

THE NEW BREED OF VOLUNTEERS

WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER

Source: *Hands on Network* www.handsonnetwork.org

In a report released in December 2004, the Bureau of Labor Statistics noted Americans' strong commitment to volunteering. Between September 2003 and September 2004, about 64.5 million Americans engaged in volunteer work!

Many factors cause people to become volunteers. Some reasons include:

- They were personally asked.
- An organization with which they are affiliated is participating.
- They have a personal connection to the mission of the project or organization.
- They enjoy the type of work being performed.
- They want to learn new skills.
- They want to meet people.

One study from Independent Sector (2001) reports that 71% of people asked to volunteer, did. Volunteering is also a great way to develop personal and professional skills. These skills include cultural awareness, creativity, problem solving, and teamwork. Volunteering can also meet motivational needs, as outlined by McClelland and Atkinson's Motivational Theory.

People have three separate motivational needs for volunteering:

Affiliation

The affiliation-motivated person needs personal interaction, works to make friends, likes to get involved with group projects, and needs to be perceived as a "good" person.

Achievement

The achievement-motivated person needs specific goals to work toward, seeks responsibility, sticks to tasks until completed, and sees problems as challenges.

Power

The power-motivated person needs to impact and influence others, can work alone or in a group, can respond to needs of people or programs, and keeps an eye on overall goals of the agency.

The Core Motivational Drive – Their Beliefs

For most volunteers, their core motivational drive—what they believe in—represents the strongest level of commitment. This takes place when volunteers commit to your organization because of their passion—meaning that they actually believe in your cause. Even if this cause will cost them a great deal of personal sacrifice and pain, these volunteers remain highly motivated. Ghandi and Mother Teresa weren't motivated by self-serving drives or because of friends. They believed in their causes. People join and commit because they believe a cause is right. This is the highest level of motivation.

Your volunteers might initially join for one of the first two levels (self-serving or relational). But after they get a taste of what your organization does, they could become believers in your cause. Even if they start helping just to fulfill a community service requirement, they might—in time—become true believers and grow passionate about your cause. In fact, this should be your goal with all of your volunteers.

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Source: *The New Breed of Volunteer*

It is about building relationships with people rather than trying to fit them into pre-determined roles. Invite them to come in, at their own convenience and do something they love to do.

A whole arena of new volunteers exists who'll get involved and be committed to our organizations and churches. But they'll become involved according to their rules, not ours.

They:

- Are very busy
- Have many obligations
- Often volunteer in multiple areas
- Want flexibility
- Expect to be empowered
- Won't tolerate working along side incompetent volunteers are tech savvy
- Don't want to simply make a contribution, they want to make a difference
- Don't want to be micromanaged

Shifts that have occurred:

- **Family Dynamics:** From Father Knows Best to Two and a Half Men
- **Isolation:** From community to individualism
- **Flexibility:** From rigid scheduling to volunteer availability
- **Generations:** From experienced veterans to novice Gen Y
- **Technology:** From face-to-face to cyberspace
- **Professionalism:** From skilled workers to knowledge workers
- **Episodic Volunteering:** From long-term commitments to short-term projects
- **Slacktivism:** From hard work to easy, "feel-good" tasks
- **Micro-Volunteering:** From big-time commitments to bite-sized projects
- **Speed:** From slow movements to fast responses to change

YOUR MINISTRY'S HISTORY, CULTURE, AND CAUSE

Source: *Hands on Network* www.handsonnetwork.org

Before you begin to recruit, be sure you understand your ministry's history, culture, and purpose. You should be able to answer the following questions:

- How do we typically use our volunteers (committed or not, mostly service days, randomly or regularly)?

- Which programs are successful? Which are/were not?
- Can we speak knowledgeably about our program's mission/vision?
- Do we feel comfortable speaking to how the programs of your ministry will help achieve the mission/vision?
- Can we clearly articulate to volunteers how their work will contribute to the Ministry's mission and goals?
- Is our workplace open and friendly to volunteers?
- Would we recommend volunteering in our program to close friends and family? Why or why not?