

Strategic Volunteer Engagement

Volunteer Calgary
Annual General Meeting

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Strategic Volunteer Engagement

- A look at the language of SVE
- Findings from research on High Skills Volunteers
- What we've learned
- What we see for the future

The Language

- Highly skilled
- Professional
- Specialized
- Customized
- Lead
- Pro bono
- Boutique
- Etc...

Strategic Volunteer Engagement

Strategic:

- Of or relating to strategy
- Important or essential to a plan of action
- Highly important to an intended object

Implies that volunteers:

- Make a real impact on the organization
- Are engaged thoughtfully and deliberately
- Play key roles in the organization

Strategic Volunteer Engagement

Engagement:

- an appointment or arrangement:
- a pledge; an obligation or agreement
- employment, or a period or post of employment

Engagement implies that:

- Volunteers are involved in the work of the organization
- The organization and the volunteers make a commitment to each other
- There are negotiated parameters and goals associated with the volunteer position

Strategic Volunteer Engagement

Dynamic:

- Vigorously active, changing over time, pertaining to or characterized by energy or effective action

Flexible:

- An ability to change and accommodate for changes in the environment

Serendipity:

- An aptitude for making desirable discoveries by accident

High Skills Pilot Project

Volunteer Calgary ran a pilot project to determine what was required to support the engagement of “highly skilled” volunteers:

- January 2007 to December 2007
- Seven nonprofit organizations involved
- Participated in 9 workshops
- Offered coaching, but most did not utilize

What Research Told Us

- The critical role of the Executive Director or CEO in successful volunteer engagement
- The essential role of the Manager of Volunteers
- The existence and use of an Integrated Human Resource Strategy
- Creating a culture that values and embraces volunteers

What Practice Told Us

- Strategic Volunteer Engagement applies to all volunteers in your organization, not just high skills
- Human Resource (Volunteer) Management is dynamic and requires an adaptive approach
- Requires a connection between your strategic plan and your Human Resources (Volunteer) Plan

What Practice Told Us

- The ED/CEO and the Board are the champions of successful Strategic Volunteer Engagement
- Requires negotiation with the volunteer
- Managers of Volunteers must have sufficient influence to incorporate volunteers into organizational goals
- Managers of Volunteers must be supported with appropriate professional development

What Practice Told Us

- There are volunteers who want to make a real impact and are willing to work with you to find the right role
- Requires us to rethink the traditional volunteer management cycle
- Considering changing how programs are delivered so that volunteers can be engaged
- Requires the organization to take some risks

What Practice Told Us

- Organizations can benefit from being aware of environmental changes and recognizing the opportunities that these may present
- Offers an opportunity to increase the capacity of individual organizations and the overall sector
- Some organizations are already doing this very well

What's Next

- Foster communication with and among our member organizations around how they are engaging volunteers successfully, provide opportunities for them to learn from each other
- Support the professional development and certification of Directors and Managers of Volunteer Resources – increase the influence these roles have within organizations
- Communicate with senior management of nonprofit organizations, particularly CEO's/ED's about the impact and investment volunteers can make in achieving their mission and goals

What's Next

- Learn more about what volunteers are looking for by talking with volunteers – develop social marketing that encourages volunteers to be active and responsible for their own volunteer experience
- Advocate for the professional management of both staff and volunteers in the sector
- Encourage those who engage and support volunteers to approach each volunteer as an opportunity to grow and strengthen their organization

Thanks!

Questions and Thoughts...