Raising Volunteer’s Motivation as an Opportunity for Implementing the Full Potential of Volunteering in Organisation

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The authors claim that personal motivators are the basis for volunteer activity, because people are ready to devote their energy and time as long as they are motivated. Volunteers have different motivations: some look for experiences in an unfamiliar field, some would like to acquire new knowledge and skills that will be useful for future career, others want to help people in need, build social capital, feel being useful, gain recognition and some people want to give their contribution into developing a certain field of activity like crime reduction. As volunteer has to find time besides everyday work, studies, hobbies, leisure, family or social life, there has to be a good reason to volunteer and not to do something else. It is up to the environmental and organisational conditions to facilitate the driving personal motivators and diminish the presence of factors that work against volunteer’s motivation. Volunteer commitment can be increased, if the benefits that volunteer experiences overweigh the cost of energy and time.

In general the motivation of volunteer can be affected on two levels: organisational and environmental. The environment for volunteering determines what kind of civic activities are legal, which activities are financially and socially supported, and are socially not recognized. This is a more general level, where changes in the environment may not have direct effect on volunteer’s motivation to devote time and energy in favour of a more or less altruistic cause. But the volunteers’ experience is directly affected by the behaviour of the people working in the organisation that asks for volunteer help. At the same time the organization has to find balance between taking into account the motivators of volunteers and the needs of the organisation and society in order to implement the full potential of volunteers.

The authors analyzed the existing literature on types and activities of volunteering, incentives and disincentives in organizations and as they could not find a comprehensive publication, constructed an international literature based model of volunteer motivation in an organization that distinguishes between short-term and long-term volunteering. The model was tested in a specially conducted survey on volunteering in Estonia (random 400 volunteers, 200 non-volunteers) to study if the model works in an East-European new EU member country. Binominal regression analysis, that studied the difference of organizations where volunteers would certainly want to go back, showed that these organizations offer sufficient choice of activities for volunteers, give adequate feedback and acknowledge them. The same activities turned out to be important factors when looking separately for relations with each benefit of volunteering. Other important factors are sufficient instruction and training, reporting publicly about the organization's activities, covering the expenses of volunteering, and the general development level of the organization: financially stable, can affect social development, has a good reputation.

The results of the empirical analysis support the literature based volunteer motivation model built earlier, particularly the disincentives aspect. A list of principles was created for implementing the full potential of current volunteers in organizations. Also descriptive analysis was used to study the state of volunteering in Estonia and based on motivators of non-volunteers, different social groups were brought out for which specific communication strategy is needed in order to raise the number of volunteers.

References:


