Failure in Volunteer Work: A Call for Strategic Volunteer Management

Romualdo Ramos and Theo Wehner

Introduction

Occupational sciences have traditionally focused on remunerated work, and this will continue to be the case as the job market faces new challenges regarding digitalization, automation, demographic changes and environmental sustainability. Moreover, all these characteristics of the globalized job market are also accompanied by a shift in values, mostly prevalent in postmodern societies, in which work is no longer seen as a mere path to financial security, but also as a way of self-actualization. It is in this context in which the literature on unpaid, voluntary work has come to proliferate in the last two decades.

We define voluntary work as the sustained, unpaid work within an organization for the benefit of the environment or individuals other than, or in addition to, close relatives. It requires time expenditure, and it could theoretically be remunerated and carried out by other people (Wehner & Mieg, 2006). In Switzerland, where the authors of this chapter have conducted most of their studies, 25% of the population (15 and older) is engaged in some type of club or non-profit organization (Freitag, Manatschal, Ackermann, & Ackermann, 2016). The same participation rates are found in the US, where in 2015 a total of 7.9 billion hours of volunteer service were completed, valued at $184 billion (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2016). This engagement makes the provision of many community services possible, for which there would otherwise be little or no funding. It also translates into a substantial relief for the welfare system. At a more individual level, volunteering has been associated with well-being, a better work-life balance and

R. Ramos (✉)
Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria
e-mail: romualdo.fernandesramos@meduniwien.ac.at

T. Wehner
ETH Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland
e-mail: twehner@ethz.ch

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other health benefits (see Ramos, Brauchli, Bauer, Wehner, & Hämmig, 2015 for a review of the literature and empirical evidence).

Yet the non-profit sector is currently experiencing difficulties when it comes to retention of volunteers. Reports in Switzerland show a declining tendency in participation (Freitag et al., 2016). In the US, one out of three volunteers will not continue their services in the following year (Corporation for National and Community Services, 2016). In other words, non-profits are failing to hold on to their most valuable resource, and in the eyes of many scholars, this failure is attributable to a lack of strategic volunteer management (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, & Washburn, 2009). But at a deeper level of understanding, we could legitimately ask ourselves: what is actually failing?

In this chapter, we will focus on the individual experience of failure as the triggering factor leading to turnover and, ultimately, organizational failure in the non-profit sector. We define failure as the sense of infeasibility of a self-defining, meaningful goal (Thomann, Wehner, & Clases, 2015). It should be distinguished from errors and mistakes, which represent hurdles on the way toward an anticipated goal. Based on this understanding, those who do not know self-defining, meaningful motives cannot fail. What fails is the self (Rüdiger & Schütz, 2014).

While extrinsic motives (i.e. a monetary income) may, to some extent, override intrinsic, self-defining goals in our paid jobs, the non-profit sector depends on the willingness and intrinsic motivation of millions of volunteers who will be equally willing to leave the organization when they perceive their goals are not being met. The voluntary nature of participation is also what might create a sense of complacency at the managerial level. When the prevailing rationale is that people volunteer "because they want to" rather than "to fulfil a self-defining goal", organizations lose from sight people's deep-rooted motivations, which will eventually translate into expensive, time-consuming recruitment processes and the loss of invaluable human capital. Some non-profits are becoming aware of this issue and are now adopting a "talent management" approach, which creates the infrastructure to recruit, develop, place, recognize and retain volunteers.

This chapter will first provide a theoretical blueprint on motivation research, which will illuminate the underlying basic human needs in general, and our engagement in voluntary work in particular. We will then delve into issues that may arise when no strategic volunteer management is implemented, ultimately evoking the experience of failure in individuals. We will organize the evidence in three areas: task-related characteristics, social characteristics and structural characteristics. Case studies from interviews conducted by the authors will help to illustrate many of the ideas put forth in this chapter and will set the stage for best practice recommendations.

Theoretical Background: Volunteering and Human Motivation

What motivates individuals to undertake voluntary, unpaid work during their spare time? Research has adopted two different yet highly intertwined frameworks in order to explain this phenomenon: the functional approach to volunteering and self-determination theory.

In line with earlier theorizing on attitudes (Katz, 1960), the functional approach posits that people's engagement in voluntary activities serves different psychological functions (Clary et al., 1998). Based on exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, researchers found six categories, which are the building blocks of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI). They labelled these functions as follows:

- Values: Volunteering is a way of expressing personal values for a cause that is important to the individual, often related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns.
- Understanding: Volunteering brings about new experiences, and thus, the opportunity to learn new things and to exercise abilities, skills and knowledge that might otherwise remain unused.
- Enhancement: Volunteering helps to maintain or enhance positive affect (e.g. self-esteem, growth and self-development).
- Social: Volunteering offers the opportunity to be with one's friends or to engage in activities viewed favourably by relevant others.
- Career: Volunteering serves as a facilitator of career-related benefits, shedding a positive light on our professional endeavours.
- Protective: Volunteer can function as a self-protecting tactic, shielding the ego from negative feelings such as guilt, loneliness or other personal problems.

Recent studies have called for an extension of the VFI, finding empirical support for a "social justice" function (Jiranek, Kals, Humm, Strubel, & Wehner, 2013). Volunteers driven by this motive are morally concerned with promoting social equality. This function brings in an other-oriented motive, which counterbalances the predominantly self-oriented categorization of the VFI.

It is legitimate to ask whether these volunteer functions serve extrinsic or intrinsic motives. In this respect, self-determination theory (SDT) offers a more holistic view on human motivation. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000) is a robust theoretical corpus based on the assumption that individuals have an innate desire for personal growth and this can be attained by fulfilling three basic psychological needs: the need for autonomy, which refers to our freedom of action in accordance with our views and values; the need for competence, i.e. the experience of mastery and self-efficacy derived from the use of one's skills and knowledge in ways that bring about positive change; and the need for relatedness, which alludes to our social nature and need for close interpersonal relationships (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). It follows that the fulfilment of these psychological needs is associated with a myriad of positive outcomes including performance, organizational commitment, self-esteem and well-being (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2001).

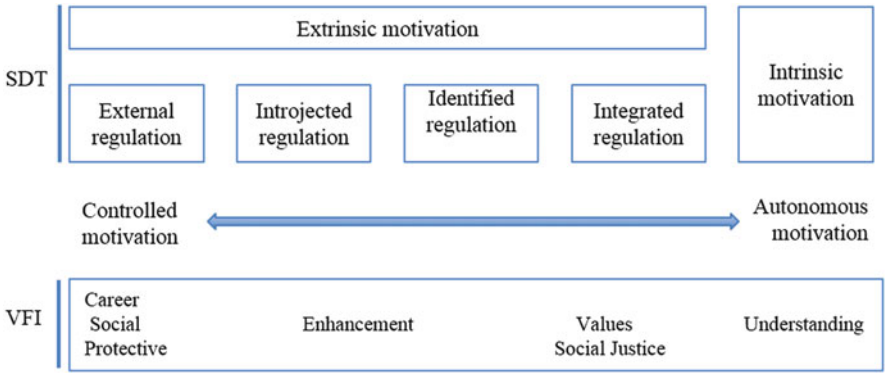

Fig. 1 Controlled and autonomous motivation based on the VFI and the SDT

SDT further suggests that motivation be understood in terms of a continuum rather than as an extrinsic–intrinsic dichotomy. It distinguishes between controlled motivation, which is contingent to forces extrinsic to the self, and autonomous motivation, where the locus of causality lies within the individual. Based on SDT premises, controlled (extrinsic) behaviours can also become autonomous (and even intrinsic) by means of internalization. As shown in Fig. 1, behavioural regulations can be found at different levels of internalization (for a detailed account, see Gagné & Deci, 2005). Furthermore, the categories of the functional approach can be placed along the SDT continuum of controlled and autonomous motivation (see Oostlander, Güntert, van Schie, & Wehner, 2014).

An important tenet of the SDT is that regulations should not be treated as developmental stages, in which individuals have to complete a certain level of internalization in order to move on to the next. Rather, behavioural regulations can be readily internalized at any given point of the continuum depending on personal experience and situational factors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This premise has important reverberations on our understanding of work; both paid and unpaid. On the one hand, it is safe to assume that all paid work is, to some degree, externally regulated by contingencies (e.g. a salary) that secure our living or our mere social status. Autonomous, self-determined motivation might be given from the very beginning, it can be gradually internalized, or it might never materialize. On the other hand, the motivation for volunteering is primarily autonomous. Although controlled volunteer functions (e.g. protective, career) might sometimes be at play, research reliably shows that they are not as pronounced as autonomous motives (e.g. values, understanding, social justice; Jiranek et al., 2013). Hence, the motivational logic in volunteering is reverse: the challenge at stake might be less characterized by the need for internalization and more so by the need to prevent self-alienation, i.e. the process by which individuals lose their sense of autonomy and self-determination. In the following section, we will illuminate scenarios that can undermine volunteers' motivation and the underlying basic human needs.

Ways to Fail in the Non-profit Sector: Three Levels of Analysis

People may experience failure while volunteering if the tasks and roles they have been assigned prevent autonomy and competence from unfolding, if they are unable to build social bonds that are both appreciative and supportive of their work, or if the overarching infrastructure, in which volunteering takes place, is ill-managed. We will now consider some of these task-related, social and structural characteristics as they pertain to volunteers' motivation.

Task-Related Characteristics

Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity can be defined as the lack of necessary information with respect to a job or position (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). A specific, agreed-upon set of tasks and responsibilities is of paramount importance when entering a new position. This is the only way supervisors can hold workers accountable for their performance, and how workers know what is expected from them. When roles are not clearly defined, role incumbents will either follow a trial-and-error logic, or adopt coping strategies that either avoid the source of stress altogether or distort its perception. This scenario can seriously harm the need for competence, ultimately leading to negative outcomes such as anxiety, dissatisfaction, poor performance and withdrawal tendencies.

Role ambiguity highly correlates with the complexity of a position (Rizzo et al., 1970), so it comes as no surprise that volunteer boards are particularly prone to this problem. A committed board of trustees/directors is crucial for the success of a non-profit organization. However, they are often confronted with multiple, conflicting expectations in regard to their governance tasks. Oftentimes, there is a blurred line between the responsibilities of board members, board chair and chief executives, leading to confusion and a lack of accountability. In sum, board members experience role ambiguity due to inadequate communication, leading to inefficient performance and reinforcing turnover intentions, as empirical research has shown (Doherty & Hoye, 2011; Wright & Millesen, 2008).

Role ambiguity is particularly insidious in a specific form of volunteering known as "voluntourism". This has become a popular form of engagement while exploring a new country or culture. In a world of increasing mobility, many have touted voluntourism as a chance to expand human agency in community work. However, studies show that this form of volunteering can create several ambiguous and conflicting roles, that can not only thwart their feelings of competence but also their need for autonomy (Lyons, 2003; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Case Study 1 depicts the detrimental effects of role ambiguity on a longstanding volunteer in the aftermath of the 2013 super typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, and the challenges faced in international volunteer assignments.

Case Study 1

Role Ambiguity in Disaster Operations Abroad

"As soon as I heard about the typhoon in the Philippines, I contacted my organization to see how I could actively help. Two days later, I was on a plane on my way to the affected areas", commented a 40-year-old engineer, who had been offering his services to a renowned NPO for many years. But this assignment marked a turning point, after which he left the organization *"I was supposed to work in a team responsible for smoothing out the logistics of food and medicine on site. But it all ended up in an organization chaos, in which logistics abroad and on site were not synchronized and we were literally left out there without much else to do. I wanted to use my time in some productive way, so I tried to help other units, but I couldn't see any sense or result in anything I was doing. I felt powerless and very frustrated. When I came back, I decided that I would stop volunteering"*. This was clearly a drastic decision; a decision one would not normally make after a single case of failure. But further statements made by the volunteer expose the scathing emotional toll this situation has had on him. Thus, while we should not fail to acknowledge the extraordinary circumstances that exacerbated the feelings of failure, poor organization and ambiguity were clearly at the root of his decision.

Unmet Role Expectations

There are times in which roles might be crystal clear, but they simply do not measure up with what we had in mind. Unmet role expectations emerge when there is a negatively connoted discrepancy between volunteers' expectations of the job and the actual job experience, leading to a decrease in job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intent to remain (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). This situation is most likely to surface during the very early stages of a voluntary engagement; what some have come to name newcomers' entry shock (Lopina & Rogelberg, 2013). Many volunteers join an organization with the hope of making an immediate impact. However, it is often the case that they either hold unrealistic expectations, they lack the necessary know-how to make that happen (see Case Study 2), or the organization fails to provide the working conditions to materialize their goals (see Case Study 3). As a result, many volunteers feel frustrated and helpless, what might lead to an abrupt termination of their engagement (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). A qualitative study has also shown that volunteers prefer relational rather than transactional HR practices (Stirling, Kilpatrick, & Orpin, 2011). In other words, volunteers prefer being involved in activities rather than being entangled in bureaucratic procedures, they expect organizations to create a supportive environment with enjoyable volunteering opportunities and they expect public recognition for their contributions. These expectations throw light on the feelings of competence and relatedness that volunteers yearned for in their activities.

Case Study 2

Unmet Expectations in Patient Care Volunteering

A bank employee wanted to volunteer in the field of terminal patient care. He participated in a preparation workshop and started his shifts as a sitter soon thereafter. It did not take long (namely still before his patient passed away) until he quit. Full of resignation, he felt that he had "downright failed" in his mission: *"I realized that I was really scared; not of the dying patient, but of myself. In my mind, it was not clear anymore, what I was doing and why I thought I could be of any help to a dying person"*.

A similar scenario characterizes the experience of a young woman who, after much self-reproach, terminated her engagement. She had come to this volunteering opportunity at a clinic through her employer, and she decided to start visiting patients with acute dementia: *"Shortly after I realized that it was impossible to establish a relationship or bond with the patients. Even after a short break to the toilet, patients wouldn't recognize me anymore. That was not quite the way I imagined it, although I no longer knew, what I was expecting to begin with. It was frustrating, but I had to quit."*

In both cases, it becomes apparent that the volunteers had not fully thought through the demands and implications of their engagement, and what a successful mission might have entailed. Those who experience failure have, at least in hindsight, an idea of what success might have looked like.

Case Study 3

"It All Just Got Out of Hand"

In the face of the ever-increasing rate of asylum-seekers in Switzerland, a middle-age librarian enrolled in a volunteering program that provides German courses to refugees. His module was conceived as a "conversation practice" course. He started with 15 attendees; already a sizeable, but still manageable number. Two months later, that number had doubled. *"It just didn't make any sense for me anymore. It was impossible to engage 30 people at the same time into a conversation. It all just got out of hand and they (the organization) were not efficient at all in coordinating the influx of students and the creation of new courses. It was all very chaotic"*. Frustrated with this experience, he quit his job, but not his commitment to the cause. *"I want to volunteer and give German classes, but not under these conditions. I am currently looking for new opportunities"*. The problem clearly lay in the infrastructure and conditions that the organization provided (or failed to provide). This could not, however, undermine the volunteer's motivation to make an impact.

Psychological Contracts and Illegitimate Tasks

Despite all efforts to eradicate unmet expectations through clear, a priori information about the job, there might still be unspoken rules that will shape the relationship

between role incumbents and the organization. Volunteers rarely sign a formal contract upon entering a position, bringing psychological contracts all the more to the forefront in the non-profit sector. Psychological contracts are unwritten mutual beliefs, perceptions and obligations that employers and employees have of each other and their roles in an organization (Rousseau, 1995). Given the lack of any other instrumental means of retention, adherence to these implicit rules (as paradoxical as it may be) becomes critical for non-profits in order to maintain a motivated volunteer staff. Psychological contracts can be violated, for instance, by assigning illegitimate tasks. These are *"tasks that are perceived as unreasonable or unnecessary, as not being part of one's role, thus violating expectations about what can reasonably be required of a given person"* (Stocker, Jacobshagen, Semmer, & Annen, 2010, p. 117). Illegitimate tasks can trigger feelings of offense toward one's role identity and, thus, the self. They can be distinguished in unnecessary and unreasonable tasks. Whereas unnecessary tasks might be seen as a "waste of time", unreasonable tasks are thought of as incompatible with one's role. Illegitimate tasks have been related to strain, counterproductive work behaviour, lower job satisfaction and work engagement as well as feelings of resentment (Semmer, Tschan, Meier, Facchin, & Jacobshagen, 2010; Stocker et al., 2010). In the realm of voluntary work, Van Schie, Güntert, and Wehner (2014) found differential effects for the two types of illegitimate tasks. Volunteers of a charitable organization who reported being subjected to unreasonable tasks had a significantly lower intent to remain in the organization, whereas unnecessary tasks were associated with lower self-determined motivation. Case Study 4 exemplifies the reactions to illegitimate tasks in a volunteer workforce.

Case Study 4

Illegitimate Tasks

Volunteers' time is precious; thus, it is not surprising that they reluctantly carry out administrative tasks. That was the case in a NPO that offered a sport program for senior citizens. The organization received a subsidy from the state. An important requirement was, however, that participants be registered in a database and that they confirm their participation through a signed document. Many volunteers felt unease with this administrative load and strictly refused to accept such a "bureaucratic job" or "controlling task".

Lack of Matching Between Volunteers' Skills and Job Tasks

The average volunteer has high education levels (Wilson, 2012), bringing along not only the desire to make an impact, but also invaluable human capital. Highly skilled volunteers are oftentimes sent out to perform manual work, unable to unfold their full potential. This is particularly the case in corporate volunteering programs, where building team spirit is one of the intended goals and can be achieved through this type of activities. While such a task-skill disparity might be acceptable for one-shot projects, they might not enthral volunteers for long-term commitment. In fact,

statistics show that people who find no applicability of their skills in their assignments are less likely to continue serving the following year (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2008).

However, a matching process should not see volunteering as a continuation of activities done in one's occupation. In fact, such a scenario could backfire, as the Case Study 5 portrays. This tip over effect, in which "too much of the same thing" can become damaging for engagement, might be contingent to the line of work. Whereas people in fields such as art, healthcare and management show higher retention rates when they volunteer in activities related to those in their profession, volunteers who work in service (e.g. gastronomy, retail) or highly routinized jobs are less likely to remain in non-profit organizations where they perform similar tasks (CNCS, 2008). In sum, lack of matching between volunteers' skills and assigned tasks can thwart motivation by underutilizing volunteers' potential. However, volunteering should not become the unpaid prolongation of paid work activities.

Case Study 5

"I Didn't Come Here to Continue Working"

"I chose (the Organization) because of its mission and values", said the 35-year-old accountant, who had recently started to work in a charitable association that offers at-risk youth programs. At the time, a bookkeeping position was open, so it seemed as the logical step for her to take up this role. She did it for some time, but soon she realized this was not what she was intended to do. *"I kinda do the same thing in my regular job every day, so it felt like more of the same. I just needed some other kind of impact. I am a good listener, and I had psychology as a minor during my studies. So I guess that kind of listener's side to me was always kind of there. And that is what I saw myself doing here"*. Fortunately, she voiced her concern and the organization took action promptly. After a brief preparation workshop, she started volunteering as a mentor.

This case shows that matching skills with tasks does not have to be based on a person's résumé. It is thus a sound advice to look also beyond formal education in order to unearth unpractised skills and interests.

Social Characteristics

Voluntary assignments take place in a social setting, and that setting's capacity to provide a safety net of support, feedback and recognition is pivotal for the survival of the organization.

Lack of Recognition

When organizations fail to acknowledge the efforts of their volunteers, motivation is prone to suffer. It undermines both our needs for relatedness and competence, as we become uncertain of the quality and impact of our work on the life of others. In fact,

lack of recognition is one of the leading causes of volunteers' turnover (Wilson, 2012). A major problem in addressing this issue is the limited scope and understanding of what recognition actually entails. It is widely agreed that saying "thank you" on a regular basis is the most fundamental form of acknowledgement. However, in a recent study, volunteers reported that the best way to be thanked and recognized is by hearing how their work has made a difference (Dixon & Hientz, 2013). Feedback is widely known for its motivating potential ever since the seminal work of Hackman and Oldham (1976). This holds also true for voluntary work. The way and the circumstances under which feedback is given, however, should be carefully planned in order to avoid backlash effects (see Case Study 6). The aforementioned study also found that banquets, yearly dinners and gifts are the least preferred methods of recognition by volunteers (Dixon & Hientz, 2013). This form of acknowledgment might be even frowned upon if they feel that their contributions are otherwise overlooked the rest of the year (Ellis, 1994). This is consistent with meta-analytical findings of the SDT, which show that extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Finally, and most importantly, recognition begins long before outcomes are tangible. If people's voices are not heard and their ideas are not taken into account (i.e. recognized), they may feel frustrated and precipitate toward withdrawal.

Case Study 6

When Recognition Backfires

A big misunderstanding led to the "resignation" of some of the 100 volunteers working at a hospital. Volunteers were considered "workers/employees" in both internal and external communication, what was thought of as a way of appreciation. It was thus consequent to offer them "appraisal interviews" on a regular basis. This well-intended practice resulted in ten volunteers abandoning their engagement. They did not want to be treated as "employees": *"Appraisal interviews? Me? A 63-year-old? I've had enough of them during my working years, and I know that it is mere formality. I do not need that here"*, said one of the volunteers. A lady that had volunteered at the hospital for years added: *"They probably meant it well, but I was still angry. I am not an employee"*.

This brings into light that recognition in the form of feedback must be a thought-through process in which volunteers do not feel apprehended or in real job-like situations.

Lack of Social Support

In work design research, social support *"reflects the degree to which a job provides opportunities for advice and assistance from others"* (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006, p. 1324), be it co-workers or supervisors. It also refers to the extent in which comradeship and friendships can develop in a work environment (Sims, Szilagyi, & Keller, 1976). Social support at work is a reliable predictor of well-being, and is particularly relevant in stressful or emotionally demanding jobs. In the

non-profit sector, this becomes apparent in fields like hospice care and crisis management. The case studies presented earlier also illustrate failed tasks in which social support could have had a buffer effect. It is also of value in activities that might otherwise lack motivational job characteristics (e.g. trash pick-up in a reservoir), bringing the sense of social bonding and connectedness to the foreground, whatever the task may be. Organizational connectedness, a more encompassing form of social support engrained in the organizational culture, has shown to reduce turnover intentions in emergency service volunteers (Huynh, Xanthopoulou, & Winefield, 2014).

One of the issues that some NPOs face is a disparate volunteer–employee ratio. In other words, staff members lack the time resources needed for ongoing mentoring and support of volunteers; especially in the initial phases of their engagement, when many questions and challenges are likely to arise. New volunteers might also refrain from reaching out staff members for help. In addition, some volunteers might require special support in order to fulfil their assignments (e.g. people with disabilities). To counteract the undesirable feeling of "being left alone" in volunteers, we propose a volunteer peer support scheme in the closing segment of this chapter.

Structural Characteristics

Negligence at the task and social levels are often the result of a missing or faulty overarching strategy; a strategy that provides guidance in achieving the organization's mission and utilizes human resources in an optimal manner. We herein consider lack of vision and goal-setting as well as the lack of strategic planning regarding diversity and the changing work environment as two fundamental structural flaws.

Lack of Vision and Goal-Setting

Visions are clear, comprehensive pictures of an organization at a given time in the future; they are trailblazers of what the organization is yet to become. Visions take form by setting goals that serve as milestones of the vision's progress. Unlike private companies, the vision of an NPO constitutes one of the main, if not the reason why people volunteer for a specific organization. After all, as the functional approach has shown, the "values" motive (i.e. volunteering for a cause that is important to the individual) ranks the highest from all six categories (Clary et al., 1998; Jiranek et al., 2013). To the layperson, visions are not much more than labels that help to cluster organizations based on their missions (i.e. what they do rather than what they intend to become). It is not until people are enmeshed within the daily grind of a non-profit that they begin to grasp the vision of an organization (or lack thereof). In a recent survey of NPOs from over twenty countries (Nonprofit Sector Leadership Report, 2016), one out of four non-profits reported not having a compelling vision that

would unify the board, staff, and donors, which could facilitate decision-making processes.[1] There is also a discrepancy in this regard based on organizational hierarchy, with only 19% of CEOs admitting that their organization lacks a unifying vision and 41% of middle managers making such assertion. This comes as no surprise in a way, as the creation of a guiding vision is prime responsibility of top-level management. The clarity or blurriness of a vision will eventually trickle down to the lower levels of the organization, yielding positive and negative outcomes accordingly. The Non-profit Sector Leadership Report also shows that 85% of nonprofit leaders consider a compelling vision as one of their top priorities; however, two thirds confess having difficulty in articulating that vision or creating it in the first place. The result of an ill-conceived vision (or its complete absence) will end up reflecting in uncoordinated, ambiguous tasks (see Section "Task-related Characteristics") and in a loss of volunteers' morale.

Lack of Strategic Planning in Terms of Diversity and Changing Work Environment

The lack of strategic planning in regard to diversity can be approached from two different perspectives depending on the dimension of diversity that is being considered. When it comes to ethnic and racial diversity, statistics show that the nonprofit sector falls extremely short in recruiting and engaging minorities. A study in the US shows that 82% of nonprofit employees (the pattern holds also true for volunteers) are Caucasian, and the gap widens even more at top management levels, where only 1 out of 20 organizations is led by a minority member (Schwartz, Weinberg, Hagenbuch, & Scott, 2011). A similar picture is found in Switzerland and its large foreign population (25%), which is significantly underrepresented in the third sector (Freitag et al., 2016). This perspective sheds light on the (mostly unintended) selection bias found in the recruitment process of NPOs, which goes beyond the scope of this chapter. However, these findings are not fully detached from the underlying individual motivation to volunteer and to remain in an organization. Perceptions of diversity and inclusiveness play an important role in recruitment and retention of employees and volunteers, especially of those that are members of a minority themselves. If the latter do not perceive a culture of diversity within the organization, they will be more inclined to quit or less likely to get involved in the first place (Thurman, 2011). Finally, although 90% of NPO employees believe that their organization values diversity, more than 70% assert that their employer does not do enough to promote diversity and inclusion (Schwartz et al., 2011).

The second perspective (and most relevant to this chapter) concerns lack of strategic planning based on age and cohort diversity. Failing to see and manage diversity of this type can lead to inefficient use of human resources and an increase of ongoing recruitment costs. The key in developing a strategic plan for different age groups and cohorts is understanding both developmental (i.e. intraindividual) and generational (i.e. interindividual) differences in motivation. There exist both

[1] See also Bedenk and Mieg (2018).

theoretical and empirical guidelines to undergird strategic decision-making in this respect. The selection–optimization–compensation theory (Baltes & Baltes, 1990) and the socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 1992), for instance, show how our availability of resources such as experience, cognitive abilities, physical health and time will dictate how we allocate those resources and the type of activities we are drawn toward. At a young age, when time is perceived as open-ended, people are driven by knowledge-related goals, which provide leverage in future life experiences. This aligns well with motives such as career or enhancement posed by the functional approach (Clary et al., 1998). As we get older and time is perceived as limited, we gravitate more toward emotional experiences from which we can derive meaningfulness (Carstensen, 1992). From a cohort perspective, we are currently witnessing the most diverse workforce in history. With people living and working longer, the interaction among different generations has become ubiquitous in the workplace. There are at least four cohorts currently active in the remunerated workforce, and at least five when considering voluntary work. Different generations have different skills, ways of communication, motives, values, and preferences in terms of recognition, all of which reflect changes and critical events in the work environment and society as whole. Millennials (aka Generation Y; 1984–2004), for instance, are a highly educated and technologically savvy generation. The observed decrease of formal volunteering rates among younger generations might thus be nothing more than a shift toward other, more digital-based forms of volunteering. The last Volunteer Monitor in Switzerland has assessed the growing trend of online volunteerism, showing that indeed, people under 30 are now opting for this form of engagement (Freitag et al., 2016). Given that this participation is largely informal, the challenge for the nonprofit sector is to find ways in which this commitment can be institutionalized to serve the greater good. On the other end of the generational spectrum, we find the baby boomers (1946–1964), who are beginning to retire in large amounts and represent a promising asset for the sector. This cohort brings years of experience and they are eager to make use of it in leadership positions (Edwards, Safrit, & Allen, 2012). Generation Xers (1965–1982), in turn, are more drawn toward episodic forms of volunteering. In short, understanding the motivation of different generations, the critical events that marked their lives (e.g. the advent of the internet, wars, political atmosphere, etc.) and seamlessly linking these patterns with stages of human development will be part of the artistry in non-profit management in years to come.

Recommendations

In view of the scenarios considered in this chapter, which can lead to feelings of failure in volunteers (and ultimately organizational failure), we have assembled a set of best-practice recommendations that can be implemented in a volunteer management program:

- Evidence from salaried jobs shows that some extent of role ambiguity is tolerable (and even beneficial) in specific, time-constraint stages of a job, as it may allow employees to explore and broaden their competences in an attempt to master different tasks (Yun, Takeuchi, & Liu, 2007). However, volunteers can rarely afford the luxury of "exploring", as their engagement is normally limited to a handful of hours per month, and still a substantial time investment in the face of the multiple roles they already fulfil (parents, full-time workers, etc). Role clarity is thus crucial for volunteers' commitment to their job and their organization. Defining roles should not be a unilateral process, however, and all stakeholders should be involved. Unambiguous tasks and roles, that have been agreed upon before taking a position or a particular assignment, will allow role incumbents to make efficient use of their limited time, boosting their sense of self-efficacy and their intent to remain. As a rule of thumb, the more complex the role (e.g. management level, board of trustees, etc), the greater the need for debriefing and clarity. Clear tasks are also of utmost importance in emergency situations, not only to maintain volunteers' level of self-efficacy, but also in order to provide effective service to the recipients.
- In order to avoid the feelings of frustration that can ensue from unmet role expectations, the reality of everyday volunteering in the organization and the expectations of prospective role incumbents should be on the table prior to entering the position. This can be addressed during the recruitment process by means of realistic job previews (RJPs; Lopina & Rogelberg, 2013). This approach provides applicants with accurate information about the job (considering both positive and negative aspects), allowing them to opt out, should it not turn out to be what they hoped for. As noted elsewhere (Breaugh, 2008), RJP offers a unique research opportunity in the nonprofit sector, as the two key determinants of its utility are, by and large, given: unrealistic expectations from volunteers and their ability to opt out from the job. In a more general sense, organizations should strive to offer the infrastructure and conditions that can be reasonably expected for volunteers to succeed in their endeavours.
- Organizations should regularly evaluate the adequacy and necessity of certain tasks, policies and procedures, in order to ensure that they are still aligned with volunteers' needs and expectations as well as with the changing work environment. Some procedures are anchored in an organization's protocol with a substantiated rationale (e.g. financial strategy, risk management). Others continue being implemented simply because "we have always done it this way". Shattering such notions from time to time can prevent the onset of illegitimate tasks.
- Organizations should know the ASK (abilities, skills and knowledge) of their volunteer staff and capitalize on them. Skills-based volunteering (McCallum, Schmid, & Price, 2013) can bring about a sense of competence and autonomy, which fosters retention. When matching skills with assignments, organizations should not limit themselves to formal education or work experience. Rather, they can delve into volunteers' interests, hobbies and passions, in order to unpack the potential they might not live out in their daily jobs. That been said, the activities

they perform should differ from those in their paid jobs, particularly in the case of highly routinized jobs.

- When it comes to recognition, many organizations opt for yearly dinners and gatherings, which in some cases can represent a burden on their limited financial resources. However, the most desired form of recognition is cost-effective and requires the creation of bidirectional communication channels. On the one hand, organizations should provide feedback on a regular basis on the impact and results of volunteers' participation. This can (and should) be carried out in groups for at least two reasons: first, it is time-effective, and second, group feedback creates a comforting, candid atmosphere, which prevents any sort of apprehensive reaction from job-like appraisal interview situations (See Case Study 6). Savvy use of social media is also key in making the efforts of the voluntary workforce visible, particularly in younger generations. Finally, volunteers' voice should be recognized just as much as their actions, providing a platform where their ideas can be exposed, discussed and, eventually, put into practice.
- Meaningful, transformative experiences that promote long-term commitment to an organization are more likely to emerge from the joint efforts of individuals rather than work in isolation. Creating a volunteer peer support scheme can facilitate this objective by pairing senior with novice volunteers in relevant ways. Volunteer coordinators should look for the one bonding commonality within the dyad or group of volunteers (e.g. life circumstances, language, set of skills), yet still maximizing the enriching diversity they bring along. A thought-through volunteer peer support scheme will reinforce people's need for relatedness and acquit NPOs' employees of ongoing mentoring obligations.
- One of the biggest challenges non-profit CEOs face is articulating a guiding vision for their organization. Learning storytelling techniques and resorting to cascading goals can help to overcome this hurdle. Storytelling has a resonating power on its recipients, creating persuasive, relatable and memorable pictures of what the organization is yet to become. Cascading goals will streamline the way toward that vision, ensuring that goals at different levels of the organization (i.e. CEOs, middle managers, board, staff members and volunteers) are connected. This will trigger a domino effect, aligning the organization's strategy with individuals' tasks and goals. Such an approach can boost volunteers' motivation and palliate turnover intentions.
- It is crucial that NPOs begin to diversify their staff (both employees and volunteers), sending out an inspiring, inclusive signal as messengers of noble causes that they are. They should then reap the benefits of that diversity by laying out a strategic diversity management plan. This should also apply to the already existing age and cohort diversity found in the non-profit sector. It is essential that managers understand the "seasons of service" in human development (Edwards et al., 2012), matching tasks with motivations and predicting turnover. In other words, some fluctuation should always be expected and understanding those fluctuations across age groups and generations can help to better coordinate volunteer efforts, know where to invest in long-term human capital, and who to allocate in short-term, project-based assignments. Although age and cohort trends

are still in need of disentanglement (Twenge, 2010), and the patterns discussed in the literature (Edwards et al., 2012) should not be seen as monolithic truths, they do provide a reliable guideline to understand the drive and motivations of volunteers and to allocate their resources accordingly. Finally, NPOs should become aware of the window of opportunity that is currently opening, as baby boomers retire from the workforce and millennials continue developing their sense of civic responsibility. Young adults show particular interest to work for companies that provide volunteering opportunities (Eisner et al., 2009), asseverating once again the ever-growing overlap between work and civic society.

Conclusion

Our understanding and the study of work have long been confined to remunerated activities. As social values evolve and we submerge deeper into the post-industrial era, work acquires a new essence; no longer seen only as a way of securing existence, but also as a fundamental source of meaningfulness and self-realization. At the crossroads, we find voluntary work and a prolific non-profit sector, which stand at the core of our civic society. Much like the HR department in a private company, NPOs also need volunteer management plans in order to recruit and retain volunteers. Given the inverse motivational logic found in voluntary work, which allows to assume that most people engage out of autonomous, intrinsic motives, and where extrinsic contingencies play a subordinate role, the retention of volunteers is one of the biggest challenges NPOs area confronting. But as the need for self-actualization grows and an immense pool of potential volunteers begins to retire from the workforce, NPOs are starting to give up on complacency, taking responsibility in their own hands and starting to build the infrastructure so that the initial, heavy-lifting efforts of recruitment are not in vain.

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