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# Connect-Active: An Innovative Recruitment Model for Potential Volunteers in Nonprofit Organizations

*Bernadene Erasmus and Peter J. Morey*

## Abstract

The challenge to improve the recruitment and sustainability of a strong volunteer force within nonprofit organizations gains momentum at a time when the impact of a worldwide ageing population has the potential to stretch community services, which are heavily reliant on this “free resource,” to the limit. Adroit management practice becomes critical within a complex environment in which a “one-size-fits-all” strategy is obsolete. This study of a faith-based hybrid organization in Australia uses a cross-disciplinary, multidimensional approach to develop the connect-active model (CAM) for volunteer recruitment strategy. Facilitated by a visual tool, the model depicts the interrelated and multi-faceted elements impacting on the initial volunteering process: recruitment. The proposed chapter will discuss an innovative and individualized approach to volunteer recruitment with the aim of increasing volunteer numbers in nonprofit organizations.

**Keywords:** volunteering, faith-based, recruitment, management

## 1. Introduction

**Connection:** The concept embodies a pervading strand representing every strata of human experience, from the umbilical cord to scientific neurons and the theories of being. Connection to the micro, meso and macro levels of life contains, within its essence, the potential for individuals and society to sustain wellbeing. Disconnection, on the other hand, a startling phenomenon of contemporary living, bears within it, seeds detrimental to society’s welfare.

A growing awareness of the impact of disconnection has resulted in increasing awareness in diverse spheres of the need to establish reconnection. Books with titles such as *Lost Connections* [1]; YouTube conversations with the CEO of Amazon, Jeffrey Bezos; and even Disney cinema themes highlight the need to address human connection. This issue is no less relevant to the life of nonprofit organizations.

It is in direct response to the challenge faced by nonprofit organizations to connect and retain volunteers, in essence the life-blood of many nonprofits, that this study was launched. In order to gain understanding of actual elements impacting the phases of volunteer experience, a mixed method design was adopted to explore the factors that influence the recruitment, experience and retention of a sample

of faith-based volunteers at an Australian hybrid organization. Results led to the development of the connect-active model (CAM) which identifies actuators as real-time connectors to positive recruitment. The model forms part of a larger study which incorporated all phases of the volunteer experience. In this chapter, the focus falls on the initial stage: recruitment. The chapter starts with a sketch of the volunteering context before discussing the individual actuators that impact on the connection of potential volunteers to volunteering service as illustrated in the CAM model. The discussion concludes with a list of practical recommendations aimed at enhancing effective volunteer management with particular reference to the initial phase: recruitment.

## **2. Context**

The role of volunteers in societies which are facing the impact of a worldwide ageing phenomenon is gaining momentum. Reports from many countries, starting to come to grips with providing basic structural foundations to cope with the challenges associated with ageing citizens, indicate that current infrastructure may not support the opportunities that increased life expectancy potentially creates. A recent article in *Time* magazine (February, 2019) predicts that by 2050, 330 million Chinese will be 65+ years of age [2]. The article references the chairman of Stirling Finance Ltd., Stuart Leckie, who regards it as the “No. 1” economic challenge of the future. By 2030, 20% of Americans will have reached retirement age, outnumbering the number of children for the first time in history. Data from the Australian Bureau of Standards [3] mirror these global trends. In June 2014, 15% of the Australian population was aged 65 years and older. This cohort is estimated to reach between 11.5 and 18.1 million by 2101. In addition, the number of people in Australia aged 85 years and older is expected to triple in less than 25 years. Such is the scale of the challenge that the World Health Organization (WHO) has called on all decision-makers, practitioners and researchers to increase the focus on addressing the profound consequences of global ageing on society as well as on the individual.

The implications of the abovementioned statistics mean that on international and national fronts, governments are facing shrinking tax bases along with increasing community needs. In an attempt to meet these escalating social service demands, attention is becoming focused on nonprofit organizations which generally comprise large contingents of “free” resource in the form of volunteers. The significance of nonprofit organizations as key players, seen distinct from for-profit organizations, is gaining momentum as their potential contribution to society is recognized [4–6]. In view of these escalating social needs, there is a growing trend for nonprofit organizations to provide services which were traditionally the responsibility of the government [7–12].

## **3. Nonprofit challenges**

The nonprofit sector, however, has challenges of its own. The nature of these challenges is well documented in the literature [4, 13–15]. They include a move to professionalism, decreased government funding and a growing dependence on a voluntary work force. In fact, the literature suggests that nonprofit organizations, in general, would struggle to operate without volunteers [16]. Volunteer management, however, has evolved considerably from the erstwhile approach of management principles based on goodwill and informality. In a contemporary setting, many

nonprofits consist of a diverse composition of workers ranging from full-time employees, part-time volunteer workers and non-paid volunteers. Management of this diverse range of workers means that nonprofit organizations will not retain volunteers if they are treated as a homogenous, well-meaning group of amateurs. Leaders and coordinators will need to incorporate an awareness of diversity including volunteer trends, generational and cultural differences and worker classification. In order to recruit and retain individuals who are not primarily motivated by financial initiatives, it has become crucial for volunteer management to find approaches that are relevant and effective if they are to retain people who give of their time freely and mostly for altruistic reasons.

#### **4. The functional approach**

One area of enquiry with potential to increase insight into the recruitment and retention of volunteers involves the consideration of the underlying social and psychological motivations of volunteers. Employing a functional approach, the volunteer function inventory, VFI [17], is an internationally verified survey instrument which identifies six underlying volunteer motivational functions associated with the initial phase of volunteering. Despite its wide application in motivational research, however, the VFI is essentially of generic relevance, and even in the view of Clary et al. [17], there may well be variation in the number and type of functions in varying contexts and volunteer type.

To address this issue, Erasmus and Morey [18], in a previous paper, selected a functional approach to test the applicability of the VFI to the initial motivations of a sample of faith-based volunteers at a nonprofit hybrid organization in Australia. For this context, four factors emerged as significant underlying social and psychological motivations for volunteering. The four-factor motivation model that emerged included three of Clary et al.'s [17] VFI functions: values, social and career. The fourth factor consisted of a combination of the elements of Clary et al.'s enhancement and understanding factors. Analysis suggested that the themes inherent in these items related to a real-world construct labelled enrichment. The enrichment factor may be described as opportunity for volunteers to learn and grow personally in their understanding of themselves and the world and to use this experience to benefit the lives of others. The final four-factor structure is considered reliable given that each factor has an allocation of five or more items with loadings  $>0.5$  and internal reliabilities of 0.836 for enrichment, 0.828 for career, 0.767 for social and 0.640 for values. The new structure was titled the faith-based volunteer motivation (FVM) scale, and its validity was tested against levels of volunteer satisfaction for this sample of volunteers.

Research further suggested that in respect of volunteering, there might be initial motivating factors other than the six functions proposed by Clary et al. [17]. Wilson [19] in a review of volunteering research indicated that one of the limitations of Clary et al.'s VFI was that the set of motivation factors outlined was neither exclusive nor exhaustive. Based on these views, additional functions were added to the FVM, and these were found to have particular relevance for this context. Two items from Esmond and Dunlop's volunteer motivation inventory (VMI) [20] were added: reactivity and reciprocity. Reactivity outlines the response of volunteers to critical events in their past, while reciprocity represents the desire of volunteers to "give back" to the community in the form of service. A third motivator, value congruence, based on the work of Wright and Pandey [21], was included to reflect the alignment of individual volunteer values with those of the organization.

Motivational functions	Scale ranking
Values	1
Values congruence	2
Enrichment	3
Reactivity	4
Social	5
Reciprocity	6
Career	7

**Table 1.**  
*Ranking of initial FVM and non-FVM motivation factors.*

A scale was generated for each of these non-FVM motivational functions by calculating the mean of the respective responses. The scales were all scored on a four-point Likert scale. A scale mean of 2.5 or greater would indicate that a majority of this sample agreed or strongly agreed that the function was a strong motivator for their initial volunteer decision. Factor analysis and correlational analysis which indicated that the correlation coefficients between the respective non-FVM motivation factors were all below 0.287 would suggest that these factors are distinct and relevant motivators for these faith-based volunteers.

The mean of the FVM motivation factors and the additional non-FVM motivation factors was determined, and these means were compared to generate a ranking of the respective motivating factors impacting the initial stage of the volunteering process for faith-based volunteers. The combined initial motivation factors ranking is illustrated in **Table 1**.

5. Call for more

Although the value of reliable and valid survey instruments is acknowledged, it is recognized that there are potentially relevant categories which are not specifically covered in this paradigm [22]. One such category is religion which, even when taken into account via survey research, may potentially oversimplify the analysis of complex phenomena such as spirituality. Voices in the literature have called for further studies employing a qualitative orientation to ensure richer and more in-depth insights by incorporating the voice of volunteer experience [23, 24]. In order to address this issue, this research adopted a mixed method approach which included both a survey instrument and semi-structured interviews in a concurrent design. Results from the quantitative and qualitative orientations were synthesized in a quest to gain a more holistic insight into the research phenomena.

In addition, a holistic approach necessitated a consideration of the multi-dimensional nature of volunteering. In fact, volunteering has been described as an “inherently multi-dimensional phenomenon” ([25], p. 20). Coupled with a multidimensional approach then, this research aims to inform a diversity of stakeholders about factors which may enhance effective management practice. The chapter forms part of a wider study which incorporates all phases of the volunteer experience: recruitment, experience and retention. In this section, however, focus will principally be on the initial phase: recruitment. This division of phase is purely conceptual as themes and actuators interplay in a complexity of ways across all phases.



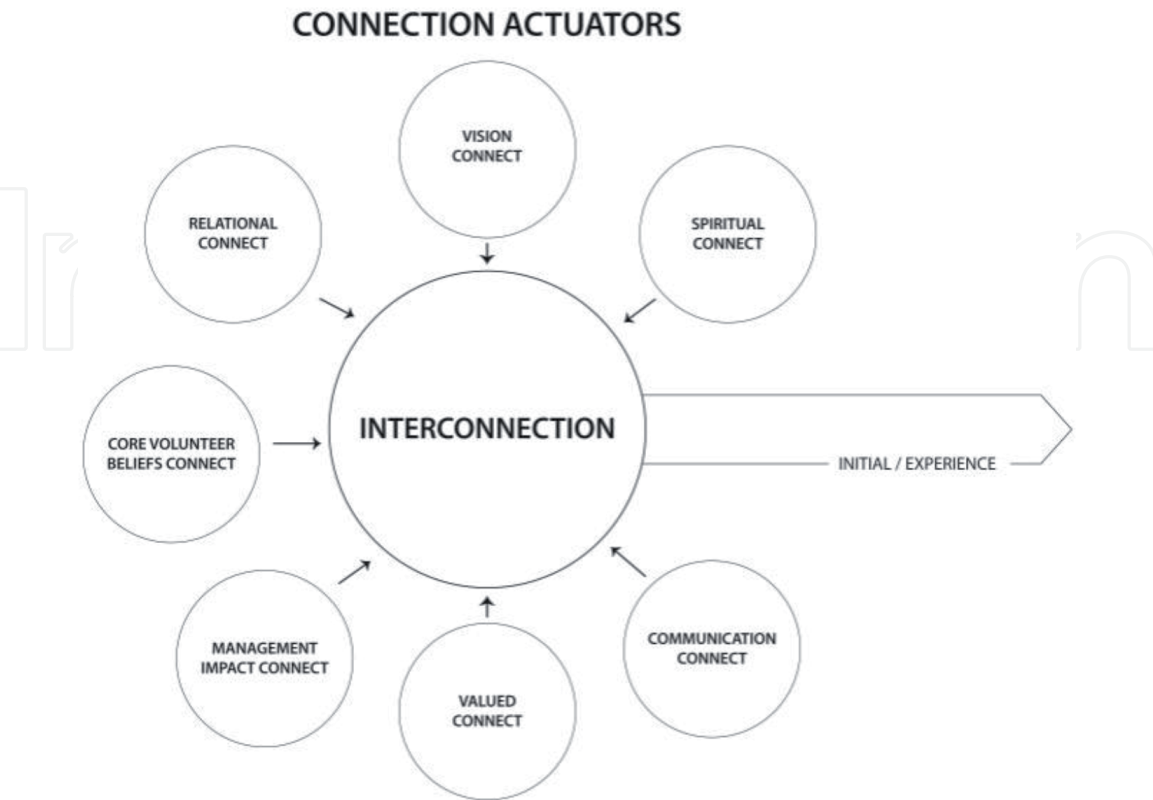
## 6. Recruitment

For the purpose of this study, the volunteering process is conceptualized as follows: recruitment, experience and retention. This broad framework is based loosely on the classic model developed by Omoto and Snyder [26]. Their model encompasses three broad and sequential phases: antecedents, experiences and consequences. The selection of a more generic model was deemed a good fit as it emerged naturally from the data, which allowed for greater flexibility and enabled the research to retain an essential focus on managerial practice.

The recruitment phase encompasses the initial phase in which volunteers are attracted to an organization and focuses on the elements that impact their decision to volunteer. The initial stage of the volunteering process which includes management recruitment strategies has received considerable attention in the literature. The significance is highlighted by authors such as Wilson [19] who writes “The search for the antecedents of volunteerism is a search for the cause of volunteerism.” This pre-eminence may be attributed to the conundrum which continues to surround the initial decision to volunteer. While there appears to be less mystery surrounding the reasons for individuals to seek paid employment, the answer to why individuals give time willingly to benefit others without primarily seeking financial gain tends to remain open-ended [25].

## 7. The connect-active model

From the converged results which emerged from this mixed method research, a model was developed which outlines the interplay of themes impacting the initial phase of volunteering: the connect-active model (**Figure 1**). This visual model illustrates the significance of the interrelation between elements of themes as well



**Figure 1.**  
*Connect-active model (CAM) for recruitment.*

as the interconnection between themes themselves. Actuators are defined as distal factors which, when facilitated by management practice, impact recruitment and have the potential to perpetuate connection. To facilitate understanding, actuators are discussed individually in the section that follows. In practice, however, these actuators co-exist in a multidimensional and complex interplay impacting on the recruitment of faith-based volunteers. The following connecting actuators, identified as having primary impact on volunteer connection, will not be discussed in any hierarchical form as they are deemed to be of equal weight in impacting the recruitment of volunteers.

## **8. Core belief connect**

The core belief actuator may be defined as a pathway incorporating essential individual values which represent the scaffolding of the perspective worldview of the volunteers. For these faith-based individuals, the opportunity to serve others and the potential for personal learning and spiritual growth, as well as the chance to enhance life experience and self-concept, emerged as principal values impacting on their decision to volunteer. This finding complements a study by Fitzpatrick et al. [27] who propose that prime components of volunteering include personal growth and learning. Motivation, based on organizational opportunity for growth and learning, has also been noted by Bassous [28].

In general, these participants adopted an altruistic approach to volunteering. Recurrent phrases, such as “for others” and “for the benefit of people,” were evident in conversation with this sample. They perceived the essence of volunteering to mean service with the potential to positively impact the lives of others, suggesting that they viewed volunteering essentially in altruistic terms. This view concurs with that of a study by Bassous [28] who found that most faith-based participants in his study associated with the concept of altruism. It also concurs with the finding that Australian volunteers in general serve primarily for other orientated reasons [29].

These views were prominent both in the interviewing process and in the high ratings given to non-FVM motivations in the survey phase: reactivity (helping others because of personal difficult experiences) and reciprocity (helping for mutual benefit). An opportunity to “do good” and give back to the community in the form of service to others was regarded by this sample of volunteers as a decisive reason for deciding to volunteer. This view was complemented and expanded in the qualitative data to include an understanding of initial motivation in the context of participants’ perception of spirituality. In conversation, these faith-based participants perceived reciprocity not only in terms of giving back to people but also to God.

The sample in this study found no conflict with their faith beliefs in embracing volunteering as an opportunity for personal growth and learning which they understood in relation to the development of skills and knowledge, the broadening of world experience and the potential for spiritual maturation. For the majority, learning and growing were not regarded as a self-directed, selfish ambition but a means of improving self for the service of others. Consequently, a volunteer course in Japanese culture was regarded as beneficial both for individual development and as potentially increasing effectiveness during an upcoming Japanese mission trip. The exception was advocated by several younger members for whom career opportunities formed a primary motivation. Some younger individuals signed up to volunteer in the hospitality division with the aim of training as a barrister which potentially increased their employability in paid positions. For this sample as a whole, across

generation and gender, however, the value of personal growth in terms of increased understanding of other cultures and the potential to grow in spiritual maturity were rated highly and linked to satisfaction with volunteering experience.

## **9. Mission connect**

Personal beliefs and values were found to be closely aligned to mission congruence in this study. Results from the quantitative phase, in particular, indicated that value congruence was a strong initial motivating factor for these participants. The alignment of personal values with those of the organization was perceived to frame an important element in the initial decision to volunteer at a specific organization. In this study the concept of mission congruence was somewhat distinctive from value congruence in that it incorporated a divine element. While value congruence was seen principally as an alignment between individual values and those of the organization, mission congruence implied a wider perception in which the vision extended to a meta-identity of a worldwide mission of serving God and people.

In this study, participants perceived that they were aligned, not only with the values of the organization which implied faith-based beliefs but indeed with the meta-vision of faith believers universally. The association with a worldwide vision, incorporated in the mission statement of the FBO where they were serving, was perceived by these volunteers to be an important factor in deciding to volunteer. Belonging to a mission, connected to something bigger than local projects, was enticing to volunteers who wanted their lives to make a difference on a global scale. This insight brought some illumination to the fact that these faith-based volunteers placed relatively less emphasis on organizational commitment. Initially this result appeared incongruent, given the importance of this phenomenon in the literature [30]. When considered in the context of the significance of participants' primary commitment to personal faith and to a meta-vision, this result is less surprising. This has implications not only for the initial stage of volunteering and recruitment but also for the other phases: experience and retention.

What potentially sustains volunteering for this sample, therefore, is a commitment not only to the organization in which they serve but more so to a strong link with their personal faith call and a connection to a worldwide mission. This sense of commitment to a universal vision, a bigger picture, potentially constituted a significant factor in sustaining connection and by implication, impacting positively on intention to remain in service. It may be concluded that for this sample of faith-based volunteers, a spiritual element is inextricably part of the mission connection. Consequently, establishing vision congruence in the initial phase is important but not sufficient for promoting sustainability. Volunteer management is advised to continually ensure that volunteers are connected to the wider mission statement of the FBO.

## **10. Spiritual connect**

Spirituality, as a distinctive motivating factor, emerged strongly from participant interviews in this study. Insight gained into the role of spirituality, indicated in all stages of the volunteering process, contributed to a better understanding of faith-based volunteering in general. The significance of the spiritual function finds complement in the view of Pargament [31], who proposes that the spiritual function is the most salient motivating factor for faith-based individuals.

In this study, participants described spirituality essentially as centred on their experience with a relationship with the divine. For this sample, this definition was



significant in distinguishing the understanding of spirituality from that of religiosity which they perceived as relating primarily to a sense of legalism. The call to serve, perceived as a universal tenet of faith teaching, was individualized through personal directive. Participants referred to this as “the call” and ascribed “answering the call” (putting it into practice) as a response to a revelation based on relationship and not as a result of legalistic obligation. The call of God was operationalized in diverse ways in varying pathways through the course of a personal lifespan. Although the course of the call might vary in diverse environments and circumstances, participants ascribed an ongoing connection with the call as the mainstay of sustainability. This endorses the view that although the phases of volunteer experience may be conceptualized separately, motivations for initial, experience and retention overlap and intertwine in practice.

A sense of enjoyment and satisfaction with the volunteering experience was enhanced, for this sample, by a sense of divine affirmation. Spiritual coping, which was described as divine support and encouragement, was strongly indicated in volunteer retention. Although faith-based volunteers in this study acknowledged that principally they faced the same challenges as their non-faith-based counterparts, their way of potentially overcoming these challenges was described as being rooted in a personal relationship with God who supported them through crises and provided a way out. This sense of being connected to a divine source in times of challenge was seen by this sample to be significant in sustainability.

Another interesting finding from the data was that although the initial motivation for some participants may have been Clary et al.'s [17] social factor, it was spiritual motivation that was described as the main sustaining actuator by the majority of those interviewed in this study. This result is complementary to the proposal by Ozorak [32] that initial motivations are not necessarily the ones that sustain volunteering over the course of time. Volunteer management, consequently, cannot assume that initial motivations remained unchanged.

## **11. Relational connect**

While the call to serve originated mostly from a divine directive for this sample, the actualization of prosocial service was invariably connected to human relations. While spirituality played a primary role in the initial volunteering process for this sample, the role of meaningful human relations too played a pivotal role in all stages of the volunteering process. In the survey results, participants returned a high rating for the initial motivation of the VFI social function which is described as essentially being connected to others and feeling endorsed by significant others. An overview statement proposes that the connection of individuals to a personal divine relationship, as well as meaningful relationships with a diversity of human agencies, may be regarded as representing principal actuators in engaging potential volunteer recruits.

In the initial phase, several relational threads were identified as necessary to connect potential individuals with volunteering service. These included church members, family, friends, social networks and leadership relationships. As members of the church, some participants were socialized into organizational norms and practices ahead of the decision to volunteer. One young adult male volunteer said:

*So it was just what you did at church—you served.*

The influence of family emerged as another important influential connector in promoting a positive response to volunteering. This result echoes the views

of Musick and Wilson [33] who advocate the importance of understanding “the dynamics of the household” in volunteer practice. A young female participant attested to the positive influence of family in her decision to volunteer:

*Mum and dad taught us that routine (to volunteer) and they planted that in us, you know. Yeah, yeah, I think it's just something in the family.*

The influence of culture in which family traditions are embedded provided a fascinating aspect of factors impacting volunteering. This is an area of study that requires further investigation. Owing to the limitation of this section, the issue can only be highlighted and not discussed at any length. One example, however, may suffice to ignite interest. In pursuing the theme of culture and family as volunteer connectors, one young male volunteer from the Pacific Islands reflected:

*So I think it's really embedded in me culture-wise: To see my mum and dad do stuff like that. You could probably say it's “volunteering” but I never saw it as that. Just helping, helping out, yeah.*

Among the younger volunteers, several said that they had been invited to join by peers. In addition, the role of social media as an emerging connector requires attention in future studies. For all age and gender considerations in this study, personal relationships were regarded as a significant connector in the antecedent as well as the initial stage of volunteering. In general, all participants confirmed that the enjoyment of making new friends, the support from existing friendship circles and the potential to realise a sense of accomplishment through group efforts were significant factors impacting the volunteering experience. Social networks in the initial stage were seen to represent varying levels of relationships. The identified pathways connecting individuals to volunteering through relating and belonging in this study have much in common with the community-based routes described by Omoto and Snyder [26].

There was a general expectation among the faith-based volunteers at the FBO in this study that leadership and management cultivate relationships with volunteers, be prepared to sacrifice time and energy in connecting with volunteer teams and be seen publically to volunteer themselves. In addition, participants stressed the importance of having the right leader in the current complex volunteer management environment. They acknowledged the challenge faced by management called to lead teams comprising both unpaid and partly paid volunteers. For their part, volunteer management and leaders at the FBO expressed an awareness of these expectations and endorsed the significance of fostering relationships with volunteers. A young female volunteer youth leader summed it up as follows:

*Everything has to be done and spoken through relationship.*

Within the current complexities of contemporary volunteer management and the ongoing challenge of fostering positive relationships, both management and volunteers acceded to the importance of recognizing the concept of belonging as a vital connecting link in the understanding of positive volunteering experience. All participants, including volunteers, management and leadership indicated that they made a clear distinction between belonging to a club and a deeper connection of belonging to a “family” of faith-based volunteers. Despite adopting a sense of belonging as a vital part of the volunteer management philosophy, fostering a sense of belonging for the younger generation potentially posed a more complex challenge. A young adult male youth leader explained:

*So, you know, a young person doesn't have to volunteer somewhere to belong. They can belong on an internet forum or they can get that on their iPhone. I think we are looking at an age where interaction is not a necessity for young people to belong. So, we have to create something that is real.*

The importance relegated to the development and maintenance of “real” personal relationships in the volunteering process emerged from the data for all gender and age categories. The value attached to relational connection by females in this study was not a surprise, given that the preference given by female volunteers to relational roles has been documented in the literature [34]. What was a little more surprising was the relatively high rating given by males to the social function in this study. This priority was recorded not only as an initial motivator but also as an ongoing source of connection, particularly as indicated by mature male volunteers who spoke of the importance of the “bloke connection” in task accomplishment. A link between males and the social function has also been noted in a study by Stukas et al. [29].

The significance of actively fostering relational connection and a sense of belonging is underscored when the converse is considered. Volunteers who had left the FBO had done so as a result of becoming disconnected from peers, from leadership and from the organization in general. Participants expressed the view that if individuals were not serving in some capacity, they found it difficult to maintain connection and invariably left feeling devalued. Creating a sense of being valued is initiated in the recruitment phase. Empirical evidence supports the view that personal invitation remains the most effective form of increasing decision to volunteer. It is a sense of being acknowledged as someone who has potential to make a difference that creates a feeling of being valued according to volunteers who were interviewed.

## **12. Valued connect**

In addition to the significance ascribed to a feeling of being valued by God, positive personal relationships with volunteer managers and leaders in particular were seen to play an important role in fostering a sense of personal value. For this sample, this perception of being valued included not only recognition for the skills and service offered but also affirmation of the individual per se. A distinction was therefore made between acknowledgement (reward and recognition) and affirmation (personal attributes). Participants described the difference as being between “what I do” and “who I am.” For these volunteers, acknowledgement could be expressed through diverse forms of recognition and reward and be delivered through a variety of human agents providing it conveyed a sense of being valued. Cultivating a culture where volunteers experience a high level of being valued from the initial phase posed the strongest counter strategy to a “commodity” culture in which volunteers felt acknowledgement only for the service rendered.

Although the majority of participants placed primary importance on intrinsic reward, they did not discount extrinsic reward in the form of small tokens of appreciation. Further, there was no evidence to support the view that the expressed need for acknowledgement suggested any “crowding out” effect for this sample. This is in line with the findings of Bassous [28] that intrinsic motivation, which is closely aligned to personal faith, may be enhanced by external factors if extrinsic reward is effectively administered. In the current study, these tokens of recognition were regarded as non-calculating bonuses aimed at expressing a sense of being valued and not as ego-enhancing reward. In summary, participants

expressed the view that in accepting these rewards, they were being recognized for their volunteering as opposed to volunteering for recognition. Consequently, it is suggested that volunteer management actively work to incorporate both acknowledgement and affirmation in communicating value to volunteers throughout the volunteer experience.

### 13. Communication connect

The role of relevant, contemporary language in the recruitment of volunteers, in enhancing volunteer experience and in strengthening future commitment, emerged from the data as having significant subagent impact on the volunteering process. This is a broad theme which incorporates subthemes of metaphor and meaning and has been extensively discussed in the wider thesis and in the literature. This section will only touch on two aspects of the phenomena: definition and relational language.

Feedback from focal meetings and a reading of the data indicated a general acceptance of the current generic definitions of volunteering such as the 2015 definition offered by Volunteering Australia:

*Volunteering is time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.*

Participants felt, however, that there would be a stronger connection if definition included salient elements of volunteering type in specific context. These faith-based volunteers suggested that the incorporation of words such as God, vision and helping others would strengthen identification and foster connection with their volunteering experience. The following definition compiled by participants of the focal groups reflects this view:

*Faith-based volunteering is helping, supporting and building the vision of God collaboratively to extend the kingdom of God.*

Relational language was shown in the data to be of significance in connecting and sustaining a sense of social cohesion for all participants but particularly for the younger members in this sample. In conversation, youth leadership at the FBO emphasized that connection with youth “had to be relational.” In addition, there needed to be a constant assessment of traditionally relevant volunteering terminology. In this context, it emerged that in some instances, youthful members considered the term “volunteering” to reference community work, while “service” was perceived to be related to church-related volunteering activities. One youth leader advised that for younger members of his team, the word “volunteering” was “just not a young person word.”

Overall results suggest that volunteer management can no longer assume the relevance of traditional terminology relating to volunteering. Consequently, it is recommended that an awareness of language relevance be borne in mind to ensure continued connection between volunteer nomenclature and volunteer experience. Results from this study complements strongly the view of Sider and Unruh [35] to the effect that a “one-size-fits-all language yields one-size-fits-all-policies” (p. 110). Conclusion from the current research indicates clearly that a “one-size-fits-all” volunteer management strategy has been given the thumbs down in favour of management diversity based on connect-actual relational links established through contemporary relevant language.



## **14. Management connect**

It appeared evident that potential volunteers envisaged some form of relational connection with volunteer leaders and managers in the course of their service. Further, they expected leaders to connect them to an experience where they could potentially make a difference in the lives of others and at the same time learn and grow as individuals. In principle, they supported an environment in which change, growth, the suggestion of new ideas and participation in decision-making affecting volunteer management were encouraged. Before registering interest, potential volunteers appeared to seek confirmation that they could expect freedom to voice opinion and to be granted some form of self-governance.

These faith-based volunteers in general were happy with autonomous practices within a form of structure based on a family model adopted by the FBO. In this model, leadership encouraged the idea of mentors, with similarity to the concept of parental guidance, rather than authoritarian voice. The perception that they would be connected to volunteering as members of a “family” rather than being regarded as “unpaid workers” meant there was variance in the way these volunteers expected the structure to operate. This could lead to interesting dynamics in the way volunteer managers negotiate these varying expectations. The issue is only highlighted here and needs further investigation to increase insight.

The importance of identifying initial motivating functions of faith-based volunteers and matching these to initial volunteering activities in order to promote potential satisfaction with experience has been referred to in a previous paper [18]. It is reiterated here as a significant connecting exercise. The efforts of management to connect potential volunteers to a “good fit” volunteering task is perceived by these participants to indicate an expression of valuing the individual.

## **15. Conclusion**

The development of the connect-active model for volunteer recruitment has been inspired by the desire to join the commendable efforts of representatives from a diversity of sectors, to foster connection and sustainability in volunteerism. In this respect the role of nonprofit organizations is assuming a pivotal place in meeting the needs of increasing ageing communities. Volunteers who already represent a significant slice of the answer to meeting community needs pose an even greater potential for addressing future challenge—but only if their value is recognized and operationalized in effective management practice. The connect-active model (CAM) volunteer recruitment highlights the need to acknowledge specificity of context by identifying underpinning metaphor and developing actual pathways of connectivity to ensure a best fit between recruit and organization. By adopting a pragmatic lens, it is hoped that the application of the theoretical framework to a practical model will facilitate volunteer management to promote and sustain an irrefutably valuable social resource: volunteers.

## **16. Recommendations**

In line with the overarching paradigm of pragmatism adopted in this study, results from the data suggested practical recommendations for enhancing effective management practice for faith-based volunteers in a specific context. Wider application awaits further enquiry, but it is proposed that some suggestions may potentially have relevance for other volunteer management contexts. Further, it

supports a basic assumption of this research which adopts the Lewinian dictum that there is nothing so practical as good theory. The following recommendations are selected from a wider directory in the main study and will focus on the initial phase of volunteering, recruitment.

- Management recruitment recommendations strategies should recognize the pivotal role of spiritual motivation for faith-based volunteers. Spiritual maturing is incorporated in their perception of serving in volunteering activities.
- Identification of an individual call may facilitate matching volunteer activities with volunteer motivation.
- Measures should be put into place to identify individual underlying motivations in recruitment in order that these motivations may be matched with volunteer activity from the start. If, for example, the social function is dominant, then the volunteering activity should incorporate opportunity for meeting and connecting with others.
- Management cannot assume, however, that initial motivations will remain as the constant connecting factors throughout the volunteering process.
- Decisions to volunteer stem primarily from personal invitation delivered by pre-established contact. Volunteer recruiting teams are advised to foster social contact and pursue social connection prior to extending a personal invitation.
- It is essential in the current environment where the majority of potential volunteers are time strapped, to tailor volunteering to suit individual needs.
- Volunteer expectations need to be clearly identified and clarified. Unrealistic expectations should be addressed prior to commencement of volunteering service.
- Volunteer expectations in terms of opportunity to learn and grow and to enrich their lives and the lives of others should be incorporated into recruitment drives.
- Leaders and managers should actively facilitate synergy between individual values and that of the organization in order to foster value congruence.
- Time and effort should be allocated to identifying the underpinning metaphor of specific organizations and ensure the terminology used in mission statements is sufficiently wide and appropriate to accommodate all volunteers on the spectrum of potential recruits in order to foster mission congruence.
- Recognition should be given in recruitment drives to the emphasis required for diverse age groups: Younger members are more likely to be recruited through relational language, and for many in this cohort, career-focused activities will be a strong drawcard. Older individuals are more likely to be attracted by the opportunity to meet and serve others, enhancing personal growth. For the more mature recruits, traditional terminology and definition may still be the relevant connector.
- Cross-cultural diversity necessitates the inclusion of leaders who are culturally aware of the definition of volunteering terms as they pertain to cultural

diversity and ensure that the meaning of these concepts is clearly communicated in recruitment language.

- Where possible, management should incorporate family packages and short-term mission projects in their recruitment strategies.
- Volunteer management should clearly detail operating structures within which volunteers may exercise autonomy.
- Volunteers feel valued when they are both acknowledged and affirmed. Management should explore a diversity of creative means to ensure that volunteers feel valued.
- Introducing and managing a diverse and individualized connecting strategy for potential volunteers may pose additional weight on an already overloaded management team. The CAM approach aims to facilitate volunteer recruitment through clearly identified actual pathways.


Connection: It's contemporary; it's critical and it's complex. Nonprofit organizations cannot escape the impact. With the aid of practical models for enhancing recruitment such as the connect-active model for volunteering, leaders and management within the sector are offered a tool with the potential to facilitate their role in connecting a vital source of service with the welfare of the world's communities.

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