

The Functional Approach to Volunteers' Motivations

Gil Clary
College of St. Catherine

and

Mark Snyder
University of Minnesota

Assumptions

1. People are purposeful, planful, goal-directed -- Volunteers engage in volunteer work in order to satisfy important personal goals
2. Different people may do similar things for different reasons -- Volunteers performing the same volunteer activity for the same organization may have different reasons for volunteering
3. Any one individual may be motivated by more than one need or goal -- An individual volunteer may be attempting to satisfy two or more motives through one activity at your organization
4. Outcomes depend on the matching of needs and goals to the opportunities afforded by the environment – Successful volunteer recruitment, satisfaction, and retention is tied to the ability of the volunteer experience to fulfil the volunteer's important motives

The Motivations for Volunteering

Values function

the person is volunteering in order to express or act on important values, such as humanitarianism and helping the less fortunate

Understanding function

the volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world and/or exercise skills that are often unused

Enhancement function

the individual is seeking to grow and develop psychologically through involvement in volunteering

Career function

the volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering

Social function

volunteering allows the person to strengthen one's social relationships

Protective function

the individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems

VOLUNTEERISM QUESTIONNAIRE

Your organization is involved in a project related to volunteer's reasons and experiences with volunteering. On the following pages are two sets of items that concern your experiences as a volunteer with this organization. The first set, **Reasons for Volunteering**, presents 30 reasons that people volunteer and asks that you indicate how important each reason is for you for your volunteering at this organization. The second set, **Volunteering Outcomes**, presents 18 outcomes that can result from volunteering and asks that you indicate whether you have experienced each outcome. You do not need to put your name on the questionnaire.

Reasons for Volunteering

Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate how important or accurate each of the following possible reasons for volunteering is for you in doing volunteer work at this organization. Record your answer in the space next to each item.

- | | not at all important/
accurate for you | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | extremely important/
accurate for you |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <u>Rating</u> | | | | | | | | | |
| — | 1. | | | | | | | | Volunteering can help me get my foot in the door at a place where I'd like to work |
| — | 2. | | | | | | | | My friends volunteer. |
| — | 3. | | | | | | | | I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself. |
| — | 4. | | | | | | | | People I'm close to want me to volunteer. |
| — | 5. | | | | | | | | Volunteering makes me feel important |
| — | 6. | | | | | | | | People I know share an interest in community service. |
| — | 7. | | | | | | | | No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it. |
| — | 8. | | | | | | | | I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving. |
| — | 9. | | | | | | | | By volunteering, I feel less lonely. |
| — | 10. | | | | | | | | I can make new contacts that might help my business career. |
| — | 11. | | | | | | | | Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others. |
| — | 12. | | | | | | | | I can learn more about the cause for which I am working. |
| — | 13. | | | | | | | | Volunteering increases my self-esteem. |
| — | 14. | | | | | | | | Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things. |
| — | 15. | | | | | | | | Volunteering allows me to explore different career options. |
| — | 16. | | | | | | | | I feel compassion toward people in need. |
| — | 17. | | | | | | | | Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service. |
| — | 18. | | | | | | | | Volunteering lets me learn through direct "hands on" experience. |

- ___ 19. I feel it is important to help others.
- ___ 20. Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems.
- ___ 21. Volunteering will help me succeed in my chosen profession.
- ___ 22. I can do something for a cause that is important to me.
- ___ 23. Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best.
- ___ 24. Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.
- ___ 25. I can learn how to deal with a variety of people.
- ___ 26. Volunteering makes me feel needed.
- ___ 27. Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.
- ___ 28. Volunteering experience will look good on my resume.
- ___ 29. Volunteering is a way to make new friends.
- ___ 30. I can explore my own strengths.

Volunteering Outcomes

Using the 7-point scale below, please indicate the amount of agreement or disagreement you personally feel with each statement. Please be as accurate and honest as possible, so we can better understand this organization.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

Rating

- ___ 31. In volunteering with this organization, I made new contacts that might help my business or career.
- ___ 32. People I know best know that I am volunteering at this organization.
- ___ 33. People I am genuinely concerned about are being helped through my volunteer work at this organization.
- ___ 34. From volunteering at this organization, I feel better about myself.
- ___ 35. Volunteering at this organization allows me the opportunity to escape some of my own troubles.
- ___ 36. I have learned how to deal with a greater variety of people through volunteering at this organization.
- ___ 37. As a volunteer in this organization, I have been able to explore possible career options.
- ___ 38. My friends found out that I am volunteering at this organization.
- ___ 39. Through volunteering here, I am doing something for a cause that I believe in.
- ___ 40. My self-esteem is enhanced by performing volunteer work in this organization.

- ___ 41. By volunteering at this organization, I have been able to work through some of my own personal problems.
- ___ 42. I have been able to learn more about the cause for which I am working by volunteering with this organization.
- ___ 43. I am enjoying my volunteer experience.
- ___ 44. My volunteer experience has been personally fulfilling.
- ___ 45. This experience of volunteering with this organization has been a worthwhile one.
- ___ 46. I have been able to make an important contribution by volunteering at this organization.
- ___ 47. I have accomplished a great deal of “good” through my volunteer work at this organization.

48. One year from now, will you be (please circle your best guess as of today):

- A. volunteering at this organization.
- B. volunteering at another organization
- C. not volunteering at all.

Volunteering Outcomes

C = Career

Sc = Social

V = Values

E = Enhancement

P = Protective

U = Understanding

St = Satisfaction