



Photo by Fachy Marin on Unsplash

TOP 20 IDEAS

in Volunteer Engagement for 2020

Edited by Erin Spink, MA



Design & Layout by **08 · 10 · CREATIVE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

03

Looking into the Crystal Ball: The Future of Volunteering

By Christine Martin

04

SECTION 1: THEME: TRENDS

The impact of Technology on Traditional Volunteering (& Volunteer Management) Roles

By Andy Fryar

06

The Gamification of Volunteering

By Dana Litwin, CVA

07

Building Support by Reducing Commitment

By Amy Stow

08

Volunteers are Our Best Advocates

By Emilie Bromet-Bauer, CVA

09

Courageous and Flexible: It’s Time

By Jessica Pang-Parks

10

I Might Just Have To Build a Flux Capacitor

By Amira Barger, CVA

11

SECTION 2: THEME: EVOLVING OUR PRACTICE

Work with Human Nature, Not Against It

By Tobi Johnson

13

Brother, Can You Spare Some Time?

By Faiza Venzant, CVA

14

Stronger Together: My Journey towards Diversity and Inclusion

By Donna Jeanpierre

15

The Great Divide in the World ...and, the World of Volunteers

By Marla Benson

16

Stand and Deliver

By Ruth Millard, CVA

17

Moving Beyond Simple Data to Improve Volunteer Engagement and Retention

By Tracey O’Neill, CVA

18

Death By a Thousand Satisfaction Surveys

By Erin Spink

19

SECTION 3: THEME: REFRAMING OUR ROLE

Leadership through Effective Partnering

By Beth Steinhorn

21

Volunteer Leaders: Logistical Coordinators or Experiential Guides? That is the question....

By Dr. Rebecca Jackson

22

Size Only Matters When it Comes to Coffee

By Erin McLean

23

Why Volunteers are Worth the Trouble

By Dr. Sue Carter Kahl

24

Valuing Ourselves by Valuing Our Time

By Dr. Melissa Heinlein Storti

25

Parting Thought: Before you Go

By Rob Jackson

26

Author Biographies

27

INTRODUCTION

The approach of a new year brings with it both contemplation and anticipation. A fresh decade heightens these feelings even more. And so it's with pleasure that spinktank presents not the usual Top 10, but in honour of such a special year, our Top 20 Ideas in Volunteer Engagement for 2020.

**"For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice."
– T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets**

The number 2020 brings to mind clear vision and it's my hope that this ebook contains ideas, questions and challenges that help sharpen yours. We don't know what the future holds, but need to prepare for whatever it brings. This ebook and the thoughts of the authors are intended to help you, as a leader of volunteers and consequently the profession at large, know what forces are at play, what crescendos may await us and which challenges we must overcome.

No matter where you live, where you work or what your title, there are so many experiences we share as Volunteer Engagement professionals. Consequently, we have much to learn from one another. I hope something within each of the 20 articles resonates with you and provides the insight, perspective or push you need to enhance your practice.

The book is organized into three sections, with both an introductory and closing article. The sections are:

- Trends: we always need to know what forces are at work that will influence and potentially shape or reshape our environment. These articles spotlight a key concept or trend that has the power to significantly impact (or is already impacting!) our work.
- Evolving Our Practice: the ideas and opportunities for improvement always outweigh the capacity to tackle them. This section helps pluck some key ones out for you as worthy of your focus.
- Reframing Our Role: so much of our perspective on things depends on where we're standing, or think we're standing. The final section of the book introduces articles that question if we're really standing where we think we are, where we should be and provides ideas for new places to go.

Thank you for downloading this ebook and investing in yourself, your organization and its people and ultimately the world we all share. I wish you good health, good humour and good grace as you face the challenges of the year ahead.

Erin R. Spink, MA (Leadership)
Principal
spinktank



10% OFF ANY ONLINE SPINKTANK COURSE

As a special thank you to all readers of
The Top 20 Ideas for Volunteer Engagement in 2020,
spinktank is offering you a special discount
TAKE 10% off any online spinktank course.
Use promo code **"TOP20"**.

WWW.SPINKTANK.CA

LOOKING INTO THE CRYSTAL BALL: THE FUTURE OF VOLUNTEERING

By Christine Martin

What do you imagine our world will look like 20 years from now? Will it be mostly the same? Completely transformed? Falling apart? Our world is changing at an incredible rate and the impact it will have on the voluntary sector is impossible to predict. In 2020, it will be important for leaders of volunteers to understand what may be ahead, so we can become more “future fit”.

We may not have a crystal ball to help us see clearly and predict, but we do have some tools we can use to help anticipate how things may evolve, to help us see a bit around the corner. Strategic foresight is a growing field that uses tools and methods to explore the future in order to create better strategies today.

What we want to do is cast our eyes more widely within and beyond our sectors to the world around, looking at the context of larger societal trends. Trends have the potential to reverse or accelerate hard-won progress, distort the outcomes of projects, and may shape the future operating environment for volunteer engagement— some are just emerging while others are well-established.

SOCIAL

Aging population People are living increasingly longer, with more seniors than ever, bringing working retirement, increasing health issues and workforce changes.

Democratizing action A shift towards self-organization, self-mobilizing forms of action and informal volunteering, both on the ground and online.

TECHNOLOGICAL

AI takeover AI may impact and potentially disrupt every industry, with machine learning, natural language processing and related technologies.

Always connected Mobile devices are permeating more and more areas of our lives, strongly shaping the consumption and communication behaviors of society, changing how we interact with location and each other.

ECONOMIC

Shifting employment models The growing shift towards a gig economy, entrepreneurship and decreased job stability, and away from traditional fulltime jobs.

Social/business blend While charities seek new forms of revenue through social enterprise and impact investing, some businesses are becoming more socially focussed, blurring the lines between for profit and for good.

As we enter 2020, let’s think deeply about the future and the shape(s) it might take, keeping our eyes and ears open for signals of change in the world around us. And then, let’s think about how we and our sector will need to change to continue to thrive and be relevant twenty years from now.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Climate emergencies Climate change is causing increased wildfires, floods and mudslides in Canada, with increasing health risks, vulnerabilities and inequities.

Climate migration The increasing pace of people moving internally and across borders as the result of climate change.

POLITICAL

Polarization A growing division in Canada across political, regional and ideological lines.

Government cutbacks The prevalent pattern of governments reducing, or even eliminating, key funding for public services and institutions.

VALUES

Eroding institutional trust Trust in various long-standing institutions meant to serve and protect the public is on the decline.

Diversity matters The importance and value of diversity within organizations and society is being highlighted by a range of industries and professions.



Photo by Riccardo Annandale on Unsplash

TRENDS

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON TRADITIONAL VOLUNTEERING (& VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT) ROLES

By Andy Fryar

For years I've been asking volunteer leaders to define what they understand their core role to be – and without doubt, the same set of responses follow; recruitment, selection, screening, training, retention and a few essential management functions.

I've constantly argued that this both over simplifies and limits the role of volunteer management, and while this viewpoint may have once been an accurate reflection of volunteer leadership, the undertaking of these tasks does nothing more than keep the Volunteer Manager incredibly busy and nowhere near as productive as they might otherwise be.

I have long advocated (often to a lot of resistance), that the leadership of volunteers could benefit from solutions that included targeted delegation, time management strategies, and actively including volunteers through the entire recruitment process.

In short, I believe that the 'core' role of the volunteer leader has changed forever and it's time to re-define our core function and understand our roles in a different light!

"If we are free from the cycle of never-ending 'busy' work that comes with trying to recruit and lead our teams when we use outdated technology, how might we better engage with our teams and bring the 'people focus' back into our leadership styles?"

While cloud-based technology has been around for a few decades now, there's suddenly a greater maturity about these platforms and an atmosphere of acceptance has grown within the profession, where these 'tools' are now being viewed as an essential and integral part of every VM's armoury. Perhaps this is as a result of younger and more computer literate leaders entering the field?

I am witnessing a significant and fundamental shift, where volunteer leaders are adopting volunteer management software to replace many of these long held traditional values – it's like the dam wall has broken, and as such, I believe it is time to raise the question again as to just what our profession should be about and look like in 2020 and beyond.

If we are free from the cycle of never-ending 'busy' work that comes with trying to recruit and lead our teams when we use outdated technology, how might we better engage with our teams and bring the 'people focus' back into our leadership styles?

And it's not just volunteer leaders who are being affected by new technologies. Recent developments in robotics, artificial intelligence, driverless vehicles and drones, just to name a few, pose the need for us to ask some very hard, real (and maybe frightening) questions about which volunteer roles might be replaced in the not-too-distant future.

Some estimates in the 'paid' world are suggesting that up to 60% of workers might be replaced in many traditional fields over the next decade and this surely must have a flow on to volunteering.

While we may not be comfortable with these conversations, the turn of a new decade is the time to muster up the courage, become visionaries and begin to tackle these issues head on.

After all, our livelihoods may just rely on it!

THE GAMIFICATION OF VOLUNTEERING

By Dana Litwin, CVA

“Gamification” is the term given to the use of game design elements outside of games themselves. The gamification of volunteer roles and tasks is here, and as #LeadersOfVolunteers we can understand and enjoy the ride on this wave of change, or be left behind, sputtering and struggling in the wake. Volunteers are doing good for their communities, in big and small ways, on their own terms and time, whether they’re working for your agency or not!

A recent viral social-media trend, #Trashchallenge, is a prime example of people seeing and solving a problem (litter), and turning it into a playful competition. The website (<http://trashchallenge.org>) says it all started with a call for volunteers to clean up around an orphanage in Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Within a few months, millions of people were globally engaged in the “game”; removing many more millions of pounds of garbage in their own areas. Although our sector often defines “engagement” of volunteers differently than the gaming industry or the public, there is no doubt that connection and attention deeply resonate using gamification.

Games are an undeniably vital part of a society. Whether you are part of a competitive trivia team, play sports (or fantasy football!), or enjoy Board Game Night with the family, the act of participating in a game is something almost universal. With advances in technology now allowing for many aspects of our daily lives to become infused with gaming elements – Likes, Shares, Top Fan Badges – are our motivations for playing becoming an important and relevant part of who we are?

Studies on the effects of gamification have shown that it improves engagement with tasks and products, drives loyalty and retention, and engages team members at all levels of an organization. Beyond badges and trinkets, rewards and recognition – strategically focused gamification relies less on behavioral design elements and more on building human agency, autonomy and capability. This means that we empower people in a meaningful way rather than nudge, push, entice and reward.

**“we empower people in a meaningful way rather than
nudge, push, entice and reward.”**

Overcome the obstacle of technophobia to using gamification as a strategy by recruiting tech-savvy and specifically-skilled volunteers to co-create the work plan or campaign. You don’t need to know how to do it to find someone who does! There’s probably already someone(s) in your team talent pool qualified and eager to do it. Try crowd-sourcing solutions, and building formal and informal “learning networks” in the community – make it a game! Elements of play and fun are good for stress relief, especially in organizations with high levels of compassion-fatigue.

The now and near-future is about how we tie together the threads of best personnel management and leadership practices that agencies struggle to embed (values, purpose, personal development, coaching, and recognition) with the competitive and engaging nature of gamification.

I challenge you, me, us, we to ponder relationships between our work preferences and our motivations for playing with others, to see when viewing a volunteer as a ‘player’ in an environment is beneficial. Game on!

BUILDING SUPPORT BY REDUCING COMMITMENT

By Amy Stow

It is a truth universally acknowledged that by 2020, the average number of data interactions per connected person per day is expected to be 1426 (that's nearly 2 interactions per minute). Ok, perhaps not a truth (yet), but a forecasted statistic from research undertaken by Seagate¹ at the end of 2018.

What does this mean for volunteering? To go alongside having less time, people will also have many more routes for distraction. The world is moving forward, and let's be honest, at a pace which is often terrifying. We all know it's happening, after all we're experiencing it too, and yet how much have leaders of volunteers changed to fit this new reality? How are we engaging people in a way that reflects this temporary, one-off, flexible world we now live in?

New technology allows us to involve those looking for a low-commitment at a greater scale. This has often been seen as a negative due to the high turnover rates and difficulty in managing but what if we flip the argument and look at the positives? We've all been in situations where long-term, established volunteers have huge sway and can end up creating some...interesting management challenges. Low-commitment means this is less likely to happen and is a great way to identify and build a positive foundation with people who may wish to work with your organisation more regularly in the future or who may simply have a more positive association with your organisation when it comes time to donate, refer or give a good word of mouth recommendation.

**"People feel invested, and
people remember you."**

Additionally, you'd be improving the demographics of your volunteer base. Volunteering historically attracts a certain demographic of people, but providing opportunities which are low-commitment and low barrier to entry can reach a whole new audience. Lack of travel means not only do you appeal to those who might struggle with upfront costs, or even actually getting out of their house (public transport in the Outer Hebrides and a wheelchair is not a great mix) but there are no expenses to process. Being more flexible means appealing to the 49% of people who, according to UK Community Life Survey, didn't volunteer because work commitments were a barrier.

By investing in short term opportunities, we create a community of supporters who can engage with us when it's convenient for them but we shouldn't be looking to 'keep hold' of people or be upset when they 'move on'. Through providing positive experiences people will come back, it might just be in 5 years time. People feel invested, and people remember you.

I'm not saying it's easy, and I'm not saying that there aren't challenges to overcome. You might need regular volunteers because of the nature of your work, but we need to future proof for when this is no longer the way charities operate. Ask yourself some tough question, how can you break up these tasks? What can be done as a one-off? What barriers do you have and what do you need to do to smash through them? **And most importantly, can you really afford not to be working flexibly?**

¹ Seagate, IDC. (2018). Daily digital data interactions per connected person worldwide from 2010 to 2025. Statista. Statista Inc.. Accessed: October 14, 2019. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/948840/worldwide-data-interactions-daily-per-capita/>

VOLUNTEERS ARE OUR BEST ADVOCATES

By Emilie Bromet-Bauer, CVA

When was the last time you spoke at a community event on behalf of the organization where you work? Or stood up on social media for the change, the cause that is the mission of your organization? In these politically and culturally tumultuous times funding for many causes can be precarious and organizations many times expect staff to advocate for them. But how often do we engage our volunteers in doing this advocacy work? In 2020, leaders of volunteers should ensure we are positioning and up-communicating the power of volunteers as advocates.

We know volunteers can be our organizations' most effective advocates. Volunteers live and work in the communities and navigate the social and political systems that organizations seek to change through advocacy. They represent their communities when they engage with your organization, and they can be the voice of your organization when they engage in their communities; if we can motivate people to advocate and provide them with the tools and opportunities

That's where volunteer managers come in. We have the power to create potentially transformative experiences for volunteers. As volunteers make a difference through volunteering and in doing so develop meaningful connections with your organization, their values and world view often shift and align more deeply with the organization's mission and cause. This deep connection to your organization, its mission, and purpose can motivate volunteers to be your public advocates.

“This deep connection to your organization, its mission, and purpose can motivate volunteers to be your public advocates”

How can a volunteer manager facilitate a transformative experience for volunteers that turns them into effective advocates? Consider the following questions:

- Are you telling good stories and inviting volunteers to engage with them? Including discussions - not presentations - on why the organization does what it does, its mission and the social, economic, and political reasons that the organization is addressing.
- Are you guiding the development of volunteer roles and matching volunteers with their positions that reinforce the volunteers' ownership of their work while emphasizing the value of their role in raising the profile and reputation of the organization?
- To help volunteers become more engaged with the organization through their work, are you and your organization communicating with them honestly and with transparency and the respect they deserve, because they are integral to the organization's success? Are you involving them as much as possible in relevant and important decisions?
- Are you encouraging them to be active advocates for the organization and its cause in the community? Are you training them how to be an advocate, providing resources and information? Encouraging and supporting them to be involved in their community, with elected officials, and on social media about issues that are important to the organization? Are you supporting them to become leaders in the organization and their community?

When you embrace volunteers as advocates, the issues that are important to the organization can become more important to your volunteers. Having been transformed by their engagement with your organization, volunteers are perfectly poised to become your best advocates.

COURAGEOUS AND FLEXIBLE: IT'S TIME

By Jessica Pang-Parks

Professional associations for leaders of volunteers are struggling. Every year, it's a challenge to receive nominations for volunteer leadership (e.g. Board, Executive, Committee). To survive or be revived, we need to practice what we preach and volunteer.

2020 is time for a new wave of volunteers and volunteer roles in our professional associations.

If you already volunteer with your local professional association (e.g. AVAs or DOVIAs) - thank you. The impact you make gives us communities of practice, opportunities to learn, professional standards and a voice to champion our work. **The sad reality is that not enough of us volunteer and we must address the obstacles to giving back to our own professional associations.**

Imposter syndrome? Maybe you feel like you don't have the credentials, haven't been around long enough, or don't fit the "leadership type". I've been there and came to realize our professional associations are safe places to practice the leadership skills we already have and grow new ones. Our profession is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. While we are not perfect, stepping into a leadership role gave me opportunities to champion these values.

"To survive or be revived, we need to practice what we preach and volunteer."

Through volunteering at my association, I also gained governance and decision-making experiences I rarely encounter during my 9-5. These experiences enhance our influence inside and outside our organizations and better prepare us to advocate for ourselves (e.g. ask for a raise) and our profession's value (e.g. influence senior leaders to prioritize volunteer engagement).

A leadership role isn't a good fit right now? Our professional associations need to focus more on non-leadership and episodic volunteer roles. As leaders of volunteers, we should champion flexibility and fluidity within our own organizational structures!

As we know from experience, non-leadership and episodic volunteers have huge potential for impact. Within our professional associations, the first step of a volunteer recruitment strategy could be the creation of new roles that are project or event based. Recruitment ambassadors, mentors and certification tutors, online or in-person discussion facilitators, event setup and cleanup crew: all these roles add value because they open the door for more people to become involved. Plus, the volunteers learn new skills and feel more deeply connected to the profession.

This strengthens our internal culture of volunteerism: individuals can see themselves making small yet significant contributions to the profession. It also enables leadership volunteers to focus on creating even better communities.

Finally, leadership roles at our professional associations don't need to be set in stone. Roles can be shared or altered, creating flexibility for those who want to lead with a different style. We know that volunteering must be a good fit; creating custom fits means more equity in opportunities to lead and diversifies the representation of our sector.

Friends and colleagues: be courageous and step up for impact. This is your time to shine.

Fellow professional association leaders: enable the way forward with flexibility. This is your time to adapt.

I MIGHT JUST HAVE TO BUILD A FLUX CAPACITOR

By Amira Barger, CVA

The unfortunate truth is this: **Women remain underrepresented in nonprofit leadership roles – volunteer leadership included.** When we take into account the makeup of the leadership bodies within our organizations, data suggests that, for example, nonprofit boards lack diversity in general, but, specifically, are composed of only ¹47% women. While that may seem like a relatively equitable percentage, consider that women make up over ²70% of the workforce in the nonprofit sector (particularly true of volunteer managers). Of those, ³64% (ages 35-44) and 72% (ages 18 – 34) reported desire to operate in a leadership role.

This disparity in leadership representation is important to the volunteer management field as we enter 2020, because we know that study after study has shown – diversity in the highest levels of leadership at an organization begets a trickle-down effect in the front line of staff – including volunteer managers. If we have any hope or intention to diversify our profession, we cannot ignore the impact the makeup of leadership will continue to have across the sector.

“As our own spheres of influence expand, we create spaces to bring more women alongside us.”

So what can we do? We must look to our own spheres of influence to start changing the face of nonprofit leadership. Who we chose to align ourselves with and ask to advocate on our behalf within nonprofit structures matters.

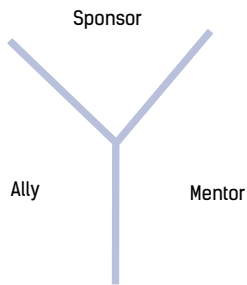
Your Personal Board Makeup:

One of the first things we learn in consultant school is how to create mnemonics (a memory recall tool) – so I can’t help but to go ahead and do that for you here. Exhibit A: The Flux Capacitor.



In the movie “Back to the Future” (1985), the flux capacitor was the component that powered the DeLorean time machine and made time travel possible. One of the key plot points of the movie was how changing something in the present affected the results of the future.

For our purposes, we are looking to create the components now that will help us to affect change moving



forward. Women in the nonprofit sector must generate greater support amongst themselves – **your own ⁴personal advisory board**. There are three components to building this board: Ally, Mentor, and Sponsor. You might also think of them as Now, Near, and Far.

An Ally (Now) offers practical help or a shoulder in the immediate. A Mentor (Near) helps you develop skills and coaches. A Sponsor (Far) works to advance and champion you into the far reaching future. Explore and expand your network to recruit these three types of members for your personal board of advisors. By taking this step, we can accomplish: connections to the right leaders, increased visibility, advice, new opportunities, and influence. As our own spheres of influence expand, we create spaces to bring more women alongside us.

My hope is that by implementing these components of our own “flux capacitor,” it will serve to empower us as we move forward to a new future – a nonprofit sector equitably inclusive of women leaders amplifying one another.

¹ https://www.thenonprofittimes.com/npt_articles/nonprofit-boards-dont-resemble-rest-america/

² https://www.in.gov/icw/files/benchmark_wom_leadership.pdf

³ <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Lack-of-Women-in-Top-Roles/153197>

⁴ <https://coronorcal.org/>



Photo by Jonathan Crews on Unsplash

EVOLVING OUR PRACTICE

WORK WITH HUMAN NATURE, NOT AGAINST IT

By Tobi Johnson

With volunteer rates surging (up over 6% and at an all-time high in the US), we might be tempted to rest on our laurels. We might think, “we’ve got this.” And, we’d be partly right. But, if the consistent challenges noted by respondents of our [Volunteer Management Progress Report](#) survey are any indication, we still have work to do. Volunteer recruitment remains the top problem year over year, and retention issues are on the rise.

So, what’s a leader of volunteers to do? More of the same? Work harder? I’d argue that working smarter, not harder is the answer. Working smarter means aligning our management interventions with the way volunteers think and feel, making the human side of talent management a priority.

[Scholarly research](#) in the voluntary sector is now trending from a traditional human resources centered approach to inter-relational volunteer engagement, including exploration of the role of [psychological contracts](#) (the implicit and explicit ‘promises’ or ‘expectations’ volunteers and organizations have of one another) in sustaining commitment.

“in the end, it’s really about people, not paperwork.”

What’s more, it’s clear that interactional volunteer management practices that drive increased retention and recruitment outcomes are directly related to the behaviors and attitudes of both the volunteer coordinator and paid staff, the strategic “body,” and key stakeholders.

So, volunteer engagement is everyone’s job.

At the same time, [advances in neuroscience](#) have shown us that emotion (not rationality) are the most important drivers of human behavior. Yet, many spend focused time working on forms and systems without balancing them with emotional intelligence.

The evidence is clear – in order to get and keep volunteers involved, we need to work with human nature, not against it. [Neuroleadership theorists](#) argue that minimizing danger and maximizing reward is a key organizing principle of the brain. The urge to approach possible rewards and avoid potential threats is deeply ingrained.

Our brains see threat more often than reward, so we are highly sensitive to “clues” about our status within a group. The resulting social pain, due to exclusion, is as powerful as physical pain.

When we don’t feel part of the “in group,” the consequences can be significant. Feelings of exclusion can ...

- Reduce cognitive functioning and performance
- Increase self-defeating behavior
- Encourage short-term versus long-term thinking
- Reduce pro-social behavior and teamwork

When supporters feel excluded, they are less likely to volunteer and donate.

Alternately, working with the brain means focusing on inclusive practices that reduce fear and threat and increase connection and reward. It means designing purposeful pathways through onboarding that promote relationships. Working with the brain means exploring the hidden needs, expectations, and emotional drivers of paid staff and volunteers and addressing the ‘contract breaches’ that result in reduced trust and performance.

If we want to get and sustain traction in today’s busy, distracted, and fractured world, it’s time to think about how we manage the emotional side of volunteer engagement and human performance.

Certainly, standards and processes are important for managing risk and reporting to funders.

But in the end, it’s really about people, not paperwork.

BROTHER, CAN YOU SPARE SOME TIME?

By Faiza Venzant, CVA

When only 1 in 4 Americans¹, 1 in 5 Australians², 1 in 3 Canadians³ and 2 in 5 Brits volunteer⁴, we have to be asking critical questions about, **“Who does and doesn’t volunteer?”** Responses produce a lengthy list, the most troubling being that those living in poverty are most often cared for by volunteers. At the same time, they are unlikely to volunteer at high rates and even less likely to be intentionally recruited to volunteer. In 2020, leaders of volunteers need to expand thinking around inclusion in volunteerism. If our volunteer base is not reflective of the communities we serve, what biases are in play? How authentic are the interventions we offer? What does this say about our attitudes towards how important the contributions of poor members of our community are? Who misses out on the transformative nature of volunteerism?

I’ve recently been trained in and have been facilitating the Community Action Program (CAPS) Poverty Simulation⁵ and discovered that **universal baselines for poverty do not exist**. Within Canada and the US, no single measure exists to define the complexities of who is deemed poor. Despite this, policy decisions are made and programs and services are created which inevitably involve volunteers.

In applying this to your volunteer engagement practice, acknowledge that stigma around poverty is widespread with beliefs that poor people are lazy, need to work harder to pull themselves out of poverty or that the government spends too much on supporting the poor⁶. **When it comes to poverty, meritocracy is a myth.**

“Who misses out on the transformative nature of volunteerism?”

Being a volunteer is costly. The World Health Organization (WHO) says income security is the most important social determinant of health⁷. We often tout that volunteers are not free to highlight the importance of the paid work we do. How do we advocate for the cost to volunteering for our volunteers? Costs like criminal records checks, uniform fees, transportation, certifications and child care – many of the things that are needed to secure a volunteer role which can also be real barriers to those who might benefit most from the experience.

Volunteerism is a choice, poverty is not. People in poverty face a lack of choice daily. Income, food security and access to health care are all social determinants of health yet those who live in poverty often lack choice in how and where to access food and health care. The luxury of choosing to volunteer is not often targeted to these communities.

Poverty is not always visible. In the US, 60% percent of households using food stamps where a child is present also have a working adult in the home⁸. Low wages, high costs of child care and precarious employment contribute to poverty. There is also a missed opportunity to engage working families with children in the very programs and services they access.

So what can you do to intentionally plan for inclusion of the poor in your volunteer program?

Start with yourself. What unconscious bias might be at play in the ways your volunteer program is designed? Do these influence who and who isn’t being included in your recruitment efforts, especially when it comes to the poor?

Be intentional. To have a volunteer base that reflects the population you serve, remove barriers that exist to them being invited to participate in volunteering.

Develop measures to track the impact volunteerism has on volunteers such as expressed health outcomes, sense of belonging, reasons for leaving and number of professional references provided.

Sense of belonging is another social determinant of health. We know volunteerism achieves this. How much healthier can our communities be if everyone has a place where they belong? How will you make this a reality in your organization?

¹ <https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/volunteering-us-hits-record-high-worth-167-billion>

² https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/036?opendocument

³ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11638-eng.htm>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-2017-18>

⁵ <http://www.povertysimulation.net/about/>

⁶ <https://www.prb.org/americanattitudesaboutpovertyandthepoor/>

⁷ <https://www.who.int/hia/evidence/doh/en/>

⁸ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/policy-basics-the-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap>

STRONGER TOGETHER: MY JOURNEY TOWARDS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

By Donna Jeanpierre

Diversity is no longer a trend, but a global reality that promises to continue into 2020 and beyond. For example, where I live and work in Northwestern Ontario, 26% of the population identify as Indigenous. Despite the diversity in our countries and our communities, the Volunteer Engagement profession continues to be homogenous. Thanks to research done on the profession like Volunteer Pro's "Volunteer Management Progress Report" we know in general who makes up the Volunteer Engagement profession. Author Tobi Johnson writes:

Respondents continue to be white (88%) women (90%). This trend has continued for four years. This represents less diversity than in the non-profit sector as a whole... As a point of comparison, 18% of general nonprofit US employees are people of color, twice as many as those who work in volunteerism. (2019 Volunteer Management Progress Report)

“ For a profession that specializes in recruiting great people and building diverse teams, just consider the talents we’re missing out on with such a narrow group of peers. ”

For a profession that specializes in recruiting great people and building diverse teams, just consider the talents we’re missing out on with such a narrow group of peers. With that in mind, in 2020, leaders of volunteers must look in the mirror and ask ourselves what impact this homogeneity may be having and what we can do to ensure our 'community of practice' is more inclusive. These are important questions that need answers if we want to ensure that our profession not only reflects the diversity of the communities we serve but also ensures that as a collective, leaders of volunteers have a depth and range of voices and experiences to ensure our best practices, policies and shared dialogue aren't simply reflective of one perspective.

Last fall, a group of local volunteer engagement professionals reached out to a community development organization to help us identify our own gaps. As a result, we realized that our own AVA membership did not include any Indigenous leaders of volunteers, despite the large local Indigenous population.

It was also a personal journey for me. I realized that the way I define volunteering is only one of many. For example, many Indigenous people in Canada have a long-held tradition of helping one another and giving back to their communities. Most of their contributions to family, neighbours, or anyone in need are not part of any formal volunteering. It's not even referred to as volunteering, but rather as "helping out." These are simple but important considerations that as a white, female coming from a place of privilege, I need to understand. Given the stats shared earlier about our profession, I'm guessing you may as well.

Through the process, I am learning that recruiting for a diverse team demands intention and effort. To quote Faiza Venzant, Volunteer Engagement Professional, "If you build it, only the people it is built for will come." This is true whether you're recruiting volunteers or taking stock of our profession. In 2020, let's make sure we're building a profession for all.

THE GREAT DIVIDE IN THE WORLD ...AND, THE WORLD OF VOLUNTEERS

By Marla Benson

In case you've been living in a cave for the past several years (and if you have, move over – there are plenty of folks who would like to join you there), you may have noticed that conflict, whether personal or political, has been steadily escalating in our culture and many times becomes toxic.

This toxicity is currently at an all time high with people divided and angrily and openly confrontational in ways we have never seen before. Think of the woman who calls the police because a family of a color other than hers is barbecuing in a public park. Think of the man who yells at two women in a department store because they are speaking a language other than his. And, we ask, what has made people angrier than ever and with the internal permission to act on it?

“To turn away from these occurrences when they happen in the world of volunteers is not just naïve, but downright dangerous to your members, your volunteers as a whole and of course, to your mission.”

That is a loftier conversation than can be solved here, however, in your world, these issues happen, too!

To turn away from these occurrences when they happen in the world of volunteers is not just naïve, but downright dangerous to your members, your volunteers as a whole and of course, to your mission. I get it, having these conversations can be tricky and we feel stuck between either saying nothing for fear of breach of 'political correctness' and possible litigation OR our fear of saying too much as demonstrated in the steady diet of 'no filter' communication we see on reality television and media; social and otherwise.

My Top Idea for 2020 in dealing with volunteer issues is one of CLARITY. If you can be crystal clear about how this volunteer helps or hurts your organization you will have no doubt about what must occur.

- Did someone yell at other members at a function?
- Does someone publicly espouse a political view that is contrary to your organization's mission/credo?
- Did someone discriminate against another person while they were acting in a volunteer role?
- And, the list goes on and on.

So, if you are **aware** of what may be happening in your organization and if it correlates to the negativity that is happening in the world at large, be **CLEAR** about your acceptance or rejection of that behavior. Then, do the right thing.

STAND AND DELIVER

By Ruth Millard, CVA

Those who work and engage volunteers consider oodles of factors when looking to fill volunteer roles such as the number of volunteers needed, scheduling, skills needed, training, length of commitments; often focusing on the transactional aspects. We look at those parameters and often recruit using familiar strategies and tactics to get the volunteers required. Often we don't get all the volunteers we need, so we do our magic and work around without the numbers or specific skill required to carry out the event. And then we move onto the next task or event at hand. This constant merry-go-round can be exhausting. Let's face it. Many managers of volunteers are tapped out, strapped with the tasks and to-dos in their job, and limited resources to carry them out and these roles never achieve their full potential impact - on the volunteers or the organization's mission. How can we change this when the world is only getting busier and more complex?

We need to consider how we look at the opportunities we have to offer and communicate them as meaningful, time-worthy experiences. It reminds me of a lottery commercial ad where the narrator is asking people to plan big if they won, and to stretch their imaginations. He keeps encouraging them to think bigger until their lottery plans are transformational. He encourages them to change their verbiage, and thus the result of the experience if they won. They change their mindset to one of possibilities. So what if we did the same? And what if we held ourselves and staff partners accountable for delivering to this standard?

“Regardless of whether people are motivated to volunteer for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons, we can ‘sell’ experiences that connect to what people want.”

In 2020, to get ahead of the curve, let's change how we communicate the experiences we can offer by reframing our approaches to the recruitment and lived experience of our opportunities. Our experiences are cause-based regardless of the organization we work for, that is given. Today's worldly experiences are vast, and we can be connected to the other side of the world instantly. Regardless of whether people are motivated to volunteer for intrinsic or extrinsic reasons, we can “sell” experiences that connect to what people want. The volunteer experiences we offer need to be more powerful than the competition - like a Netflix marathon or an epic Youtube/Tik Tok session. Educating our organizations that activities like those are what we're up against is key.

People who come to volunteer have skills they bring to share; ideas they want to implement and opportunities they wish to experience. These experiences can be world changing for a volunteer, but we rarely frame the experience to people that way. Folks who volunteer want to see their impact and difference to their communities, now more than ever. They have high expectations of themselves, and of us who provide these opportunities. So let's take this opportunity to reflect and reframe how we can step up to match those expectations with what we offer and really deliver them. In 2020, I hope you create opportunities that are transformational experiences for volunteers because their transformation and its impact on our organizations is your work.

MOVING BEYOND SIMPLE DATA TO IMPROVE VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION

By Tracey O'Neill, CVA

Leaders of Volunteers have always been great at counting; number of volunteers; number of hours they have contributed; number of “insert thing volunteer is doing.” We then use this data to tell volunteers how incredible they are and hope it encourages them to continue engaging with our organisation. But do the answers to these questions really tell a volunteer about the impact they have had and inspire them to continue to support their chosen organisation?

If we are to move ahead as a profession, if we are to enhance how we are viewed, supported and resourced, and if we are to engage the best volunteers for our cause, we must be able to demonstrate that what we facilitate is more than the number of people we are able to engage. In 2020 leaders of volunteers must be able to prove how the work our volunteers undertake truly makes a difference.

**“We must be able to demonstrate that what we facilitate
is more than the number of people we are able to engage.”**

More than ever, volunteers expect to know what the impact of their work is; they often don't have a strong allegiance to a brand but to a purpose. Take Gen Y for example; research shows that up to 85% of Millennials are more likely to remain loyal to an organisation if they are able to contribute to social and environmental issues. And many Baby Boomers are seeking an encore career as volunteers where they can have a social impact on their community through work that is personally meaningful to them.

Engagement and retention of volunteers can no longer be about sharing meaningless data. Engagement and retention of volunteers in 2020 must be about connecting volunteers with their purpose and enabling them to see the difference they have made.

Leaders of volunteers must develop meaningful impact metrics.

- How can you demonstrate that volunteers are contributing to mission and strategic outcomes?
- What data must you collect to show that volunteers are impacting on social and environmental issues?
- What do you need to measure to show a change that has occurred due to volunteers' work?
- What information must you seek to assess whether the work of volunteers is having the desired impact, and how can this impact be improved?
- What stories can be shared that illustrate a volunteer changed someone's life or experience for the better?

Demonstrating the impact of their work to a volunteer is not about telling them how many hours or years they contributed to an organisation, or how many “insert thing volunteer is doing”; this data has no value. Leaders of volunteers must be able to share with volunteers how the work they do makes a difference to individuals and communities through relevant impact metrics and stories. And through sharing this information and linking volunteers' experiences with positive change, we will improve the engagement and retention of volunteers.

Volunteers make a difference – make sure you show them how.

DEATH BY A THOUSAND SATISFACTION SURVEYS

By Erin Spink

Leaders of volunteers take great pride in the kind of experience we help facilitate for volunteers, and so we should. We also love to tell external colleagues about how much sharing exists across the profession. And that's mostly true, too. However we are missing a critical piece of the puzzle by not building a shared understanding of what drives these great experiences and where there might be differences that should be reflected in our individual practice. In 2020, it's imperative that we begin building and using some basic shared measurement tools so that we continually get better, both individually and together as a profession. We must build a culture of iteration within Volunteer Engagement.

Iteration is defined as the ["repetition of a...procedure applied to the result of a previous application, typically as a means of obtaining successively closer approximations to the solution of a problem."](#) Basically, it's repeatedly trying and testing to improve results. Others have done this for years and built their own profession-wide insights, from knowing the average number of sales to expect from a pitch email to which images and words work best to get a donation online. For leaders of volunteers, we need a body of knowledge we can use as a benchmark as we hone our practice.

"Ignorance is bliss but doesn't help build better Volunteer Engagement."

Satisfaction surveys are a good example - we all do them but use our own versions. As a result, we can't compare how satisfied one group of volunteers are compared to others or see which changes impact those rates. We may think having an 83% satisfaction rate is good but what if the average satisfaction rate of all other volunteers is actually 94%? Other practical pieces we need iteration on are:

- tenure and retention rate for common roles, within subsectors and by demographics
- recruitment language click through rates; which words spur people to apply
- volunteer engagement levels
- which experiential factors cause volunteers the most dissatisfaction

We'll never get there if we keep doing our own satisfaction surveys and not realizing that they're only the smallest step forward if we aren't using consistent questions, compiling results and learning together from those.

To be clear, this isn't about picking whose satisfaction survey we 'like' most, it's about having some rigour in place to ensure we're building tools that tell us what's working (including when and for whom), what's not and whether changes we're making are having a difference. I'm also not advocating that we all use exactly the same questions - add and subtract as you will, but keep a consistent core so we're comparing apples to apples. If we don't, this profession can't move forward using a thousand satisfaction surveys that don't help drive tested and proven improvements to how we do our work, individually and as a whole. Ignorance is bliss but doesn't help build better Volunteer Engagement.

I'm putting my money where my mouth is and offering spinktank's validated measurement tool on Volunteer Engagement (the only one in the world!) for [**FREE to 20 organizations in 2020**](#). Let's build better Volunteer Engagement together, starting today!



Photo by Alony Haust on Unsplash

REFRAMING OUR ROLE

LEADERSHIP THROUGH EFFECTIVE PARTNERING

By Beth Steinhorn

We all know that volunteer engagement professionals wear many hats, yet that doesn't mean we alone should be responsible for volunteer engagement. If volunteer engagement is truly to be embraced as an essential strategy for mission-fulfillment, then the multifaceted responsibilities of engaging and supporting volunteers cannot live with the engagement professional alone. When organizations commit to engaging volunteers as a strategy critical to achieving mission, volunteer engagement professionals do not personally recruit, screen, train, support, recognize, and manage the volunteers. Instead, they lead by equipping colleagues in other departments to engage and manage volunteers in their own areas – much as Human Resources departments equip others to be effective managers. While framing volunteer engagement simply as “the HR of volunteers” can be problematic, that doesn't mean that HR has no valuable strategies for our work which is why this big idea comes from HR – Business Partnering.

Of course, partnering isn't new to volunteer engagement. No engagement professional does this work alone. In a small food pantry, coordinators may recruit volunteers, but pantry staff work with them daily. In bigger organizations, partnering is even more important. Recently, as the American Red Cross sought to better equip its 100+ Engagement Specialists to successfully engage over 300,000 volunteers in mission-critical work, the organization looked to the business partnering model developed by human resources expert David Ulrich.

“If volunteer engagement is truly to be embraced as an essential strategy for mission-fulfillment, then the multifaceted responsibilities of engaging and supporting volunteers cannot live with the engagement professional alone.”

By applying the model to volunteer engagement, an engagement “expert” is paired with department leaders to explore how volunteers can be engaged to drive organizational goals—whether reaching more students through volunteer mentors, distributing more food to the hungry, or passing important policy in local government.

Together, engagement experts and department leaders assess needs, develop new roles, and equip department staff to onboard and support the volunteers to enhance operations or serve clients. While most organizations already use a similar approach for finance or IT, the time has come to embrace it for engagement.

Effective business partners excel in four areas. Consider how each can be viewed through an engagement lens:

Strategic Partner – How do you harness volunteer talent to help colleagues in other departments?

Change Agent – Where can you leverage volunteers to help the organization respond to changing conditions?

Administrative Expert – How are you administering the volunteer database, tracking applications and skills, and communicating impact?

Volunteer Champion – How are you recognizing and advocating for volunteers?

With this model in mind, the Red Cross created job descriptions for hundreds of engagement specialists and now provides training on how to be an effective business partner. Here's how you can implement this big idea for greater success.

1. Assess your approach. To what extent do you balance your roles as strategic partner, change agent, administrative expert, and volunteer champion? Where are your strengths? Where can you further hone your skills?
2. Review your job description. Discuss expectations with leadership and peers.
3. Explore this model further with colleagues.

VOLUNTEER LEADERS: LOGISTICAL COORDINATORS OR EXPERIENTIAL GUIDES? THAT IS THE QUESTION....

By Dr. Rebecca Jackson

What is our role as leaders of volunteers? To coordinate logistics or facilitate experiences? Many days are filled with emails, calendars, event registrations, waiver forms, thank you notes, photos, metrics, reporting, and the list goes on and on. But through all these seemingly tedious tasks lies the incredible responsibility and opportunity to change people's lives.

"We are experiential guides, designing moments in time where people can help others, reflect on their place in the world, and remember who they are as fellow human beings."

Rather than viewing our roles as coordinators of simple logistics, I propose we start shifting our perspective and reframing our efforts toward those of experiential guides. We are blessed to be able to create spaces where people get to explore their humanity, share moments with people and situations they may otherwise have never come in contact with, and question their perspectives and attitudes towards others. Will logistics always be part of the process? Of course. However, the more meaning and intention we put into those tasks, the more impact the experience can have on the volunteers, the recipients of services, and the community at large.

My Ph.D. dissertation examined the return on investment of an employee volunteer program and found the following two key outcomes:

- The more satisfied volunteers are with their experience, the more committed they are likely to be to their organization. Organizational commitment represents how much I identify with my organization. The more I identify with my organization, the more likely I am to stay, which is associated with higher retention.
- The more committed volunteers are, the more likely they are to display citizenship behaviors. Citizenship behaviors are prosocial actions above and beyond one's job duties, which is associated with productivity.

So, essentially, impactful volunteer experiences have the potential to increase an employees' level of commitment and likelihood of expressing helping behaviors at work. Got your attention?

Volunteer leaders have the power to not only change people's lives through impactful volunteer experiences, but they can also literally help to shape the culture of an organization. Volunteerism has the transformative ability to enhance our relationships with others. When we volunteer, we get to experience each other as human beings. Our job titles are stripped away, our culture, background, socioeconomic status, gender, and ethnicity take a back seat, and for those few hours, we are people helping people. One of my favorite quotes from one of my volunteers has been "No one's 'real job' mattered. We just worked as a team toward our goal." So, let's move into 2020 with a new sense of pride and belief in the power of the work we do everyday - every piece of it. Every interaction, every email, and every event matters. We are experiential guides, designing moments in time where people can help others, reflect on their place in the world, and remember who they are as fellow human beings.

SIZE ONLY MATTERS WHEN IT COMES TO COFFEE

By Erin McLean

Sometimes size matters. When it comes to my coffee, it makes all the difference—the bigger the better please! In over 10 years as a leader of volunteers, I've worked in four significantly different organizations, while also connecting with other Volunteer Engagement professionals who all have varying experiences be them local, provincial or national in scope. One of the most common questions or discussions topics I hear amongst peers is the comparison of processes and resources and the idea that the size of our organization affects Volunteer Engagement success.

Size can impact a lot of things – number of team members; office working conditions; access to specific resources; and perhaps even the role volunteers play within your organization, but it shouldn't, and we can't let it, influence our success.

If you work in a small grassroots organization it might be easy to think that a national organization with scheduling software or large digital or design departments have it easy. The same could be said for smaller organizations when it comes to the ability to recruit locally in an area you live in, where you have connections and existing relationships, versus working remotely supporting recruitment for a significant geographic area. Some might say that comparing volunteer engagement between organizations of such different sizes is like comparing apples and oranges. From an outside perspective it likely does seem that way, but for Leaders of Volunteers, we should be arguing (to the outside world, and to our peers that begin to fall back on size comparisons) that size does not matter, nor does it dictate how successful we can be.

**“If we stay true to the fundamentals of our profession,
size really has nothing to do with our ability to be successful.”**

Let's think about the fundamentals. Recruitment is still recruitment whether it's for episodic or leadership level volunteers. Whether it is local or provincial in scope, we know it still requires a thought-out strategy, focused effort and sometimes trial and error. Recruitment is successful when we find the right fit – skills and interests matching the role and responsibilities. Recognition, whether done with fancy creative campaigns, or with an intimate conversation over coffee (hopefully a large one), is still recognition. It will only be successful if it is truly meaningful to the person receiving it.

As the non-profit sector continues to change and evolve, and we find ourselves being asked to do more with less, or are suddenly part of a new larger organization as a result of local efforts merging, it is vital that we adapt and remember that if we stay true to the fundamentals of our profession, size really has nothing to do with our ability to be successful. The only size worth considering is the network of professional colleagues you have at your disposal to bounce idea off of, collaborate with and turn to for advice and resources, rather than frustration or comparison. In 2020, focus on the fundamental principles of Volunteer Engagement, while integrating evolving best practices, and you won't have time to worry about comparisons. Size will only relate to success when ordering your large coffee to enjoy with a fellow leader of volunteers, in celebration.

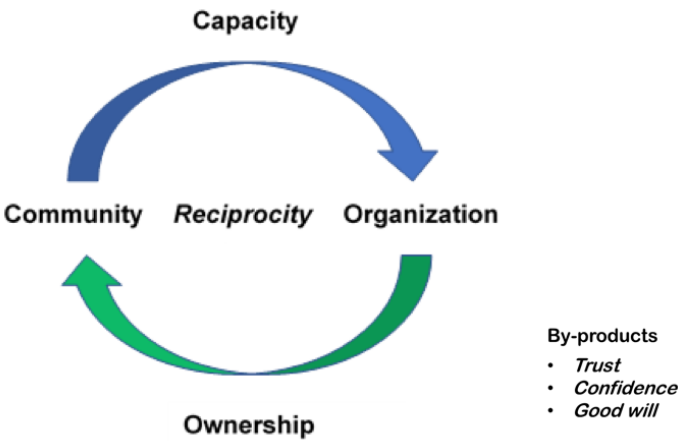
WHY VOLUNTEERS ARE WORTH THE TROUBLE

By Dr Sue Carter Kahl

Nonprofit leaders often claim that volunteers are the heart of our organizations. Yet the dirty little secret of our sector is that volunteers are more trouble than they are worth. Perhaps they are – if we insist on holding volunteers at arm’s length, doling out small tasks we deem appropriate for them, and treating their involvement as a series of transactions.

If we want volunteers to be “worth the trouble,” we need to engage them as partners in advancing our mission. If we want to harness all the resources that volunteers can provide, we need to invite their full participation. When we are successful, the benefits transcend the volunteers or our nonprofits. It’s no longer about us and them, but rather what we can do for our community together.

My research reveals a virtuous cycle that occurs when we engage volunteers well. As the graphic shows,



volunteers bring the resources of the community into our nonprofits and strengthen our organizational capacity. When we share ownership of the mission with them, volunteers assist in bringing the work and story of our nonprofits back out into the community. Along the way, volunteers blur the artificial boundaries that sometimes define our work.

For example, volunteers expand our organizational capacity in many ways. They are more likely to donate¹ and do so at higher amounts² than non-volunteers. This blurs the boundary between

volunteer and donor – and creates a stronger community connection to our organizations than either role alone. Volunteers also bring in a wealth of non-financial resources: expertise, connections, community perspectives, and even a “luxury of focus.”³ These contributions further expand the boundary of who is qualified to do our nonprofit’s work.

Engaging volunteers also makes them part owners in our mission. This ownership equips volunteers to educate and invite others into the work. When volunteers see themselves as ambassadors, they carry awareness about our organization well beyond the borders of our nonprofits. What’s more, if their experience is a good one, it generates good will, trust, and confidence. Our organizations rely on these by-products to be successful, yet they tend to be elusive. We can’t buy good will or make someone confident in us, it must be earned. Volunteerism is one way nonprofits earn these relational assets.⁴

“It’s no longer about us and them, but rather what we can do for our community together.”

My research on effective volunteer engagement keeps leading to the word reciprocity. In a reciprocal relationship, we each have something to give and something to receive. Organizations give volunteers access to community needs. They transform volunteer labor into actions that meet those needs and their missions. Volunteers give time, talent, and passion. They transform those raw materials into organizational capacity and the satisfaction that comes from making a difference. When well matched, nonprofits and volunteers marry their unique gifts to fulfill a collective responsibility. It’s no longer about what organizations do for volunteers or what volunteers do for our organizations but what we both accomplish for the community – and that is always worth the trouble.

¹Fidelity Charitable. (2014). Time and Money: The Role of Volunteering in Philanthropy.
²<https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/2014-u.s.-trust-study-of-high-net-worth-philanthropy-finds-28-per-cent-increase-in-charitable-contribution.html?id=136>
³Ellis, S. J. (2010). From the Top Down: The Executive Role in Successful Volunteer Involvement (3rd Ed.), Energize, Inc.
⁴Chertok, F., Parker, S. & Carter Kahl, S. (2019). From Intention to Action: What Matters for Strong Volunteer Engagement. Presentation at 2019 Points of Light Conference.

VALUING OURSELVES BY VALUING OUR TIME

By Dr Melissa Heinlein Storti

Volunteer engagement leaders are often asked to drop everything, rearrange schedules, and add more to the never-ending tasks list. When we push back, we are labeled as that “challenging volunteer director/coordinator/manager.” But in all honesty, we need to be strategic in our planning and value our time just as much as anyone else’s within the organization and community.

Why is this topic particularly relevant in 2020?

There are more and more demands placed on volunteer engagement leaders. While we are engaged with our dedicated and ever-changing volunteer workforce, we have competition for our time that our internal and external constituents may not realize. The list becomes endless.

We are still seen as the friendly face of volunteer engagement who *always* helps. “When in doubt” they say, “call the volunteer department.” Yet as leaders of our departments, we must focus on being strategic and careful in our planning for the fiscal year, events, onboarding, recognition, support to other departments, and more. Little do staff realize that we cannot (and should not) always drop what we are doing or what the impact is on volunteer engagement and the broader organization when we do.

Our time is just as valuable as theirs.

So, consider what you are already doing that is leaving you wondering at the end of the day “where did my time go?”

- How strategic are your systems and processes?
- How much time are you seeing drift away because of constant interruptions and distractions?
- How efficient and effective is your time management in your department?
- Do you have volunteers supporting *you* in your department?
- Are you scheduling your time for professional development each month?

We move so fast in the world of volunteer engagement. At the end of the day, we question “where did the day go?” What was it filled with? Were you running around to do something for someone else because you volunteered? Because you thought that down the road you may need that relationship some day? You thought that person may one day repay the favor?

“Every time you say YES you are also saying NO to something else” stated Yuli Azarch.

When you say yes to everyone else’s emergencies and demands, the energy that you would have put forth into your tasks, your volunteers, your programs, and your department is lost. Stop giving your time away. Your time has to be strategic. Without a focus on your time, the initiatives for volunteer engagement within your organization is reduced.

Your time is valuable. Your time is just that...yours.

PARTING THOUGHT: BEFORE YOU GO

By Rob Jackson

This book is packed full of ideas to help you improve your volunteer engagement practice in 2020. By now you've probably got a list of actions to help you up your game and enhance the volunteer experience you offer. Brilliant!

But wait – before you rush headlong into making change happen, let's take a pause so you not only understand what you are going to do but check in with why you are going to do it.

All of us come to our work with our own beliefs about volunteering, our own values, personal biases, limits to our frame of reference and, of course, organisational biases. Take diversity for example. In this book you've read some compelling arguments for embracing a more diverse team of volunteers. That's great. You may have thought about groups in your community who are under-represented in volunteering, groups you now want to reach out to. Fantastic.

“We must lead the thinking in our organisations, inspiring and challenging them to change, remaining relevant to an ever shifting external content for their work.”

But are they really under-represented in volunteering or are they under-represented in what you and your organisation consider to be volunteering? Are these people actually very active volunteers in a form of volunteering you and your organisation doesn't embrace?

In my experience, for example, disability rights activists rarely volunteer for more traditional disability support organisations, especially when they might be seeking a change in the way those very organisations operate. But that doesn't mean these passionate disabled people don't volunteer, they just channel that passion in something those traditional organisations might not recognise as volunteering.

Do you have an equivalent? When faced with this kind of situation, don't try and convert others to your view of volunteering. That attitude can throw up even more barriers to diversity than may already exist. Instead reach out, understand where they are coming from, look for lessons you can learn and changes you can make to embrace these people. Develop win-win solutions for you and them.

Whether the actions you want to take now you've read this book relate to diversity or something else, stop, take a breath and think about the values, beliefs and biases you and your organisation may have that will influence those actions.

At this point you're possibly screaming at me, “But Rob, I don't have the time to stop and think. I've got to get on with making change happen now!” I get it. Volunteer Engagement Professions are busy people. Finding time to stop and reflect is hard. But it's vitally important.

As the world changes around us, we must constantly check whether what we believe to be true about volunteering is relevant to the society we live in. We must challenge and encourage each other to develop. We must lead the thinking in our organisations, inspiring and challenging them to change, remaining relevant to an ever shifting external content for their work.

OK, now you can go back to your list of actions. I wish you every success in implementing them. As Seth Godin would say, “go make a ruckus!”

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



AMIRA BARGER, CVA

United States of America
amirabarger@gmail.com

I partner with brands to story-craft their hero's journey to reach their most important audiences. As a seasoned communications strategist, I bring experience in the public, nonprofit and private sector. After investing 14+ yrs within nonprofits I am equipped in the kind of collaborative leadership necessary to effectively tackle pressing, public issues that impact us all. The foundation for my leadership and community-building was set at an early age when my family moved from San Diego, CA to the tiny Pacific Island of Guam, USA to serve as missionaries in the 90's.

I received a B.A. in Marketing from Vanguard University, MBA from Letourneau University, and received both the CVA (Certified Volunteer Administrator) and CFRE (Certified Fund Raising Executive) designations. I serve on the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration's Board, am an active member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Public Relations Society of America, and the American Public Health Association.

I facilitate a variety of courses and am a sought-after speaker on the topics of strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, communications, and volunteerism.



EMILIE BROMET-BAUER, CVA

United States of America
brometbauer@yahoo.com

Emilie Bromet-Bauer, MA, CVA is a consultant, trainer, and thought leader in the field of volunteer management. She has over 30 years experience leading volunteer engagement and developing volunteer management systems for organizations in a variety of sectors, including nonprofit, higher education, military, human services, and museums.

She is the author of the chapter "Advocacy in Volunteer Administration" in the CCVA text, *Volunteer administration: professional practice*. She was a founding board director for ALIVE and served on its board for nine years. Emilie served as a Task Force member in the development of The National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement and is an active participant in the Alliance's Research and Accreditation workgroup.

In her work, Emilie promotes the importance of pracademics, the application of research and critical thinking to the practice of volunteer management, organizational development, civic engagement, and social change. She believes in the transformative power of volunteering for the volunteer, organization, and society, and the role of the volunteer engagement manager in facilitating this transformation.



MARLA BENSON

United States of America
mbenson@volunteerrelations.com

Marla Benson, SPHR Founder & President of Volunteer Relations Consulting Group, LLC VolunteerRelations.com

Marla Benson, SPHR is known for contributing to the success of many leading organizations including Disney Resorts, eHarmony, Microsoft and Girl Scouts with her communications and conflict management coaching & training. Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) and Certified Mediator she has created the groundbreaking Volunteer Conflict Management SystemSM out of sheer necessity (and a smidgen of desperation) while serving as an executive with a leading youth organization supporting tens of thousands of girls and volunteers.



DR. SUE CARTER KAHL

United States of America
suecarterkahl@gmail.com

Sue is the President of Sue Carter Kahl Consulting and has more than 24 years of experience in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. Her work is infused with lessons learned as a nonprofit executive, board member, staff member, volunteer, consultant, and research analyst.

Some of her current projects include consulting on and evaluating volunteer engagement in nonprofits, teaching a graduate course on Volunteer Engagement at the University of San Diego (USD), facilitating volunteerism workshops throughout the country, and administering the Service Enterprise Initiative in San Diego. Prior to these roles, she led a volunteer center, served as a state commissioner with CaliforniaVolunteers, and co-authored a chapter in *Volunteer Engagement 2.0*.

Sue has a PhD in Leadership Studies from USD. Her research focuses on volunteerism with an emphasis on the value that volunteers bring to nonprofits. She volunteers as a coach for nonprofit executives through the Fieldstone Leadership Network.



ANDY FRYAR

Australia
andy@ozvpm.com

Andy Fryar is the National Operations Manager for Better Impact in Australia and New Zealand and the founder of OzVPM (Australasian Volunteer Program Management).

For more than 30 years Andy has contributed significantly including serving as President of Volunteering Australia and convening the group that later evolved into the Australasian Association for Managers of Volunteers.

Andy has helped produce three books on volunteer management and co-authors Volunteer Program Management: an essential guide (3rd edition). He has served on the editorial committee of the Australian Journal of Volunteering and since 2000, has been a founding member of the editorial team for e-volunteerism.

Andy travels extensively and has conducted volunteer management training in many countries including the UK, where he was faculty with the prestigious 'Institute of Advanced Volunteer Management' and co-founded the Australasian Retreat for Advanced Volunteer Management.

Since 2008, Andy has volunteered as Chairperson of the global committee for International Volunteer Manager's Day. In 2003, Andy was awarded a Centenary Medal by the Australian government in recognition of his services to the volunteering movement in Australia.



DR. REBECCA JACKSON

United States of America
drbeccahardin@gmail.com

Dr. Rebecca Jackson is the Employee Volunteer Program Director for the U.S. Federal Government. She completed her Ph.D. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology in 2014 after successfully defending her dissertation: *Building a Case for Supporting Nonprofits: Examining Relationships between Intra-Organizational Volunteerism, Organizational Commitment, and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors*. Based on her results, which demonstrated the ROI of employee volunteer programs, she was approved to design, develop, and implement the first-ever structured volunteer program in the federal sector, which has been identified as the benchmark and best practice for the federal government.

She has facilitated over 200 volunteer events since her program's launch in 2017. She collects reflective survey feedback from employee volunteers, which indicates that over 45% of volunteers experience perception changes as a result of their volunteer experience. She also researched the impact of volunteerism on an annual climate survey, where she found that the job satisfaction of volunteers was 8% higher than non-volunteers.

She is continually disseminating the results of her research to provide ROI benefits for each stakeholder: organizations, charities, and employee volunteers.



DR. MELISSA HEINLEIN STORTI

United States of America
m_heinlein@hotmail.com

Dr. Heinlein serves as the Chief, Voluntary Service at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Veterans Affairs Medical Center located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She is credentialed as a Certified Administrator of Volunteer Services and has over 20 years' experience in volunteer engagement with the majority of her career in healthcare.

Dr. Heinlein is well respected as a subject matter expert and serves in several national leadership positions within Veterans Affairs. She served on the Pracademics leadership team for the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Association. She is an adjunct professor at Chestnut Hill College (Philadelphia) and teaches courses in research methods and volunteer administration.

Dr. Heinlein is passionate about moving the field forward. She wrote a monthly column for VolunteerToday.com, co-authored a chapter in Volunteer Administration: Professional Practice, and has co-authored articles on episodic volunteerism and volunteer retirement among older adults. Dr. Heinlein served on the Executive Volunteer Committee for Pope Francis' visit to Philadelphia.

Dr. Heinlein's research interests include: burnout and volunteer engagement leaders, episodic volunteerism, resiliency, and effective work environments.



ROB JACKSON

United Kingdom
rob@robjacksonconsulting.com

Rob Jackson is Director of Rob Jackson Consulting Ltd, a consultancy and training company that helps engage and inspire people to bring about change.

Rob has more than 25 years experience working in the voluntary and community sector, holding a variety of strategic development and senior management roles that have focused on leading and engaging volunteers.

Rob has run his company since 2011 working with a wide range of clients in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, the USA and Canada.

Rob is co-author of *The Complete Volunteer Management Handbook* (DSC, 2012 and 2019) and *From The Top Down - UK Edition* (Energize Inc., 2015).



DONNA JEANPIERRE

Canada
dljeanpierre@gmail.com

Donna Jeanpierre, CVRM, is passionate about making a difference in her community and facilitating meaningful experiences for other people who want to do the same. In her current role, Donna is responsible for leading volunteer-related activities at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, providing meaningful experiences for volunteers that help advance the organization's strategic objectives and mission to deliver a quality patient experience in an academic health care environment that is responsive to the needs of the population of Northwestern Ontario. Donna is also the current President of the Thunder Bay Association of Volunteer Administrators

Donna is interested in promoting mental health awareness, cultural respect, and physical activity. Her most recent volunteer experience includes fundraising and writing for the Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre, participating member of the Francophone Advisory Council of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and running/race training coach with the Underground Gym.

Donna lives in Thunder Bay, Ontario (Canada) with her husband, Cédric, and their Havanese, Spirit.



DANA LITWIN, CVA

United States of America
dana@danalitwin.com

Dana (CVA) is a transformational coach, strategic advisor, and public speaker with a background in team building and environmental conservation. She has guided organizations in the Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and nationwide to produce break-through volunteer and community engagement programs.

Dana is a popular presenter at the National Conference on Volunteering and Service, the Non-Profit Learning Lab, countless regional and local DOVIA conferences and webinars, and is the host of the annual 2-day live online broadcast learning events, "Take the Leap: Embrace Change", "Leading the Way: Not Managing the Day", and "The Future is Now: Tech Trends for 2020 and Beyond", produced by Better Impact, VMPC, and ALIVE. Dana is the 2019 President of ALIVE (the Association of Leaders in Volunteer Engagement - www.volunteeralive.org), and is a founder and facilitator of the new National Alliance for Volunteer Engagement (www.allianceforengagement.org).



TOBI JOHNSON

United States of America
tobi@volpro.net

Tobi Johnson is an internationally sought-after expert, consultant, and master trainer in volunteer engagement. She is known for her modern thought leadership, highly practical evidence-based strategies, and innovative, "big hat" thinking around engaging, supporting, and acknowledging the work of volunteers.

She is the President of [Tobi Johnson & Associates](http://TobiJohnson&Associates), a consulting firm whose mission is to help nonprofit organizations make connections with remarkable volunteers. In 2015, she founded VolunteerPro, an online training and networking community for leaders of volunteers.

Tobi has over 30 years direct experience in nonprofit management, program development, program coordination, training delivery and learning design in the social sector. This year, she launched the [Time + Talent Podcast](http://Time+TalentPodcast), with co-host Jennifer Bennett of Volunteer-Match.

Each year, her firm conducts the [Volunteer Management Progress Report](http://VolunteerManagementProgressReport), a global state-of-the-industry survey now in its fifth year. To date, over 5,000 professionals from 16 countries have participated.



CHRISTINE MARTIN

Canada
christinemvmartin@gmail.com

Christine is a dynamic engagement professional with over 25 years of experience in everything from city building to international development, sustainability to refugee settlement. She is passionate about authentic engagement, bringing people together, and harnessing their expertise and perspectives to make positive change. For over eleven years, Christine has been the architect of a program that has engaged more than 40,000 diverse residents in volunteering across Canada, helping support flourishing cities through Evergreen, a national not-for-profit based in Toronto.

An award-winning innovation leader in the sector, she loves to inspire new ways of thinking through workshops, mentoring and thought leadership. Her expertise includes facilitation, innovation design, collaboration, systems thinking, strategy, foresight and evaluation. Beyond volunteer engagement, she has supported projects exploring technology, organizational change, strategic planning and more. She has served on several non-profit boards and currently serves as Board Advisor for a fledgling refugee hospitality program in Boston, MA.

Currently, Christine is completing a Master of Design in Strategic Foresight and Innovation at OCAD University, where she also works as a Graduate Research Assistant. She holds a BSc from the University of Waterloo and a Certificate in Adult Education from Seneca College.



ERIN MCLEAN

Canada
mclean23e@gmail.com

Erin holds a Master’s degree and is an experienced volunteer engagement professional with a successful track record in community recruitment, intra-organizational collaboration and program development and implementation. She has focused on this work with multiple organizations at both the provincial and national levels. She is currently the Manager of Volunteer Engagement, Ontario at the Canadian Cancer Society and is actively involved with PAVRO (Professional Association of Volunteer Leaders – Ontario) as a Mentorship Program Mentor, local AVA Liaison and former Young Leader Award Recipient.

Driven by the capacity and possibility of volunteer impact, Erin is passionate about influencing that potential in the work she does and as a member of the volunteer engagement community.



TRACEY O’NEILL, CVA

Australia
volunteervillage@outlook.com

Tracey O’Neill has been involved in volunteer engagement since 2001 and is currently the Manager of Volunteer Engagement at one of the largest metropolitan health services in Victoria, Australia. She recently spent one term as a board member of the Australasian Association for Managers of Volunteers.

Tracey is an advocate for effective volunteer management and developing advanced leadership training opportunities to develop and retain exceptional members of the sector. Tracey is extremely passionate about the elevation of the profession of volunteer engagement and has facilitated numerous presentations for the sector encouraging leaders of volunteers to actively participate in enhancing the visibility, respect and leadership of those in our profession. Tracey would like to see volunteer management become a chosen career path and to see the role occupy senior leadership positions within organisations.

In 2017, Tracey launched her fledgling blog, Volunteer Village, <<https://www.volunteervillage.com.au/>> designed to help create a global community of practice to continue to strengthen the impact and visibility of volunteer management through storytelling. In 2019, Tracey was named co-editor of Voices for e-Volunteerism.



RUTH MILLARD, CVA

Canada
millardruth@gmail.com

Over two decades, Ruth has served the sports, recreation, youth and volunteer management sectors. At two Canadian national organizations, she has designed and facilitated in-person and virtual training; led teams in curriculum development, eLearning platform selection, train-the-trainer channels and been a course manager for over 100 courses and facilitated multiple sessions at national conferences. Ruth’s passion is creating opportunities for people to grow, learn, and make an impact themselves in their communities.

Ruth holds a BBA Accounting and certificates in Volunteer Management, Leadership and Program Evaluation, as well as having her international Certification in Volunteer Administration (CVA). She has also completed the Trainer III Coaching and Adult Development Training Program from Scouts Canada.

Ruth is President, with previous positions as Vice President and Certification Chair at Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC), the national voice in Canada for leaders of volunteers.



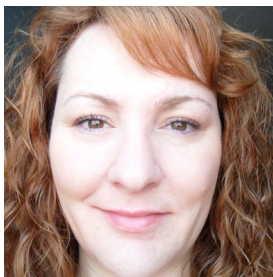
JESSICA PANG-PARKS

Canada
jessicaspparks@gmail.com

Jessica Pang-Parks is a dynamic volunteer engagement professional who is passionate about facilitating engaging learning experiences. Jessica’s background in education theory and practice informs her approach to building meaningful relationships with professional networks and volunteer partners.

At the [Heart & Stroke Foundation](#) in Canada, Jessica works as Ontario’s Senior Specialist, Volunteer Engagement. She provides coaching and subject matter expertise to employees at head office and in communities across the province. In her past role with [Volunteer Toronto’s Grassroots Growth](#) initiative, she trained over 100 leaders from Toronto’s volunteer-run organizations through specialized workshops and online modules. Jessica is proud to bring her firsthand experience in volunteer engagement and as a lifelong learner to her coaching and training practice.

As the 2018-2019 President for TAVA, Jessica led an executive committee to provide meaningful and relevant professional development programming to non-profit colleagues across the Greater Toronto Area. She is thrilled to be part of TAVA’s innovative and resourceful 2019-2020 executive committee as Past President and excited about TAVA’s opportunities to serve its professional community even better.



**ERIN SPINK
M.A. (LEADERSHIP)**

Canada
erin@spinktank.ca

Principal, spinktank www.spinktank.ca.

Erin Spink's interest in volunteers started at the age of six when she pronounced that while it was wrong to eat animals, hamburgers at McDonald's came from "volunteer cows" and therefore an exception could be made. She completed a Certificate with Distinction in Volunteer Program Management, followed by an M.A. (Leadership) where she submitted the first-ever academic research quantifying the concept of "volunteer engagement". Spink's thought-leadership work has been published around the world, including the [CCVA accreditation textbook](#).

She continues to author informative, cutting-edge research that advances the profession through her consulting firm - [spinktank](#) - which offers workshops, free resources and [online courses](#), and its research arm [CARVE](#) (Centre for Advanced Research in Volunteer Engagement). Erin had the honour of serving on the [PAVRO](#) Board for five years, including two as President. For the last several years, Erin has volunteered as the [Training Designs](#) Editor for [e-Volunteerism](#) and co-authors the [Points of View](#) articles with Rob Jackson. Erin was recognized in 2017 with the Linda Buchanan Outstanding Leader of Volunteers award for her contributions to the profession. After 20 years working in Volunteer Engagement, she has changed her mind and no longer believes in eating volunteers.



AMY STOW

United Kingdom
amy@shift.ms

Amy currently works as the Community Engagement Manager at [Shift.ms](#), a digital charity that provides peer support to young people with Multiple Sclerosis. She has worked in volunteer management for 9 years, starting her career in museums and heritage before moving into health charities. Amy understands the needs of bringing together disparate communities, and champions the benefits of volunteering in reducing loneliness and isolation. She is interested in how flexible opportunities can create a pathway to participation, particularly as a route to improve the demographics of a group of volunteers.



BETH STEINHORN

United States of America
beth@vqstrategies.com

Beth partners with organizations and their leadership to increase their impact through strategic and innovative engagement. The author of multiple books and articles on strategic volunteer engagement, she is a popular speaker and trainer, known for her interactive and inspiring presentations.

As a thought leader, Beth regularly participates in the national dialogue about volunteerism and engagement. Her consultations have included developing engagement strategies and trainings for Save the Children USA, American Red Cross, Special Olympics Southern California, and Best Friends Animal Society. As a Service Enterprise Trainer, she has also trained and supported dozens of organizations to become certified Service Enterprises.

Prior to becoming a consultant, Beth worked as an executive director and marketing director for education and faith-based organizations and spent years working with museums as an educator, manager, and anthropologist. She draws upon her anthropology experience still, helping organizations through the culture-shift process—from viewing volunteer management as a program to embracing engagement as a strategy to fulfill mission.



**FAIZA VENZANT,
CVA, CVRM**

Canada
faizavenzant@gmail.com

From a young age, Faiza Venzant's parents instilled a strong sense of volunteerism in herself and her two older brothers. They, as immigrants to Canada from Uganda in the early 70s made a successful transition into Canadian life with the help of many generous volunteers. A volunteer herself from a very young age, she has been a leader in volunteer engagement for the last 18 years speaking, facilitating and learning from others internationally. She is currently General Manager, Volunteer Development at the YMCA of Greater Toronto and maintains her CVA and CVRM certifications in the field of volunteer engagement.

Faiza volunteers as a Board Member with the Council for Certification in Volunteer Administration. She is an active member and volunteer of the Toronto Association for Volunteer Administrators (TAVA), Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC), Professional Association of Volunteer Leaders – Ontario (PAVRO), Association for Leaders in Volunteer Engagement (ALIVE) and North American YMCA Development Organization (NAYDO.)

In 2019, Faiza was the recipient of the inaugural IMPACT award in Canada for Exemplary Volunteer Leadership. She received the PAVRO Linda Buchanan Award in 2013 and has twice received their President's Award for contributions to the profession of volunteer engagement. Faiza is passionate about inclusion in volunteerism. She believes strongly that a community with a thriving volunteer base improves the overall quality of life and health of all its members.

In 2018, Faiza published her first children's book entitled, [My Mamma Wants to Eat Me Up!](#) As a mother of two young boys, she has not actually eaten any of her children up.