

Motivation for volunteering researched

What motivates New Zealanders to volunteer and what strategies could be adopted to recruit and retain them was the basis of research conducted by Jan Charbonneau and Mike Brennan from the Department of Marketing and Andrew Hercus from the School of Business, Christchurch College of Education.

The research included a confidential mail survey that attracted responses from more than 1700 volunteers in four charities and six sporting organisations from Wellington and Christchurch. The overall response rate was 56 per cent.

Two very different profiles emerged when the data was analysed. "The typical volunteer in the charity organisations was female, aged 56 plus, retired, earning \$20,000 per year, with no children at home," says Jan Charbonneau. "The typical sporting volunteer was male, aged 36 to 55, employed full time and earning over \$50,000 per year, with an average of three children at home."

Although the profiles were different, she says their volunteering histories, what motivates them to volunteer and satisfaction with current volunteering were quite similar.

"Overall, the average length of service was 8.5 years with more than 80 per cent volunteering on a regular basis. Almost 70 per cent volunteered for other organisations, be they other charities or sporting organisations or schools, clubs and special interest groups."

Both groups expressed similar reasons for doing volunteer work: Values and Understanding. Values referred to showing concern for others and causes important to individuals personally. Understanding referred to the desire for self-development and new learning experiences.

The study looked at whether increased training, responsibility and out of pocket costs, as well as the risk of liability, would stop volunteers from taking on certain roles or result in their reducing their volunteer hours. The responses indicated these issues were not likely to deter future volunteering.

The study also looked at how satisfied volunteers were with their current organisations. Overall the volunteers surveyed expressed satisfaction with their organisations and their experiences as volunteers.

"Two areas that would benefit from increased attention by volunteer coordinators are interactions with paid staff and recognition of individual volunteers when they do a good job," said Jan Charbonneau.

In terms of recruiting volunteers, being invited by someone in the organisation worked well for charities while most sporting volunteers were active participants, either themselves or their families.

"In terms of recruiting younger volunteers, the respondents had some interesting suggestions, from offering incentives such as reduced playing fees to approaching

corporations to allow junior staff time off to volunteer. The most common suggestion was also the simplest: ask them and then make them feel welcome," she said.

*Extracted from: VNZ Update, April 2006; The newsletter of Volunteering New Zealand
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