve various social causes, among them the enhancement of various leisure services for sport and recreation agencies. They were closely followed by the 45-54 (30.1%) and the 55-64 (28.4%) year old age groups. The volunteer rate for teens showed the largest decline in 2007; as the report indicates the volunteer rate for females between 16-19 years old declined from 28.8 to 26.6%, and the rate for males of that age group declined from 24.1 to 22.5%. Women in general volunteered at a higher rate than men across all major categories like age, educational level, etc.

The survey also reports that almost 45 % of volunteers were involved after being asked by someone in the organization, while 40 % were involved on their own initiative. The profile of the typical sport volunteer who offers services in sport and leisure-

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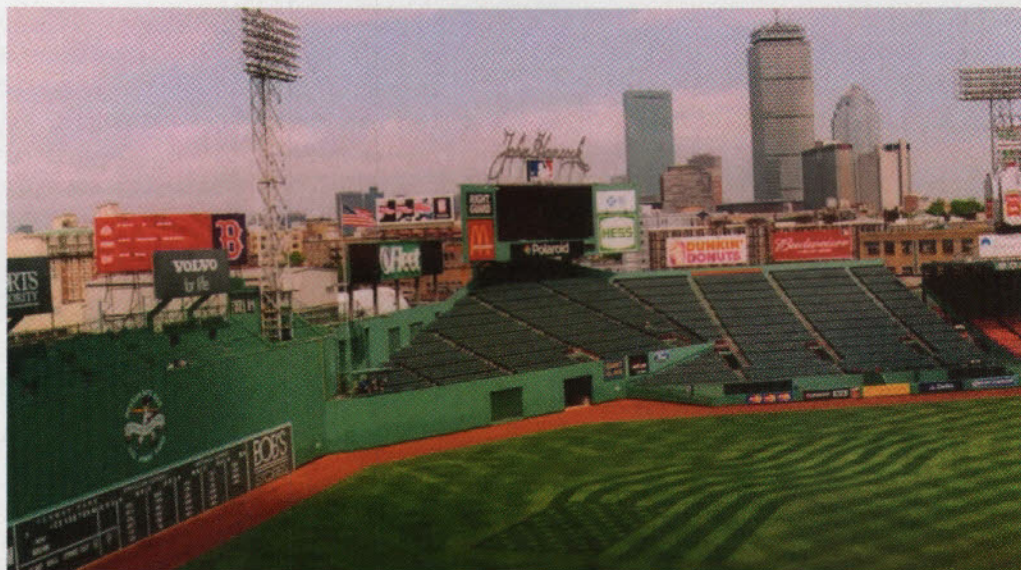
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# FACILITY & OPERATIONS

related agencies is between 34-55 years old, with a higher education degree, a full-time job, and an annual income that exceeds \$60,000. That person most likely has participated in organized sport activities in the past, and was surrounded by people that volunteering time, services and expertise is an integral part of their every day life.

Strigas and Jackson developed a number of volunteerism studies on sport and recreation dealing with motivational issues. The



primary motives for volunteering were: (a) it was fun to volunteer services for recreational sport events, (b) I wanted to help make the event a success, (c) volunteering creates a

five major motivational factors that explain volunteerism.

The first factor involved motives related to the individual's needs for social interac-

better society, (d) I wanted to put something back in my community, and (e) volunteering makes me feel better about myself. In 2001, I proposed a motivational model that broadened the existing knowledge regarding the motives of volunteer labor in sport and recreation events. That study advocated the existence of

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## Recommendations

To reduce the consequences of the demotivation factors, management professionals in sport and recreation agencies need to develop a thorough understanding of what motivates volunteers to offer their time and expertise. These are some the strategies and methods managers can employ to boost recruitment and volunteer satisfaction:

- Develop and articulate well-defined organizational goals & objectives
  - Develop and share with prospective and existing volunteers a vision regarding individual and organizational success
  - Match assignments with the specific skills and abilities each of the volunteers possess (as much as possible)
  - Monitor and control the work load for each of the volunteers; increasing demands for help from the same volunteer may force that person to drop-out
  - Create opportunities for volunteer appreciation and recognition
- Allocate resources for the development of written materials (manuals)
- Involve volunteers in the evaluation process and report to them on their performance
  - Use relationship marketing to target potential volunteers on an individual basis
  - Attract volunteers whose personal values relate to those of the leisure organization

In addition to the actions management professionals need to undertake in order to keep their volunteers motivated and involved, they should also deal with the following issues:

Address risk management issues in volunteer selection and recruitment. Too often non-profit organizations embrace volunteers and fail to take all necessary precautions for screening those volunteers. Applicable state and federal regulations pertaining to volunteer screening and selection should be investigated.

Address legal issues and risk factors in volunteer management. Volunteers can present great liability risks to sport and recreation agencies. These risks can come both from liability to the volunteers for incidents that may occur while they are volunteering or to a third party for an accident caused by a volunteer while they are volunteering. It is the management's responsibility to devise strategies for either minimizing or eliminating these risks.

Write volunteer position descriptions. Volunteer position descriptions are incredibly useful tools and are very critical in volunteer recruitment efforts. A clear, well-written position description is the basis for an equitable performance evaluation.

Initiate mutual performance reviews. Performance evaluation is not just an opportunity for volunteer coordinators to review a volunteer's performance but also an opportunity for the volunteer to evaluate the agency's volunteer management program. Mutual performance reviews should be the norm for every sport and recreation agency.

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tion and interpersonal relationships, as well as motives related to the individual's need to relax, chill out or look into various leisure choices (i.e. "I wanted to relieve the stress and the tension of everyday life," "I wanted to develop relationships with others," "I wanted to discover new interests.")

to the individual's needs of self actualization, self-esteem, and achievement ("volunteering makes me feel better about myself," "I wanted to help make the event a success").

The fourth factor involved motives related to the desire of the volunteers to aid the leisure organization in the accomplishment

Sports and recreation management professionals should develop an interest in factors that discourage potential or existing volunteers to: (a) get involved with the sport agency, (b) volunteer more hours, or (c) stay with the agency for longer periods of time. Along these lines, three questions need to be



The second factor involved motives that permitted volunteers "to carry out a rational calculus of expected utility gain," in exchange for their services; these rewards could be material goods or services (some with a monetary value), or even social status that could easily be translated into a "reward" that carried a material value (i.e. "I wanted to make new contacts that might help my business or career," "complimentary items played a very important role at my decision to volunteer").

The third factor involved motives related

of their stated ends, and contribute to the recreational sport event and the community ("I am genuinely concerned about the particular club I am serving," "I adhere to the organizational committee's specific goals").

Finally, the fifth factor assessed the extent to which volunteers were engaged in volunteering activities due to factors outside of their immediate control, like family traditions and decisions/actions by significant others. ("my friends/ family/ significant others are also volunteering," "I was asked by others to volunteer").

asked: (a) why people in the community do not volunteer services for the leisure organization, (b) why existing volunteers do not volunteer more hours, and (c) why existing volunteers choose to discontinue offering services, time or expertise.

Research has provided some indications and potential answers to the questions above; the most common answers are: (a) the volunteer had a poor previous experience with volunteering, (b) lack of time because family, work or other commitments, (c) the volunteer had developed a false understanding of



what was involved in her/his volunteer assignment, (d) perceived lack of skills and abilities on behalf of volunteers (or prospective volunteers), (e) disappointment of the way the leisure organization is functioning, (f) increased demands on volunteers from volunteer coordinators, (g) the leisure organization may do a poor job in recruiting volunteers and lack a specific volunteer marketing plan (e.g. the agency does not ask people to volunteer, does not adequately communicate to them its mission and vision for the future, etc.).

The growing use of volunteers in different facets of everyday life creates a compelling need for all these management professionals involved with leisure & sport agencies, to re-evaluate the existing knowledge regarding volunteer activity. Recruiting and retaining volunteers are primary marketing problems. Agencies could use this knowledge to design their marketing efforts in a way that could appeal persuasively to this free labor during recruitment time.

The whole procedure of evaluating motivational theories and incentives in addition to designing the marketing tools for recruitment and retention of volunteer labor requires a very careful approach and consideration. Recruitment and selection processes of volunteers can be proved a very expensive endeavor in most cases. Limited knowledge of current trends in volunteerism or ignorance of the real needs and motives of volunteers can be proved catastrophic for the expansion of volunteer human resources, the morale of the organization, or the execution of a special event. ■

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