

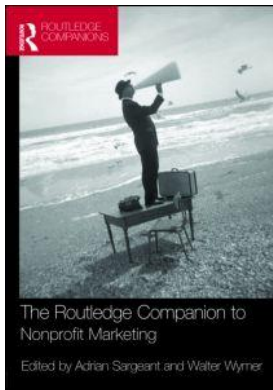
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## **The Routledge Companion to Nonprofit Marketing**

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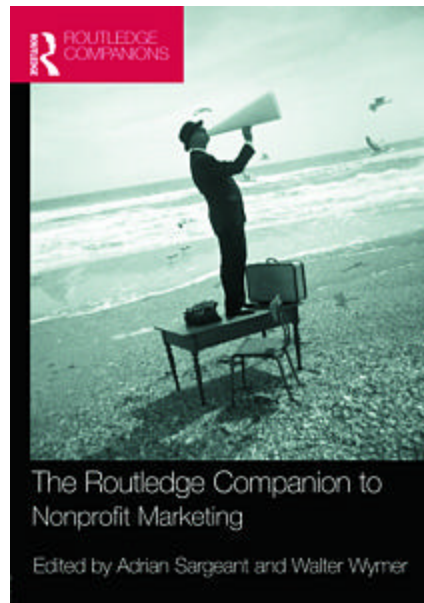
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# Volunteer recruiting, retention and development

*Paul Govekar and Michelle Govekar*

### Introduction

The nonprofit sector is an important, though little recognized, sector of the economy, growing faster than either the for-profit or the government sectors. Further, the nonprofit sector is a major economic force internationally (Anonymous 1997). Since 1977, paid employment as a percentage of US employment rose from 5.5 to 9.5 per cent (Independent Sector 2006) and total numbers of organizations grew to 837,027 million with expenditures at almost 9 per cent of US GDP.

With cutbacks in government funding and decentralization of government programmes, private nonprofits assume greater importance in many vital areas of society. Reduced government support brings increased demands for nonprofit services, making increased efficiency and effectiveness essential for their future (Drucker 1990). That the growing social need creates increased demand for trained motivated volunteers is seen throughout the USA (Zimmerman *et al.* 2003). Even the 2006 election will not change this, as current analysis suggests lesser cutbacks but at the same time it is unlikely to provide increased support at the cost of ballooning government deficits (Schwinn 2006). These same forces are increasingly at work in other geographic areas, such as Australia and the UK as well (Greenslade and White 2005; Bussell and Forbes 2002).

Nonprofit organizations depend heavily on volunteer labour to perform essential functions which allow these organizations to meet their goals. At \$15.40 per hour an estimated 83.9 million volunteers contributed the equivalent of \$239 billion worth of labour in 2001 to the US economy alone (The Nonprofit World Its Size and Scope 2006). Had they paid for this labour, no nonprofit organization could have fulfilled its mission. This is not new. Generally, the not-for-profit sector sees a decline in volunteers during economic downturns. However, shifting promotional emphasis based on volunteer workforce needs could result in an increase in volunteers during economic downturns in addition to retention and further suggest volunteer development avenues.

In order to understand marketing's role in increasing the availability of volunteers, we must first understand why individuals volunteer. This chapter next explores the recent marketing literature concerning the acquisition, retention and development of volunteers. Finally, we offer

a review of recommendations to increase the role of marketing in the volunteer lifecycle, suggest areas for future research and provide some concluding remarks.

### **Why individuals volunteer**

Those who contribute their time, skills and labour (i.e. volunteers) are involved in most aspects of nonprofit operations (Gallagher and Weinberg 1991). Previous research on determinants of volunteer participation has been conducted across several social science disciplines. Volunteering is of interest to many disciplines because of the importance of volunteerism to volunteers, the associations they serve and society in general (Smith 1994). Much of the research on volunteers is demographic in nature. This research is commonly known. Regular national surveys by the Independent Sector, the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics consistently find that voluntary participation is overly represented by white, middle-class, well-educated, middle-aged adults in families with at least one child (Gerard 1985). The latest analysis of the US Census Bureau and Bureau of Labor Statistics data conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service updates these findings. This analysis finds that volunteerism rates have exploded in the past thirty years. This is especially true for older Americans. Key findings of this analysis include: people aged 45 to 65 volunteer at higher rates than previous generations; the portion of Americans volunteering at educational or yourservice organizations has increased by 63 per cent since 1989; and teenagers 16 to 19 years of age spend more than twice as much time volunteering as did young people in 1989 (Barton 2007). While these studies are interesting and tell us who is doing the volunteer work, they do not tell us why these individuals volunteer or how to retain them once they do volunteer. To understand this, we must better understand what influences people to undertake volunteer work.

Since today's volunteers are educated people who often hold important positions, it is not likely that the overall number of volunteers will increase. Additionally, it is unlikely that the number of hours that these individuals contribute will increase significantly. In times of increased demand, it is essential that the nonprofit sector apply marketing ideas to recruit and retain volunteers. What causes these talented individuals to volunteer, what outside influences can cause the supply of volunteer labour to shift (Greenslade and White 2005) and how to keep and develop volunteers (Farmer and Fedor 1999; Leviton *et al.* 2006; Starnes and Wymer 2001) are questions that must be answered.

Bussell and Forbes' (2002) literature review identified the what, where, who and why of volunteering; noting that little work existed on local variations. Starnes and Wymer (2001) found that changes may result in volunteers quitting short term but these changes eventually merge identity with organizational goals and reactivate past volunteers.

Empirical research on volunteerism has been limited due to challenges of securing data. Data on volunteering come from the Independent Sector series of surveys (Independent Sector 1999), currently continued by the Urban Institute (2006). These surveys, conducted biennially since 1988, report volunteer time from May of each year based on a representative national sample of 2,500 or more individuals, adjusted for adequate representation of AfricanAmericans, Hispanics and affluent Americans with incomes over \$70,000. The sample is weighted to insure representation by age, race/ethnicity, education, marital status, size of household, region of the country and household income. The error rate is +/- 3 per cent (Saxon-Harrold 1999:16).

French (2006) finds that many professionals volunteer to build their work skills beyond what



is possible in their own job (see also this premise reflected in the model of USA Leadership Corps 2006). Sharir and Lerner (2006) mention the importance of past volunteer services in the role of social entrepreneurship, or starting new nonprofits. Mueller (2006) notes the lure for professionals of working for less powerful causes where these individuals can make a real difference. Miller (2005) finds professional volunteers facilitated through associations and collaborative volunteer networks. Hibbert *et al.* (2003) discovered a growing recognition of enhanced skills, self-esteem and self-confidence that developed over time for volunteers at community food cooperatives. Their study relied on Dwyer *et al.*'s (1987) phases of marketing relationships in order to develop marketing tactics to recruit and keep volunteers. Gladney (2006) focuses on the mixed motives that may involve professionals' volunteering, which in turn can bring the professional business. He brings up ethical issues associated with profiting by doing good works. The conflict of interest involves marketing oneself personally, rather than marketing the nonprofit. Orr (2005) provides the example of Taproot, a professional network providing slick marketing services to nonprofits who gained in both income and clients. Volunteers sensed that their contribution was valuable and directly aimed at using their expertise to improve the project. James (2000) noted that *pro bono* work by marketers can benefit nonprofits while building marketing skills and improving personal networks for those who volunteer. Volunteering is not limited to the USA. Volunteering is in its early development stages in Spain. Beerli *et al.* (2004) explored differences in images portrayed by charitable and ecological organizations and noted that individual self-concepts impact upon individuals' choice of volunteering targets, suggesting that nonprofits could use social marketing tactics to build volunteering.

Much volunteerism research focuses on values, attitudinal and behavioural factors which may motivate individuals to volunteer for a particular position or organization. Inglis and Cleave (2006) explored the motivations of board volunteers and found six components: enhancement of self-worth, learning through community, helping the community, developing individual relationships, unique contributions to the board and self-healing. These cluster into two groups, one personal and one more altruistic. They suggest application of these findings to recruitment, training, development and retention. Callow (2004) suggests retirees' motives for volunteering are not homogeneous, but contain considerable variability. Perceived motives for volunteering among seniors include the feel-good factor, a need for socialization, and a search for structure and purpose. Dutta-Bergman (2004) suggests developing a dialogue which highlights the nonprofit organization's responsible commitment to the community and incorporating communication strategies that appeal to different aspects of a responsible lifestyle such as exercising, consumerism, healthy eating and an environmental consciousness. Govekar (2004) suggests highlighting the social networking aspects of volunteering, using current volunteers to gain other volunteers through facilitation. Other suggestions include:

- 1 Self-esteem: volunteers have positive self-images, feel capable and competent (Okun 1994; Gerard 1985). Feeling in control of their lives is also important (Miller 1985). Wymer (2003) noted that literacy volunteers reported a need to be productive.
- 2 Moral/civic duty: volunteers frequently report a sense of moral responsibility or a sense of duty as a motive (Gerard 1985; Okun 1994). The Austin Mini used cause-related marketing to build upon this motive by encouraging their car owners to participate communally in National Volunteers' Week (Kurylko 2006). Gaschen (2005) relates the experience of Susan Hager, a PR professional who built a career by making a difference. Mintzberg and Westley (2000) characterize nonprofits as social-value achievers.





- 3 Religious beliefs: opportunities to express religious beliefs and values are provided in many volunteer situations (Wood and Hougland 1990). Leviton *et al.* (2006) noted that church congregations can encourage their members to help others in need, particularly in caring for the chronically ill, a particularly difficult but vital area for volunteer recruitment and retention.
- 4 Facilitation: rather than volunteers' behaviour, others asking them to volunteer can be important (Wymer 1997; Govekar 2004). McDermott *et al.* (2000) found that health research organizations apply personal selling techniques to recruit board members and regular volunteers.
- 5 Social benefits: social benefits are yet another need mentioned by Hibbert *et al.* (2003). Hayes and Slater (2001) studied 'friends' schemes which are also known as membership schemes and societies. Saxton and Benson (2005) looked into the role of social capital in the formation of new nonprofit organizations and found that trust was not as significant a factor as they posited it would be.

### **Marketing's role**

Marketing concepts are not foreign to nonprofits. Initial application of marketing ideas to nonprofits originated almost forty years ago (Kotler and Levy 1969). An early specific application to volunteerism is also twenty years old (Yavas and Reicken 1985) applying basic demographic and attitude-related marketing techniques to differentiate donors of time in an offshoot of fundraising research. This work set in motion a serious practical marketing analysis of volunteers (Schlegelmich and Tynan 1989) and ignited nonprofit organizations' use of marketing tactics to obtain volunteers (Wilkinson 1989). On the organizational side, nonprofits have used the concepts of market segmentation (e.g. geo-demographics, relationship marketing, database marketing) for many years. Until fairly recently, the primary emphasis of these efforts was aimed at increasing either the amount of money donors give, or the number of donors giving the money. Some performing-arts organizations also use market segmentation concepts in an effort to improve the size of their audience (Scheff 1996). Bruce (1995) proposed dividing constituents into beneficiaries, supporters, stakeholders and regulators with intermediary groups in each case to trace channels to reach the final constituent. He blames both nonprofits and marketing professionals for failing to project the benefits a marketing approach brings to better serve their constituents. One key to a nonprofit organization's marketing success may be in adapting to internal and external environments to reposition themselves in creative and dramatic ways (Scheff 1996). For example, the Sacramento Symphony remade itself after its 1992 bankruptcy by emphasizing inclusiveness, outreach and community education.

Bennett and Sargeant (2005) and Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) both found that employment of marketing techniques to attract volunteers has received 'much' attention. Bennett and Kottasz (2000) found in studying affective, cognitive and conative characteristics that both less and more altruistically (egoistical) motivated targets responded more positively to recruitment advertisements that emphasized the material and emotional benefits of volunteering. Also those longer-serving individuals most often reported egoistical motives, mostly resulting in emotional satisfaction.

Leviton *et al.* (2006) present many cases of private foundations coming forward to involve church groups in providing critical elder care. They consider how faith motivates particularly for the 'hard' social service delivery positions. Hankinson and Rochester (2005) explore whether negative perceptions of volunteering are suitable for reshaping through 'branding'



to increase volunteerism; they find that different areas of volunteering may be developed as 'sub-brands' and argue that UK national-level programmes are best able to use brand to this effect. Ratje (2003) explained how well-trained volunteers can be the carriers of an individual nonprofit organization's brand.

Wymer and Samu (2002) found that male and nonworking volunteers spend more time, while female and working volunteers are more empathetic and also distinguished different values reported by men and women for volunteering. Wymer (2003) followed Smith's (1994) lead in investigating segmentation of literacy volunteers to identify subgroups' motives and perceived benefits. He also differentiated motives of high-performing and poor-performing volunteers. Nonprofits can use this differentiation to determine what to say and where to say it to recruit, screen, place, use, manage and retain volunteers.

Market segmentation techniques, then, are familiar to nonprofit managers, developed and applied mostly for fundraising. Similar techniques help find, develop and retain the right volunteers for the organization.

Other research proposes that relationship-marketing practices, including friends' programmes carry benefits beyond cashflow, extending to volunteer retention (Hayes and Slater 2003). They develop social-club frameworks, public members and integrated membership schemes reflecting strategic directions of alignment, convergence and unification which can drive organizational marketing activities which retain volunteers.

Bussell and Forbes (2003) applied a relationship-marketing perspective to develop a 'volunteer lifecycle' model, linking various marketing tactics to volunteers' needs at each stage in their organizational involvement, recruitment, retention and reactivation. Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) address retention with their research on internal marketing programmes. They argue that applying marketing communications affected commitment; the volunteers' experience, job attributes, personal affect, stress, motivations and recognition all affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment, thus retention and performance. Mitchell and Taylor (2004) present a seven-step internal marketing process to build long-term relationships with volunteers. Leviton *et al.* (2006) find that good supervision is associated with growth in volunteers and that regular contact between volunteers and their supervisor engenders satisfaction and loyalty as well as a willingness to continue to serve.

Wymer and Starnes (2001) focus their review on recruitment, but preface it with the idea that retention is key. They present a model of volunteer behaviour including personal influence (such as self-esteem and empathy, values, personal experience and life stage), interpersonal influences (mainly facilitation, social norms and parental volunteering), attitudes and situational factors (such as time and income); then develop a complete marketing programme which draws on these factors.

Kaufman *et al.* (2004) present a Soviet Union example of volunteer retention, supporting the contention of Govekar *et al.* (2000) that a volunteer-centred orientation requires comprehensive social support, organizational commitment to goals and using the potential volunteer's professional skills in the recruitment and placement effort. Such a programme results in decreased costs, and enhanced benefits to support volunteers and volunteer recruitment. In times of strong GDP levels and low unemployment levels nonprofits grow and enjoy a stable supply of volunteers (Saxton and Benson 2005). These volunteers want to build social capital and feel psychologically content in helping society through the nonprofit organization of their choice. Nonprofits can use this analysis to build campaigns which support volunteers' natural desires (Houle *et al.* 2005).

Retention is the key to Starnes and Wymer (2001) who begin by defining volunteer turnover. They suggest that volunteer screening, matching programmes, tenure systems, offering



leadership roles and organizational support can significantly reduce turnover. Their suggestions provide academically sound support to Morley and Rossman's (1997) report for the Urban Institute on community initiatives. In this report the authors recommend that programme managers put energy and creativity into volunteer recruitment, screen and train volunteers, match volunteers and clients, provide ongoing support and monitoring and recognize volunteer efforts in both small and large ways. A more direct take on retention comes from Self (2001) who points out the application of promotional materials to support commitment through volunteer recognition and retention.

The nonprofit literature has been enhanced over the past forty years by explaining how a volunteer organization might benefit by using various corporate marketing practices (Herman 1994). Bradner (2001) argues that promotional messages must emphasize the need that nonprofit programmes hope to remedy. This traditional approach attracted volunteers using the social good that would be done by the organization. This works fairly well. Bradner (2001) further argues that the promotional message must also speak to the needs of those people who could most effectively fill the job. This strategy has the potential to be very effective. Such a distinction in promotional campaigns calls for a strategy to analyse the needs of potential volunteers and, as suggested above, for volunteer agencies to respond accordingly. The marketing concept of Perreault and McCarthy (1999) suggests that nonprofits know the needs of their volunteers and respond accordingly. The changing needs of potential volunteers cannot be satisfied if volunteer organizations do not adapt to dynamic economic conditions. Wymer (1999) applied this same logic in suggesting that nonprofits view their volunteers as customers.

Another alternative vision of marketing strategies resonates with the concept of the product lifecycle. It suggests that every product offered to consumers, no matter how successful, will eventually lose popularity due in part to the changing needs of the consumers who have been buying it (Herman 1994). The theory suggests that an organization must be dynamic and adjust its offerings or create new ones. Wasson (1978) used this idea to remind nonprofit managers that the way their organization successfully served its target market in the past may not work in the future. We argue that this can also impact upon an organization's desired and even its current volunteers.

### **Managerial process and volunteer lifecycle**

As discussed above, market segmentation techniques can assist in these areas. As Drucker (1990) indicates, a nonprofit organization has multiple vitally important key relationships and constituencies to be addressed. Market segmentation is a two-step process of: (a) *defining* broad product markets; and (b) *segmenting* these broad product markets in order to select target markets and develop suitable marketing mixes. Real-world market segmentation studies generally follow one of two designs: (a) an a priori design where management decides the basis for segmentation; or (b) a clustering design where segments are determined by clustering external or internal customers on a set of relevant variables (Wind 1978).

A nonprofit organization is trying to 'sell' its mission and its volunteer opportunity to individuals with many choices of how to spend their time. More and more, volunteers are educated people with specific skills and knowledge that they can offer and needs they might fulfil through volunteer work. They demand that a nonprofit has a clear mission that drives everything the organization does (Drucker 1990).

An a priori segmentation design could concentrate on what volunteers want. One thing that volunteers demand is training, training and more training (Drucker 1990).

## Volunteers want

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to feel qualified and to know that the organization will ensure they can succeed. Can the organization fulfil this need through the training that it provides? Nonprofits have other means to fulfil volunteers' wants. Even their mission and culture can draw volunteers who share these goals (Mitchell and Yates 2002). Lysakowski (2002) points up the crucial role of mission in attracting capital campaign volunteers. Malloy and Agarwal (2003) noted that nonprofits' organizational climates perceived as 'individual caring' had a clear impact on relationship-marketing tactics and also impacted on how staff and volunteers would behave. Rangan (2004) suggested systematic methods connecting this idea of a calling to their programmes using mission to draw volunteers through emotional appeal. Volunteers should be considered much more than helpers, as they directly influence the organization's norms. Marketing is important both externally and internally.

Nonprofit organizations must value their internal and external customers to capture those constituencies described by Drucker (1990) or Bruce (1995). They must address difficult situations and volunteer diversity. Finding volunteers to work with troubled teenagers may be difficult in an area. One way to fill this gap is to determine what needs this work fulfils to identify persons who might volunteer. Likewise, recruiting black and Hispanic volunteers may be problematic. Research suggests 'black volunteers are more motivated by altruistic impulses than white volunteers' (McCurley 1994:521). For each special challenge, volunteer managers must develop a logical combination of needs and determine how the organization's mission meets them. Some potential volunteers' needs may fit multiple clusters; these should be combined if necessary, and some overlap is expected. If clusters overlap too much, specific needs should be redefined (Wind 1978).

Current volunteers' affinity networks should be used to find new volunteers. 'The most effective marketers are satisfied volunteers already working for your organization' (Mitchell and Yates 1996:47). Berkshire (2005) recommends using word-of-mouth marketing. They describe a case where 'buzz-agents' worked to identify appropriate people to talk to. This worked better than other marketing techniques because the messages were delivered by someone familiar who has already developed some trust with the message target. Hibbert *et al.* (2003) found this strategy worked best for the initial-awareness stage of the volunteer relationship. Hart (2002) suggested using the Internet for building and keeping up relationships with donors and volunteers.

Chiagouris (2005) notes that nonprofits need a coherent branding message to facilitate success in all appeals. In an increasingly tight charitable market, successful Internet presence requires a strong brand. For nonprofits the lead brand element is the mission. The mission statement must be specific and realistic, providing a unique selling proposition and reason to believe. These should intersect with the needs mentioned above to communicate strongly and persuasively with potential volunteers. They argue that the nonprofit brand image is even more important than in the for-profit sector. In related research, Bennett and Barkensjo's (2005) study of the impact of negative experiences on retention of volunteers highlights matching volunteer roles to the targets' emotionality, vulnerability to stress, and core motivation but not to job characteristics.

Both paid staff and key volunteers must devote considerable time and energy to understanding the wants and needs of potential volunteers and clustering these into homogeneous market segments. More aggressively marketing the organization and its brand to new volunteers clearly affects the nonprofit's long-term course. Bennett and Barkensjo (2005) contend that there is a positive and significant connection between instituting an internal marketing programme and subsequent improvement in volunteer's satisfaction and commitment. Developing and implementing such a programme, however, requires the expenditure of resources that are always

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in demand for other uses. Mitchell and Taylor (2004) suggest that such a programme involves seven steps to improve individual performance and create long-term relationships with volunteers. Developing an internal marketing programme would involve analysing the current organizational culture, deciding on the benefits that volunteers want, recruiting people whose values match, designing an internal programme to cultivate the desired culture, planning a socialization process, structuring ceremonial activities to support the desired culture and maintaining a feedback mechanism.

A more targeted campaign brings in more, better-qualified volunteers. Interviewing and matching, orientation and training, and supervision and motivation (McCurley 1994) will require additional effort but provide enhanced contribution opportunity. Today's volunteers are not satisfied with being helpers. They are knowledge workers, and they want to be knowledge workers as they contribute to society (Drucker 1990). Like Taylor and Mitchell's (1996) donors, it is much more expensive to get new volunteers than it is to keep good ones that are found. Better volunteers require more work from managers and paid staff as well as other volunteers.

### **Areas for future research**

Starnes and Wymer (2001) suggest researchers explore the notions of managing volunteers like employees with job descriptions, interviews and written performance standards and wonder whether volunteer programme managers will do the extra work necessitated by treating volunteers more like employees. They further suggest exploring whether fallen-away former volunteers will return if they are asked.

Callow (2004) suggests further research to examine the relative importance of benefits and costs associated with volunteering among senior citizens. He also suggests researchers explore the steps that occur when seniors are deciding whether or not to volunteer. Further, building a better understanding of the cognitive and affective behaviour of potential volunteers would assist in formulating a more marketing-based approach to the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Hayes and Slater (2003) suggest that further research is needed to benchmark and plot membership schemes from subsectors of the cultural sector. They further recommend better identifying subgroups within what they call the 'social club group' and the 'integrated membership scheme' groups.

Saxton and Benson (2005) suggest that future research is needed to investigate the role of interpersonal trust on community-level outcomes. This research could build on the social trust work done by Fukuyama (1999) and the 'weak ties' identified by Granovetter (1973).

As can be seen, future research on the determinants of volunteer participation will continue to be conducted across several social science disciplines. Marketing's role in this research is undeniable.

### **Conclusion**

Recruiting, developing and retaining volunteers are complex tasks. These tasks are, however, essential if nonprofit organizations are to continue meeting client needs. Informed marketing techniques have a significant role to play in this process. While the application of marketing techniques to nonprofit organizations has a long history, much work still needs to be done. This



is especially true of the application of these techniques to the management of volunteers. This continues to be an area where research can truly inform and assist practising managers.

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