

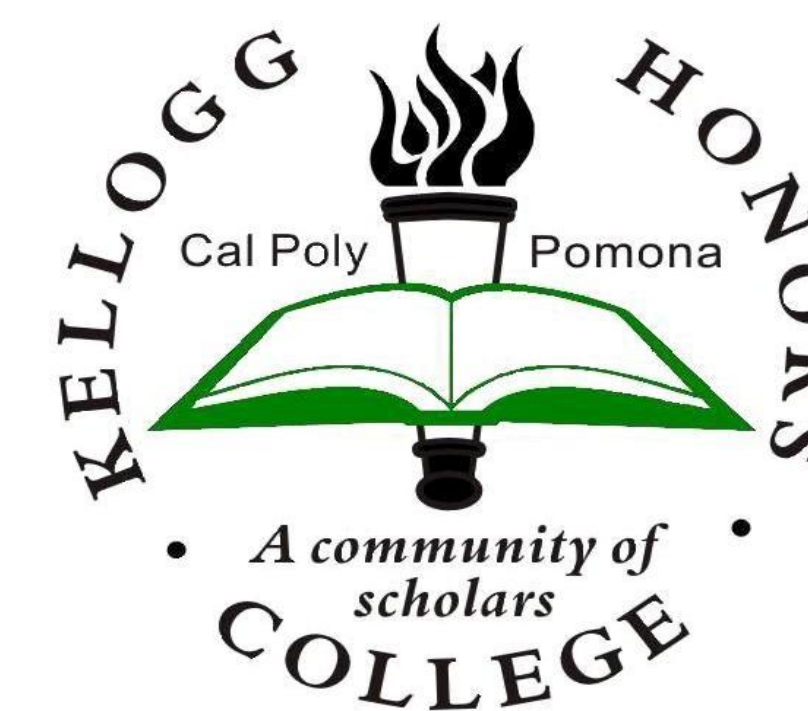
Volunteer Motivation and Retention for Non-Profit Special Events



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Abstract

Volunteering is a phenomenon that continues to elude psychologists and sociologists alike. Volunteers are especially important in the nonprofit sector, where organizations rely heavily on the contributions of others to exist. Volunteerism can be defined as involvement in a community service that is freely offered with no financial prospects for the participant. This prompts the question: *What motivates people to volunteer?* Many people volunteer because they are intrigued by the opportunity to learn new skills or gain more knowledge by volunteering for a cause or with a particular organization. Others look forward to adding to their professional experiences, building their career resumes, and enhancing their network of connections in a certain industry. Still others see volunteering as a means to help better the community around them, whether driven by their cultural backgrounds or their humanitarian values.

Volunteers are important to nonprofit organizations not only because they provide needed help in executing an event, but because they also bring fresh ideas and offer different skill sets. In return, fundraising special events expose volunteer participants to new experiences and allow them to share their expertise with the community. This study was conducted to inform hospitality event professionals, specifically those in the nonprofit sector, of the reasons why people volunteer, so they can likewise provide such opportunities to their volunteers. By recognizing what volunteers value and satisfying their needs, an organization can better recruit qualified volunteers to promote its cause and maintain that loyal labor force for future events.

Purpose

In 2014, 62.8 million people in the United States population volunteered at least once, accounting for about 7.7 billion hours of service worth \$178 billion to American communities (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2015). The purpose of this project was to define who a volunteer is and explore the motivating factors that cause that volunteer to contribute time and energy for a cause or to an organization, as well as analyze the satisfaction that encourages a volunteer to remain committed to that activity and organization.

Demographics

- The largest age group for volunteering is between 33 and 45 years old with 29.8% of that demographic regularly volunteering in 2014 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015)
- Younger people who are high school and college students volunteer to learn new skills and training (Hustinx et al, 2010, p. 351) and feel connected to the community (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 139).
- Senior adults volunteer to feel useful, remain active, and meet new people with common experiences and level of dedication (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 139).
- The volunteer rate for men was 22% in 2014 and the volunteer rate for women has been a steady 28% over the past few years (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015)

Definitions

Volunteer: An individual who offers his or her time and service to an organization, cause, or event with no expectation of a monetary reward or other tangible compensation (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 138). This unpaid individual provides his or her effort with no obligations to the party being served (Millette and Gagne, 2008, p. 11) or fear of coercion (Bussell and Forbes, 2001, p. 246)

Motivation: What compels a person to action; the state of tension that drives an individual to correct the disequilibrium and imbalance he or she feels through action in the form of volunteering (Shye, 2010, p. 188).

Intrinsic Motivation: The drive to do something because it is of interest to the individual and is enjoyable for him or her (Lee et al, 2014, p. 38)

Extrinsic Motivation: The drive to do something because there is a separable outcome that is externally stimulated (Lee et al 2014, p. 38), linked to benefits and rewards (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 139)

Values: The regard that something is worthy, deserving, and important, influenced by family member participation, interest in the activity, and a sense of obligation to a cause (Khoo and Engelhorn, 2011, p. 37)

Altruism: The need to help others; contributing time and energy to an organization or cause for the sole purpose of improving the lives of others with no expectation of benefit to oneself (Gage and Thapa, 2011, p. 407).

Special Events: Consciously planned activities, including rituals, presentations, performances, celebrations, and gatherings that have a particular objective (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 135) that are usually only one-time or infrequently occurring programs, requiring extra support from an organized body of volunteers (Gallarza et al, 2013, p. 109)

Work Engagement: The positive feeling of connection that an individual experiences from participating in a task, characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption

Job Satisfaction: Enjoyment in one's work and meaningful connection to the cause or event, as well as intrinsic motivation, not dependent upon external pressures or expectation of tangible rewards (Millette and Gagne, 2008, p. 18).

Commitment: The intention to remain with an organization for a long period of time (Vecina et al, 2011, p. 5)

Theories

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: People are motivated at five levels: physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Volunteering can satisfy many of the higher level needs. Participants often fulfill their "need for esteem of others, respect, prestige, recognition, and self-actualization" through volunteering as a part of an event that serves the community (Nassar and Talaat, 2009, p. 139).

Solidary motivation is linked to networking, social interaction and the need to belong (Bang and Ross, 2009, p. 63).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT): Individuals strive toward improving themselves and enhancing their self-esteem by gaining knowledge, learning new skills, and being challenged (Willems et al, 2012, p. 885).

Career advancement influences one's desire to obtain relevant experience and build advantageous connections.

Self-enhancement is the desire to raise self-esteem by feeling useful to a cause or event (do Paco et al, 2013, p. 224-225)

Autonomy: Individuals are motivated by the ability to exert free will and choice. Autonomy is determined by "work-related factors, such as supervisory styles, peer interactions, recognition, and rewards" (Millette and Gagne, 2008, p. 18).

Protective Motivations: Address personal issues and feelings of guilt toward the less fortunate (Bang et al, 2013, p. 98).

Escape Theory: The volunteer's need to remove his or herself from the repetitive, busy happenings of everyday life. Escape from stress is also a motive for many who participate in volunteer events that involve physical activity, like a charity race. It is suggested that this type of motive could also be considered a leisure or recreational motive (Filo, Funk, and O'Brien, 2011, p. 496).

Conclusion

Volunteers develop engagement and commitment to the organization when they can decide to join a cause or participate in an activity. By understanding volunteer motivations, organizations can develop benefits that satisfy the needs and values of their target volunteer profile. Volunteers evaluate how well an organization relates to their personal motives. If they find that those motives are satisfied, the volunteer is more inclined to exert effort and stay connected to the organization. Research on volunteer motivation for special events is especially important for non-profit organizations to attract and retain the participants needed to successfully put on the event. Because non-profit organizations rely heavily on a strong, loyal volunteer force, participant recruiting and retaining is imperative to support the planned activities and events. It is practical for non-profit organization leaders to understand how best to stimulate volunteers by appealing to their values and satisfying their needs.

Applications

Because volunteer motivation and retention is so important to non-profit organizations, the directors and managers of these organizations have become increasingly more involved with the recruitment process (do Paco et al, 2013, .222). To create the autonomous environment in which volunteers thrive, organization managers should consider and value the personal needs of the volunteers and create tasks that allow for choice and decision-making (Bidee et al, 2012). Managers should encourage volunteers to take initiative and provide feedback, so volunteers know that they can influence a cause they value in a safe, constructive environment. Non-profit organizations should build long-term relationships with volunteers that fulfill the organization's needs and create opportunities for volunteers to develop and associate positive emotions with the organization, its cause, and its event (Bang et al, 2013, p. 108)

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