

Volunteer  
management has  
become an important  
issue management  
essay



In a letter declaring September 11th a National Day of Service and Remembrance, President Barack Obama stated, "No force for change is more powerful than that of Americans who are making a difference in their communities" (Stewart, 2009, p. 28). Individuals who donate their time and expertise to help organizations address a need or concern are examples of these "Americans who are making a difference in their communities" (Stewart, 2009). Organizations over the past decade have seen a great deal of change in competition from globalization and market demands, causing them to rethink the way they are managed. This applies to both private sector and non-profit/public sector organizations, if they wish to survive in today's economy. Due to the United States' economic downturn, non-profit and public sector organizations must find ways to efficiently manage their scarce resources. One of these scarce resources is a well trained and faithful volunteer workforce. Restricted budgets often make it hard for management to hire the sufficient number of employees needed to carry out the organization's mission, so a volunteer workforce can help fill those gaps. Volunteer workforces have become essential to fully performing everyday operations from basic office clerical work to arranging and holding fundraising events.

## **Background**

Volunteer management has become an important issue today because organizational leaders must recruit, retain and motivate their volunteer workforce effectively. A number of organizations report that more volunteer assistance is needed, despite the fact that many Americans are already donating their time. This is why organizations must rethink the way they

manage volunteers to recruit and retain the best individuals available. If organizations fail to look at the management of their volunteer workforce, they run the risk of losing their volunteers or not finding new qualified volunteers. In the past, a number of non-profit and public sector organizations had an abundance of individuals who were willing to lend a helping hand. However, times have changed in today's society. With a growing number of organizations needing volunteers and people's lack of available free time, it has become essential to recruit and retain the appropriate volunteer candidates for the right jobs. Volunteers have a number of organizations to choose from, and they will choose the organization whose mission and values most closely align with their mission and values.

Over the years a number of authors and researchers have introduced techniques and/or explored issues related to volunteer recruitment, retention and motivation. When developing a way to recruit volunteers, one might look at the talent management approach or a marketing plan that includes the four "P"s (Product, Price, Place and Promotion). If improving volunteer satisfaction and retention is a priority, then the human resource management approach and the constructive feedback approach might help. However, neither recruiting the right volunteer nor retaining them is going to matter if the organizations cannot keep them motivated. This is where the psychological contract perspective comes into play, by ensuring volunteers feel appreciated and valued for their donated time. These techniques and approaches help organizations to recruit, retain and motivate volunteers.

## **Purpose**

The intention of this study is to closely examine the management styles of volunteer programs and how they affect volunteers' motivation, recruitment and retention. Today a number of individuals are volunteer coordinators, or responsible for managing volunteers, at organizations located throughout Central Illinois. Unfortunately, there are times that they feel ill equipped to fully understand how to manage volunteers in a way that maximizes retention and reduces turnover. At the same time, the findings of this study can help other volunteer managers and organizational leaders in the Central Illinois community improve their work with volunteer workforces. Ultimately, the individuals who volunteer will be impacted and/or helped by this study because the organizations that enlist their help will be better equipped to manage their needs. By managing the needs of volunteers, an organization can strive to maximize retention and minimize turnover.

## **Direction**

A survey distributed to volunteers at local non-profit or public sector organizations in Central Illinois would have been the desired method to explore this topic. Answers to a set of survey questions would need to be analyzed in order to see if a particular management style had any effect on a volunteer's decision, satisfaction, or motivation at a certain organization. Volunteers being defined as people who willingly and without pay perform a service or undertaking for an organization, and the management style being defined as the methods and techniques organizations use to recruit, retain and motivate volunteers. A case comparison between Central Illinois organizations would be needed to fully address the extent of the study's

research question. However, this type of data was either nonexistent or unable to be collected in the time allotted and because of IRB approval. So this study will look at secondary data from the Current Populations Survey's volunteer supplement, two surveys conducted of volunteers and the perspectives of two individuals who work with volunteers on a daily basis in Central Illinois. The variables from these sources includes the following: volunteers by annual hours, volunteers by number of organizations for which activities were performed, volunteers by type of organization for which volunteer activities were performed, main volunteer activity for organization, volunteers by how they became involved and items that motivate volunteers. By looking at these variables, this study will explore the question: is there a correlation between the management styles in volunteer programs and the effect they have on volunteer motivation, satisfaction and retention in Central Illinois?

## **Literature Review**

When people think about volunteer management, they usually think about the supervision and selection of volunteers. However, it involves so much more! Volunteer management is an important tool used by organizations to leverage resources to accomplish designated results. It ensures that the community is involved in current issues and ensures that there is buy-in of the organization's mission. At the same time, it strengthens the credibility of the organization in the public's eyes. A number of different authors discuss that good volunteer management must encompass three key areas: (1) volunteer recruitment, (2) volunteer satisfaction/retention and (3) volunteer motivation. Together these three things can create an effective volunteer

management system. Without a good balance of the three, organizations could experience high volunteer turnover and dissatisfaction. A number of different methods and techniques have been studied and/or introduced to improve volunteer management.

## **Volunteer Recruitment**

To have a strong team to assist in their endeavors, first volunteer managers need to recruit good volunteers. Like everything else in volunteer management, there is more to the process than meets the eye. Volunteers do not grow on trees. Most of the time the volunteer manager has to actively search for the right person for the job. This requires the ability to reach out and even educate people about the organization's volunteer needs. On the other hand, sometimes volunteer managers have to weed through a number of interested volunteers to find a good organizational match. Eisner, Grimm, Maynard and Washburn (2009) suggested that a talent management approach be used when recruiting volunteers. With this approach, Eisner and his fellow colleagues felt that the proper volunteer, with the appropriate talent, would be recruited (Eisner et al., 2009). At the same time, it is important to create the proper infrastructure that will not only recruit the appropriate volunteers for the jobs, but place, develop and retain them as well (Eisner et al., 2009).

Karl, Peluchette and Hall (2008) observed that volunteers responded positively towards organizations that know how to have a “ fun workplace.”

This “ fun workplace” can be created by recruiting the right volunteers through a marketing strategy. Their marketing strategy creates an internal

marketing plan based on the four “ P” s (Product, Price, Place & Promotion)  
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of the marketing mix (Karl et al., 2008). By conducting a study of their marketing strategies, Karl, Peluchette and Hall (2008) found that organizations had a better success rate when they recruited volunteers by advertising the psychosocial benefits offered for their time (Karl et al., 2008). They also observed that recruitment advertisements that emphasized the personal benefits gained from volunteering were just as effective as the altruistic (i. e. wanting to help out) advertisements (Karl et al., 2008). Basically, volunteers can be recruited by showing the benefits received in lieu of money.

It is also important to make sure that the organization has a staff member in the organization that can handle volunteer recruitment efforts. The recruitment techniques can only take the organization so far if it does not have a dedicated staff member to develop the relationship between the organization and interested volunteers. The Urban Institute in 2004 confirmed that there was a correlation between the amounts of time a staff member spent on volunteer management and the ability of the organization to handle additional volunteers (p. 17). However, only three out of five organizations in this study had a staff member devoted to volunteer coordination, despite the fact that a large percentage of organizations report how beneficial volunteers are to their operations (Urban Institute, 2004, p. 8).

## **Volunteer Satisfaction and Retention**

When it comes to the retention and satisfaction of volunteers within an organization, the way that they are managed can determine whether they stay or find another organization where they can donate their time. In a <https://assignbuster.com/volunteer-management-has-become-an-important-issue-management-essay/>

study by Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye and Darcy (2006), the implementation of the Human Resource Management (HRM) approach to volunteer management and retention of volunteers was observed. The HRM approach seeks to professionalize and create a “ business like” approach to the management of people. When the approach was implemented, fewer volunteers were reported leaving an organization because of management problems (Cuskelly et al., 2006). When improved planning and orientation was used for volunteers, fewer problems were reported, therefore improving the retention and job satisfaction of volunteers within an organization (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

Communication between paid staff and volunteers also plays a major role in volunteer satisfaction and retention. Garner and Garner (2010) found that organizations that encouraged their volunteers to give constructive feedback and keep the lines of communication open had a lower turnover rate than organizations that did not encourage it. Garner and Garner (2010) stated, “ volunteer satisfaction made little difference in participants’ communication choices, but participants’ motivations to volunteer did influence how they communicated problems to paid staff” (p. 826). By allowing volunteers to address a problem, and giving them the freedom to figure out a solution, managers are giving them “ empowerment” (Garner & Garner, 2010, p. 815). This can increase the volunteers’ satisfaction with an organization because they can see how their contributions help the organization achieve its mission.

However, sometimes it is hard to avoid volunteer turnover in the current economy. Lesley Hustinx (2008) found that in today’s society, volunteer’s  
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motivation for quitting can be caused by both outside and inside pressures. In a survey of ex-volunteers, Hustinx (2008), found a number of pressures that caused individuals to give up their volunteer work. Some of the outside pressures included: time pressures, family commitments and regular job or school schedules (Hustinx, 2008, p. 245). Managers can do little to address these issues. The inside pressures included: management differences and organization of volunteer work (Hustinx, 2008, p. 248).

## **Volunteer Motivation**

In order to improve volunteer motivation, it is important to make sure that volunteers feel valued and appreciated. It helps them to know that the organization has a genuine concern about their efforts and well-being. Farmer and Fedor (1999) studied the Psychological Contract Perspective approach and how it could motivate volunteers. The Psychological Contract Perspective helps volunteer managers understand volunteer behaviors and motivators. Farmer and Fedor (1999) confirmed that a number of organizations were not meeting the expectations of their current volunteers. However, if the organization was meeting their expectations, then the levels of participation increased (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). In a couple of instances the volunteers were willing to overlook their unmet expectations if they shared common values with the organization (Farmer & Fedor, 1999). Shortly afterwards, however, Farmer and Fedor (1999) reported that the volunteers would develop a sense of separation from the organization because they felt the organization did not care about their well-being.

Occasionally, the expectations of volunteers can change as the volunteer activity grows and changes. Wu Luping (2011), in an interview with 24 young  
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volunteers, found that when developing a volunteer activity, special attention should be given to the possibility that people might advance and expand their abilities during the activity (p. 190). This means that more prominence should be placed on the “ enjoyment” received when publicizing volunteer activities (Wilson, 2012).

These authors have introduced a number of studies and techniques that volunteer managers and organizational leaders should consider when creating and implementing a volunteer management system. However, most of the authors only focused on one element of a good volunteer management system. In order to have a truly effective system, managers need to encompass these best practices in the recruitment, retention and motivational processes. This is why a study needs to be conducted that can explore all three key areas together, while also looking at what methods and techniques work best to develop a strong and well rounded volunteer management system. Looking at data collected in the past years will help to examine if any of these ideas introduced still have any validity in the current volunteer market. Much like everything else in society, interests and motivations change from generation to generation, so it is important to discover what techniques work best on different demographics. Furthermore, a technique that works well in one community might not work in another. This is why it is important to study the populations that are in the community.

## **Methodology**

It is important for individuals who work with volunteers to discover what suitable motivational tools are required for each volunteer when recruiting <https://assignbuster.com/volunteer-management-has-become-an-important-issue-management-essay/>

and retaining the best individual available. When taking into consideration the purpose, and the available data, this study will examine if there is a connection between the management style in volunteer organizations and the effect it has on volunteer recruitment, satisfaction/retention and motivation in Central Illinois. In order to study the areas of volunteer recruitment, retention/satisfaction and motivation, this study will look at the published data collected in the Current Population Survey's volunteer supplement of 2007 through 2011, a research project by Esmond and Dunlop (2004) on developing the volunteer motivation inventory in Western Australia and the 2012 Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois Volunteer Survey. However, using this secondary data has limitations of only representing the individuals who answered the survey, and it might not represent the population in Central Illinois. Also, a sample of the population might differ from the entire population results. In order to address reliability and validity issues of this data, the perspectives of professionals who work with volunteers on a daily basis at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois will also be incorporated.

### **The Current Population Survey's Volunteer Supplements**

The Current Population Survey's (CPS) volunteer supplements for 2007 through 2011 is a national household survey administered by the U. S. Census Bureau (Census) for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), " the CPS is a survey of about 60, 000 households that obtains information on employment and unemployment among the nation's civilian population age 16 and over" (p. 1). The volunteer

supplement is an annual set of questions specifically aimed at gaining information on the rate of volunteering and the characteristics of volunteers in the United States. The survey defines “volunteers as persons who did unpaid work (except for expenses) through or for an organization” (Current Population Survey, p. 1). This data will examine volunteer recruitment, retention/satisfaction and motivation by looking at the number of hours spent volunteering, type of organization for which volunteer work was performed, volunteer activity performed and how the volunteer became involved with an organization.

## **Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia**

In the Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia study a total of 2,444 volunteers and 15 organizations participated in a five-stage research process (Esmond & Dunlop, 2004). Esmond and Dunlop (2004) also collected the demographic details, such as age, gender, occupation and time spent volunteering from each participant to observe trends (p. 22). The volunteer manager of each organization distributed the survey via mail or internally. How individuals answered the survey questions will allow me to examine what factors motivate volunteers.

## **Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois Volunteer Survey**

The 2012 Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois is small nonprofit located in Springfield, Illinois that uses volunteers to provide a

temporary home away from home for families who have a child seeking medical treatment at a nearby medical facility. In the first quarter of 2012 the House Manager and Executive Director conducted a survey of about twenty-two current house volunteers. The survey was conducted via Survey Monkey and consisted of twenty-five questions. These questions were designed to give the organization a better understanding of their current volunteer pool and the volunteers' general satisfaction with the organization. This study will examine selected answers to explore volunteer motivations at a Central Illinois non-profit organization.

Together the data collected from these three sources will help in analyzing the current retention, satisfaction and motivation of a sampled population of volunteers. Looking at the percent of the population that volunteers, how many hours they volunteered and what types of activities they performed, this study will explore what methods and techniques work on recruiting and retaining volunteers. The survey results from Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia study and the 2012 Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central Illinois can be used to explore volunteer motivations at fifteen organizations in Western Australia and from a Central Illinois non-profit organization. Having data samples from various individuals from completely different communities and parts of the world will show if viewpoints differ from community to community.

## **Analysis**

The analysis of this study will be divided into three sections: (1) volunteer recruitment, (2) volunteer satisfaction and retention and (3) volunteer  
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motivation. Each section has a number of graphs and/or tables that represent the data collected from the sources identified earlier. These graphs and tables will help to better understand the motivations and current volunteer statistics of the sampled population. However, it is important to keep in mind that this only represents the sampled population at the time of collection and not the entire population as a whole.

## **Volunteer Recruitment**

Table 1

Volunteers by How They Became Involved with Organization

Years

Percent distribution of how volunteers became involved

Approached the organization

Was asked by

Other

Not reporting

Boss or employer

Relative, friend, or co-worker

Someone in the organization/school

Someone else

2011

41.6

1.3

15.3

23.8

1.2

13.0

3.8

2010

41.6

1.4

14.9

24.9

1.2

12.4

3.6

2009

40. 9

1. 7

14. 8

26

1. 2

12. 3

3. 1

2008

40. 8

1. 4

14. 2

26. 8

1. 2

12. 6

3

2007

40. 1

1. 3

14. 8

27. 2

1. 2

12. 7

2. 7

Note. Percent Distribution of How Volunteers Became Involved with Organization. Adapted from “ Volunteering in the United States,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Table 1 shows the percent distribution of how volunteers became involved with their main volunteer activity organization. This information comes from the Current Population Survey’s (CPS) volunteer supplements from 2007 to 2011. Over the past five years the way that volunteers have become involved with organizations has stayed relatively the same. This graph shows that volunteers are either recruited by approaching the organization themselves, being asked to volunteer by someone or other forms of volunteer recruitment. Volunteers that approached the organization have steadily stayed around forty percent over the past five years. Additionally, the percentage of volunteers who became involved due to someone asking them has also stayed relatively steady. Adding the percentages of those asked by boss or employer; relative, friend, or co-worker; someone in the organization; or someone else, the total is consistently a higher percentage

than the percentage of volunteers who approached the organization on their own. This indicates that a greater number of volunteers were recruited by someone asking them to participate, with largest percent being asked by someone within the organization.

Figure 1

Figure 1. 2011 Volunteer Rates by Organization. Adapted from “Volunteering in the United States,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011

Figure 1 shows the percentage of volunteers within selected organizations. This data comes from the CPS’s volunteer supplement for 2011. In the survey, participants were asked to identify the type of organization where most of their volunteer time was spent. They were given the list of sport, hobby, cultural, or arts organizations; civic, political, professional, or international organizations; educational or youth service; environmental or animal care; hospital or other care; public safety; religious; social or community service; and other (Current Population Survey (CPS), 2011). The results show that the greatest percentage of volunteers spends their time with religious organizations at thirty-three percent and educational or youth service organizations at twenty-six percent.

## **Volunteer Satisfaction and Retention**

Figure 2

Figure 2. Number of Volunteers & Percent of Population. Adapted from “Volunteering in the United States,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

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Figure 2 shows the number of reported volunteers from 2007 to 2011 and the percentage of the general population that make up this volunteer core in the United States. Again this data comes from the CPS's volunteer supplements for 2007 through 2011. The results show that over the past five years the number of volunteers has steadily stayed around sixty million, with a slight dip between 2009 and 2011. The volunteer rate rose 0.2 percent from 2007 to 2008, 0.4 percent from 2008 to 2009 and dropped 0.5 percent between 2009 and 2010. However, it rose again 0.5 percent from 2010 to 2011. The data shows that the percentage of the population that volunteered has stayed steady (around twenty-six percent) over the past five years.

Figure 3

### **Volunteers By Annual Hours of Volunteer Activities**

Figure 3. Volunteers by annual hours of volunteer activities. Adapted from "Volunteering in the United States," Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Figure 3 shows the results from the CPS's volunteer supplements for 2007 through 2011. In the survey participants were asked to fill in their average hours spent on volunteer activities for the year. The data was then coded into the categories: not reporting hours, 1 to 14 hours, 15 to 49 hours, 50 to 99 hours, 100 to 499 hours and 500 or more hours (Current Population Survey (CPS), 2011). This graph represents the percentage results of their responses. The results show that the greatest majority of volunteers, at about twenty-nine percent, are spending between 100 to 499 hours on their activities. However, it significantly drops from 500 or more hours. Figure 3

also shows that from 2007 to 2011 each category of reported hours has stayed fairly constant.

#### Figure 4

Figure 4. Main volunteer activity for organization. Adapted from “Volunteering in the United States,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011

Figure 4 represents the percentage of main volunteer activities for organizations. The results were collected from the CPS’s volunteer supplement for 2007 through 2011, in particular the questions that dealt with the type of volunteer activities conducted at their main organization. The main organization is defined as the organization where the volunteer worked the greatest amount of hours during the year (Current Population Survey (CPS), 2011). The results show which activities had the greatest percentage of volunteers over the past five years, with the highest percentage being in the category of other activities, and the next highest in fundraising or selling items to raise money. Over the past five years each category, except collecting food and teaching/tutoring, has stayed at the same percentage of participation from volunteers. Collecting/serving food has seen a slight increase, while teaching/tutoring has seen a slight decrease from 2007 to 2011.

## **Volunteer Motivation**

### Table 2

Distribution of Responses to Volunteer Motivation Inventory

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Motivational items

## **Survey question**

### **Percentage of Responses**

**Disagree**

**Undecided**

**Agree**

Values

I volunteer because I believe I am meeting a need in the community in my volunteering role

1. 4

2. 8

95. 8

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering makes the world a better place

4. 7

5. 3

90

I volunteer because I believe everyone should volunteer

39

20. 3

40. 7

### Self-Esteem

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering is a feel-good experience

14. 1

10. 4

75. 5

I volunteer because volunteering makes me feel like a good person

25. 4

17. 3

57. 3

I volunteer because volunteering makes me feel useful

10

8

82

### Personal Growth

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering gives me a better understanding of what life is about

10. 7

10. 4

78. 9

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering has given me the opportunity to appreciate the differences in people

16. 6

14. 3

69. 1

I feel more settled in myself after volunteering

26. 4

23. 5

50. 1

Career

Development

I volunteer because I feel that I make important work connections through volunteering

70. 8

13. 5

15. 7

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering will help me to find out about employment opportunities.

77

12. 7

10. 3

I volunteer because volunteering gives me an opportunity to build my work skills.

56

14. 1

29. 9

Social Interaction

I volunteer because the social opportunities provided by the agency are important to me.

53. 2

20. 7

26. 1

I volunteer because I feel that volunteering is a way to build one's social networks.

54. 1

19. 8

26. 1

I volunteer because volunteering provides a way for me to make new friends.

40. 7

16. 7

42. 6

Recognition

Being appreciated by my volunteer agency is important to me.

10

11. 6

78. 4

Being respected by staff and volunteers at the agency is not important to me.

75. 3

8. 2

16. 5

I feel that it is important to receive recognition for my volunteering work.

50. 4

18. 6

31

Note. Distribution of Responses to Volunteer Motivation Inventory. Adapted from “ Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia,” by P. J. Esmond & P. Dunlop, 2004

Table 2 represents the percentage of responses from some motivational questions that were pulled from the Developing the Volunteer Motivation Inventory to Assess the Underlying Motivational Drives of Volunteers in Western Australia. The responses to questions related to volunteer motivational factors were coded on a one to five scale, with one being “ strongly disagree”, two “ disagree”, three “ undecided’, four “ agree” and five “ strongly agree” (Esmond & Dunlop, 2004). Table 2 shows the percentage of responses to the selected survey questions, with strongly disagree and disagree combined into one category, and the same with agree and strongly agree, while undecided was a separate category.

The results indicate that most of the respondents are motivated by their values, self-esteem, personal growth, and recognition. It also indicates that social interaction and career development have significantly lower impact on

their motivation to volunteer. Values such as believing that they are making a difference in the community play a highly significant role in volunteer motivation. Volunteering because it makes them feel good also plays a significant role in volunteer motivation. Being appreciated by the volunteer agency and receiving recognition was also regarded highly for volunteer motivation.

(Continued on Next Page)

Table 3

Distribution of Responses to RMHCCI 2012 Volunteer Survey

**Survey question**

**Percentage of Responses**

**Good**

**Average**

**Poor**