



A Summary of Volunteer Leadership Benchmarking

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Effective volunteer management is an essential element in ensuring a quality service experience. The report is an exploration of best practices of various network affiliates.

Report will be used to inform the implementation and management of a Volunteer Leader Network for Pittsburgh Cares.

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A Summary of Volunteer Leader Benchmarking

May 2009 | A report to the Executive Director of Pittsburgh Cares

Context

In March 2009 Pittsburgh Cares met with SponsorChange.org with the goal of understanding an innovative business model that could potentially add value by training young professionals to become volunteer leaders for Pittsburgh Cares' community connection service projects and other customized service projects.

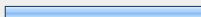
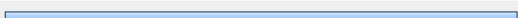

In April 2009, benchmarking around the area of Volunteer Leadership commenced, recognizing the importance of fostering the best service experience for all parties involved.

A recent SponsorChange.org survey found that 72% of non-profit organizations cited that recruitment of highly skilled volunteers was important to furthering their mission (Figure 1). Our surveys also found that roughly ¾ of agencies did not have a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator (Figure 2). Volunteer Coordinators not only contribute to the success of the overall service event, but they execute certain actions such as:

Figure 1 - Importance of highly skilled volunteers

In furthering your organization's mission, how important is the recruitment of highly skilled volunteers?						
	Not important	Moderately Important	Important	Very Important	Rating Average	Response Count
Level of Importance	8.0% (2)	20.0% (5)	28.0% (7)	44.0% (11)	3.08	25
	<i>answered question</i>					25
	<i>skipped question</i>					0

Figure 2 - Presence of volunteer manger

Does your organization have a Volunteer Manager?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes 	28.0%	7
No 	72.0%	18
Other (please specify) 		2
	<i>answered question</i>	
	<i>skipped question</i>	

- Printing and Proving Sign-up sheet
- Arriving to project 15 minutes early
- Acting as Liaison between Pittsburgh Cares and agency
- Contextualizing service project for Volunteers
- Providing brief background on Pittsburgh Cares
- Providing or facilitating background on Agency
- General oversight of volunteers during project
- Leading volunteers though a service reflection
- Submitting sign-up sheets to Pittsburgh Cares

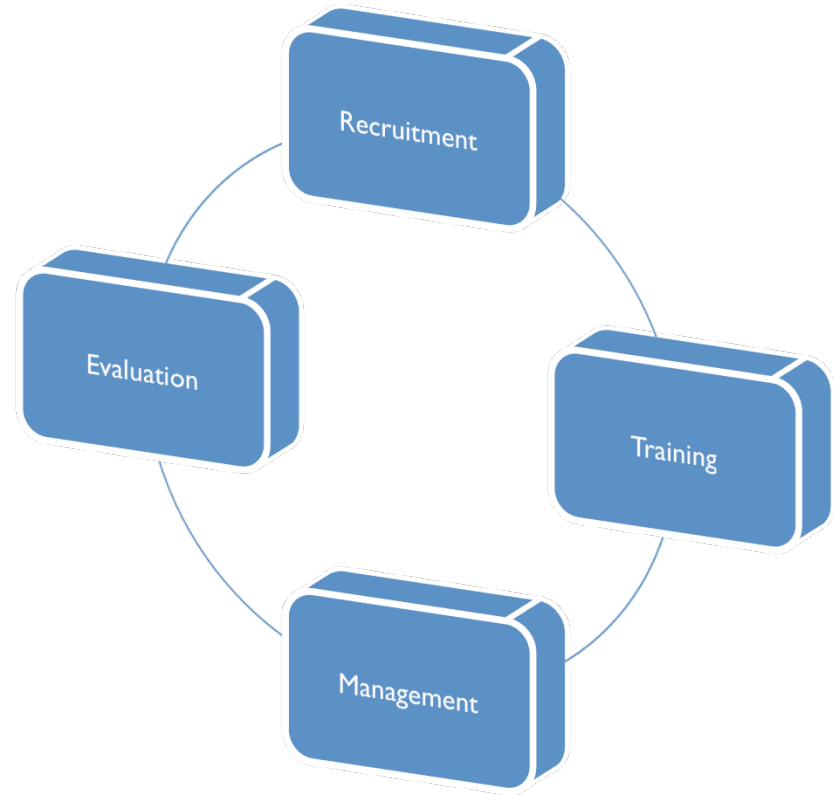
Volunteer Leader Benchmarking

The information set forth was the result of a collaborative effort to share best practices in the area of Volunteer Leadership amongst various affiliates of the Hands on Network. An excel spreadsheet was designed and managed through Google Docs with the purpose of usability, transparency, and overall strengthening communication amongst affiliates. In addition phone interviews were conducted.

As shown to the right, this benchmarking report will focus on four major areas:

- A. **Recruitment** – Attracting volunteer leaders
- B. **Training** – Preparing volunteers for leadership role
- C. **Management** – Engaging and retaining volunteer leaders
- D. **Evaluation** – Measuring impact of volunteer leadership

Figure 3 - Benchmarking Areas



This report will assist Pittsburgh Cares in designing a Volunteer Leader Network that recognizes the challenges and opportunities presented from other affiliates. SponsorChange.org has implemented a plan that has begun to create a Volunteer Leader Network. This plan rewards community service leadership with direct student loan payments for young professionals. Further evaluation will commence to determine areas of effectiveness, and areas for further development.

Table 1 - Recruitment

A. Recruitment

- Dallas is the only affiliate that does not recruit volunteer leaders.
- Most affiliates have found targeted recruitment effective.
- Most affiliates require Volunteer leaders to complete 2-3 service projects.
- Most affiliates use application to select Volunteer Leaders.

Organization	Community Volunteer Leader	Title	Recruitment Process	Selection Criteria
Chicago Cares	Yes	Team Coordinator	Targeted Recruitment and referral	3 projects and Application, interview
Boston Cares	Yes	Project Leader	Project Leaders do not have to recruit their own volunteers, but are encouraged to recruit new PL's from volunteers they find to be really engaged.	3 projects
NY Cares	Yes	Team Leader	-	3 projects and Application
Hands on Miami	Yes	Volunteer Leader	Targeted Recruitment	2 projects, referral
Atlanta	Yes	-	-	-
Dallas	No	-	-	-
Portland	Yes	Volunteer Leader	Targeted outreach	Application w/ References
Seattle Works	Yes	Project Coordinator	Word of mouth; personal asks	Application
Greater D.C. Cares	Yes	Project Coordinator	E-Newsletter; People express interest at orientation and then receive information about training	N/A

Table 2 - Training

Organization	Background Check	Training	VL Manual	Roles
Chicago Cares	No	Roles, expectations, general Chicago Cares background, problem solving scenarios (2.5 hours, once a month) Recertification after 2 years (refresher)	Yes	Sign-up Volunteers, Lead volunteers, Liaison, submit project evaluations
Boston Cares	No	Roles and Responsibilities, Online volunteer management (2hrs)	Yes	Arrive Early, sign in volunteers, be the face of the project, responsible for reflection, lead volunteers through event debrief, take pictures
NY Cares	-	General training	-	-
Hands on Miami	Yes	Monthly class or one on one (2hrs)	Yes, folder of information with waivers, and list of responsibilities	Coordinate the project, plan the project if needed, contact person for project, manager of project, trouble shoot, tell about the agency and social (point of education), remind volunteers of email. Inform volunteer site specific rules and regulations
Atlanta	-	-	-	-
Dallas	-	-	-	-
Portland	No	2x/monthly trainings and one-on-ones in Hands On Technology, Volunteer Leader mentorship	Yes	Manage pre-project communication, arrive early, sign in volunteers, introduce Hands On, facilitate reflection, thank volunteers, be ambassador from Hands On
Seattle Works	No	Yes	Yes	Confirms details with Project Hosts, communicates info to volunteers, acts as ambassador for Seattle Works, helps manage flow of projects, encourages group to reflect
Greater D.C. Cares	No	Yes	Yes	Confirm project details with nonprofit rep; recruit the appropriate number of volunteers for the event; inform volunteers about the event; lead volunteers at the event; report back to GDCC about how things went

B. Training

- Only Miami Cares requires a background check.
- Every affiliate uses a Volunteer Leader Manual.
- Greater D.C. is the only affiliate that requires Volunteer Leader to also help recruit volunteers for projects.
- Similar roles for every affiliate

Table 3 - Management

Chicago Cares	Year of commitment, attend all events that they have signed up for. Back up leaders are required to attend 20% of events	Film forum on different topics, also have speakers, every two years leaders are asked to do refresher training.	Finding leaders for each program, and ensuring quality	Targeted recruitment for people who attended projects, and get feedback from current leader. Improve training and manual for new leaders.
Boston Cares	No monthly commitment	PL social events, one PL-specific project on the Calendar each month led by Boston Cares Program Manager reserved for PLs, have held a PL focus group and a PL re-training event in 2009.	People attend trainings and don't sign up to lead an event	Commitment pledges at trainings that allow Project Leaders to set a personal goal to lead a certain number of projects within a certain time frame.
NY Cares	-	-	-	-
Hands on Miami	Varies depending on which projects they are working on. Generally an hour or two before project.	Events, enrichment, quarterly forums,	Background checks, takes too long to go through the process. Deters people from becoming Volunteer Leaders.	Starting doing the fingerprints at the office to save time and speed up the process.
Atlanta	-	-	-	-
Dallas	-	-	-	-
Portland	Lead a minimum of one project/year OR serve as a VL on a recurring project for at least six (6) consecutive months and coordinate duties with Hands On Program staff	Bi-monthly VL e-newsletter, occasional workshops/focus groups/courses, VL Mentorship Program (still in development- see Strategy for Challenge)	Volunteers attend trainings and then don't follow through	Offering VL mentorship (new leader is paired on a project with an experienced VL) which speeds up training process and alleviates fears of too much time commitment or steep learning curve
Seattle Works	5 hours a month	New and interesting projects; just keep asking; including in recognition events. Socials	Most leaders want to move on to Team Works and being with the same group of people each month	It's good recruitment for Team Works leaders!
Greater D.C. Cares	flexible	-	-	-

C. Management

- Most affiliates require a time commitment, with Chicago cares having the longest of one year
- Boston is the only affiliate that does not have a monthly commitment
- Portland offers mentorship for Volunteer Leaders.
- Most affiliates cited that the biggest challenge is volunteers leaders going through training and not signing up for projects
- Boston Cares Volunteer Leaders create goals and sign a commitment pledge.

Table 4 – Evaluation

D. Evaluation

- Volunteers are surveyed on the success of volunteer leader
- Chicago Cares cites that success is measured from retention of volunteers.
- Most affiliates have a volunteer leader spotlight
- Project leaders receive first pick of projects.
- Retention differs from majority retained to varies greatly
- Most VL are young professionals

Organization	Measuring VL success	Incentives for VL's	Ave. Retention of VL's	Demographics of majority of VL's
Chicago Cares	Retention of volunteers, volunteers signing up for the project	Appreciation events, in-services, free trainings and certifications	-	Most of the leaders are from 18-mid 30's, middle to upper income
Boston Cares	General feedback from volunteers following all projects.	Project leaders receive first pick of projects	Have retained majority of PLs--approx. 75-85 PLs are active each month and sign up to lead at least one project. This amounts to 200+ projects with leaders on the Calendar.	More female than male, age ranging from 16 to 50s.
NY Cares	-	Awards, enrichment, events	-	-
Hands on Miami	Monthly feedback of projects from volunteers, general feedback of volunteers.	VL spotlights, VL of the year, quarterly forums, were they meet other VL, partner with center of the non-profit effectiveness to train in certain others.	Have kept a majority of VL. Some Volunteer Leaders have been leading for a couple years and some are experiencing burn out	Mostly female, mostly Hispanic and Caucasian and a handful a African-Americans, age ranges from early 20's late 30's. (40 active volunteer leaders) (130 total volunteer leaders)
Atlanta	-	-	-	-
Dallas	-	-	-	-
Portland	Volunteer feedback	VL Appreciation party, spotlights in e-news, first pick of projects, leadership/skill development workshops	Varies greatly. Currently 37 VL's lead projects at least 1x/month, some lead a few different projects regularly. Another ~40 are intermittent leaders.	Mostly White/Caucasian, 3/4 female, ages mostly 18-35 up into 70's, income ranges unknown.
Seattle Works	Survey Monkey, anecdotal feedback	-	Varies greatly	20s/30s
Greater D.C. Cares	Volunteer feedback	PC of the Month award	N/A	N/A

Implementation Plan

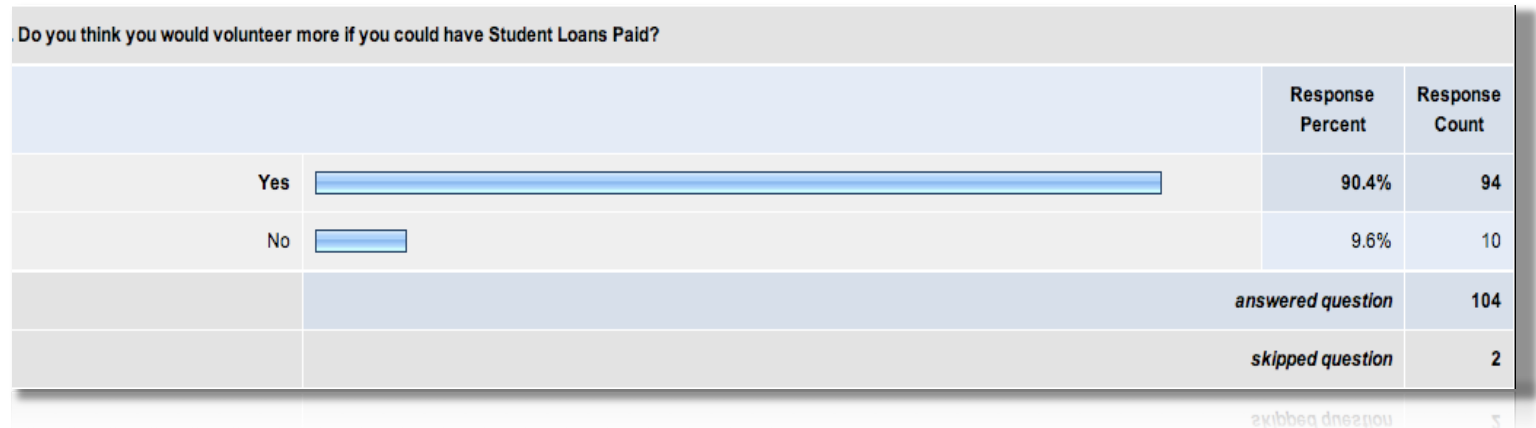
All affiliates have mentioned the importance of having volunteer leaders assigned to calendar projects. However, measuring success continues to be the most challenging aspect of managing a volunteer leader network. It is often difficult to separate the actual project from the volunteer leader. Most of the affiliates have relied on volunteer surveys that rate the volunteer leader in various areas. These surveys may potentially be skewed by the overall success of the event.

As an example one might suggest that if a project was a success overall, this also would indicate an effective volunteer leadership and conversely. However there are many other factors that may contribute to the success of a project i.e. weather conditions, nature of project, personal feelings, etc. Henceforth it becomes difficult and time intensive to control for a vast amount of factors.

The single most challenging aspect of managing a volunteer leader network for all affiliates is the retention of volunteer leaders. Affiliates have dealt with this challenge by offering volunteer leaders mentors and commitment pledges.

SponsorChange.org has been implemented for its potential to attract and retain young professional volunteer leaders. In addition to young professionals giving back their time to lead service projects they are rewarded with direct student loan payments. In a recent SponsorChange.org survey 90% of survey takers cited they would volunteer more if they were rewarded student loan payments.

Figure 4 - Increasing community service



Although it is too early access the success, preliminary results have showed that many participants are enjoying their time as a volunteer leader. Andrea Proie a graduate of University of Pittsburgh shared, “ I am left with the drive, determination, and craving to continue to volunteer because of the opportunity SponsorChange has given me. This is more than just getting help to pay back your student loans; It's about making the most of this life were blessed with. Such a simple, yet ingenious plan! Thanks to Pittsburgh Cares, SponsorChange and the donors for this opportunity!”

Further qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed for Pittsburgh Cares and SponsorChange.org at the conclusion of the program. It is the intention of SponsorChange.org to use the program results and guidance of Pittsburgh Cares to continue to develop Volunteer Leaders.