

WHAT AFFECTS A VOLUNTEER'S COMMITMENT?

One key factor that affects commitment is the volunteers desire to be a part of the organization. Keeping them (volunteer retention) is a key part of an organization's success. Many factors affect volunteer retention. A research project for the International Year of Volunteers investigated the factors that affect a volunteer's commitment.

WHAT INFLUENCES A VOLUNTEER'S COMMITMENT AND WHAT CAN WE DO?

Satisfaction with the organization's performance:

There were three factors that were shown to be the most important. The strongest factor influencing commitment was the volunteer's level of satisfaction with the performance of the organization. Satisfaction with policies and procedure is the strongest predictor of satisfaction with organizational performance. When they are involved in setting goals and outcome measures and when their role is directly related to measurable outcomes, they can see how they helped the organization succeed.

Organizational identity:

Volunteers want to be associated with organizations that they and their communities value. If the motive of the volunteer is to help, and they believe that they are doing so, then they are more likely to be satisfied. When they feel attached to an organization and this feeling becomes part of their self identity, they become committed to that organization. Effective volunteer stewardship (such as orientations, training and appreciation programs) can also help to create organizational identification. Ensuring that volunteers have ways to build friendships helps create a sense of connection and community within the organization. As such, they are more likely to stay a part of it.

The safety of the psychological climate:

Not only must volunteers feel that their volunteer environment is psychologically safe and trustworthy, they must feel supported and accepted by their peers. They must feel able to express themselves without being shamed or ridiculed. When they can express themselves in an open and non-threatening environment, they are more likely to be committed to the organization. When volunteers can trust their co-volunteers to do their tasks, they are more likely to feel satisfied with the organizations performance. To foster a healthy social environment, create a code of conduct that encourages desirable behavior by organizational leaders . This can go far to making a positive culture.

Role identity and acceptance:

When volunteers accept the responsibility of their role (regardless of whether it matches their skills, knowledge or attributes) they tend to be more committed to the organization than volunteers who do not accept their role. Volunteers must perceive that they are helping others and their community in order to feel satisfied. Take steps to show volunteers the results of their efforts and celebrate their contribution.

Information taken from 2002 Canadian Centre for Philanthropy publication

Do You Know How Volunteers Get Involved?

There are many ways to become a volunteer, but by far the most common way in Alberta, as in the rest of Canada, was to be asked by someone in the organization.

Organization asked	26%
Member of the organization	17%
Child or spouse involved	17%
Approached organization on own	16%
Asked by friend or relative	9%

Nominated by someone	3%
Asked by boss or employer	3%

From NSGVP survey 2000

Do You Know What Motivates Volunteering?

Volunteers to help a cause they believe in	95%
Volunteer to put their skills and experience to use	81%
Directly affected by the organizations' cause	67%
Attracted to volunteer activity to explore strength	57%
Volunteer because their friends volunteer	30%
Volunteer to improve their job skills	23%



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