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RETAINING VOLUNTEERS IN AFRICAN COMMUNITIES WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE CANCER ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on a study on the retention of volunteers for CANSA in African communities. Whilst social workers had no problem recruiting volunteers for CANSA to assist in service rendering, it was difficult to retain them. From the research findings, as well as an in-depth literature study, it was concluded that in order to retain volunteers, there are specific processes and factors that need to be taken into account before and after volunteers are recruited.

INTRODUCTION

The significance of volunteerism is marked by the declaration of the year 2001 as the International Year of the Volunteer. The International Year of the Volunteer is about enhancing the networking, facilitation, promotion and recognition of volunteers and their efforts. Owing to the prevailing economic climate in South Africa, financial resources are decreasing, while client demand is relentlessly increasing. In the face of this frightening situation, the majority of welfare agencies will have to find ways to explore the possibility of involving volunteers. Also caught in the prongs of a personnel shortage and an ever-increasing need for service rendering, volunteers are increasingly needed in a variety of service agencies, ranging from direct service activities to sitting on management boards within agencies. Volunteers are the cornerstones for the development of welfare services. With the increase of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which in most instances manifests itself through diseases such as cancer, the role of volunteers has become extremely important.

This article reports on a study on the retention of volunteers in African communities with specific reference to the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA). CANSA has always been a volunteer-driven organisation and volunteers are playing a more important role in the achievement of the goals of CANSA. Apart from the fact that CANSA benefits from the skills and experience brought to CANSA by volunteers, the value of the volunteer really lies in expanding CANSA's services to its clients where paid staff is lacking. The research was undertaken in the African communities of Atteridgeville, Mamelodi and Soshanguve and was limited to the current volunteers serving CANSA in these respective communities. In 1995 the Pretoria branch of the Association appointed three social workers to extend its services to the communities of Atteridgeville, Mamelodi and Soshanguve. Since CANSA was extending its services for the first time into these communities, a developmental approach was adopted. The social workers in these three African communities recruited volunteers to assist in a wide variety of services, including patient care and health promotion. Whilst it was easy to recruit these volunteers, it was difficult to retain them. It was not clear why they discontinued their services. The goal of the study therefore was, firstly, to determine the reasons for the loss of interest when initially volunteering for CANSA and, secondly, to provide guidelines for the retention of volunteers in these communities.

Since volunteers are so important in the work of CANSA, proper guidelines for retaining them are justified. By investing retention methods, CANSA will enhance its effectiveness in achieving the goals, with the ultimate achievement being to reduce the impact and incidence of cancer.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteering (1999), a brochure by the Department of Welfare, defines a volunteer as someone who:

- gives a service to an individual or group of people in need;
- carries the interest of the community at heart;
- wants to see positive changes taking place in the community; and
- gives service out of his or her free will.

Morris (1996:1) confirms that volunteerism is about people helping and providing services of their own free will. A volunteer undertakes a job for no monetary gain in their own free time. Thompson (1995:21) agrees that a volunteer is a person who does a task that needs to be done, without pay and of their own free will.

In summary, the essence of these definitions is found in the words “of their own free will.” It is a free-will offering of an individual, embodied in rendering a service to another person, group or organisation and the willingness to give in order to make better lives for other people, without any financial returns. In so doing a volunteer makes an important contribution to the betterment of society.

Blais, Corcoran, Lash, & Kelly - American Cancer Society (1996:4) define retention as the ability to attract and retain volunteers. *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1998:1146) defines retention as the ability to sustain. It can be concluded that volunteer retention fosters stability and the sustaining of volunteer programmes within an organisation.

The retention of volunteers is an inherent part of a process which starts with (1) the underlying motivational factors for being a volunteer; (2) the reasons as to why a welfare organisation needs volunteers; (3) the definition of what their roles should be; (4) their recruitment, orientation and training; and (5) the recognition; supervision and evaluation of volunteers. This process will subsequently be contextualised within a theoretical perspective.

MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS IN VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteers are vital to the success of many different kinds of organisations, yet often newcomers as well as long-time volunteers end up quitting because they do not feel valued. Managing volunteers and ensuring that they are full-fledged contributors requires that organisations determine the motivational factors for volunteering. Macleod (1993:1), McSweetney and Alexander (1996:66) argue that in order to manage volunteers effectively and retain them, it is necessary to understand what motivates their activities and then to influence their motivation accordingly.

Studies conducted by Cuthbert (1992), Bennet (1987) and Blais *et al.* (1996) agree that the most important reasons and motivators for people to become volunteers are as follows:

Altruism - defined as the inner need to become helpful to one's community or wanting to do something for others.

Sociability – the need to affiliate in order to avoid loneliness. This includes wanting to meet people and making friends.

Self-interest – the need to make use of one's skills and gaining skills from others or seeking personal benefit such as new experiences, interests, knowledge and occupation.

Use of spare time – in a constructive manner in order to gain recognition from the people one is serving.

Qureshi, Challis & Davis (1989:29) and Hedley & Smith (1992:83) confirm other motivators of volunteering such as (1) reciprocity, i.e. to offer help previously received from others; (2) therapeutic reasons, whereby a person becomes involved in voluntary work in order to eliminate personal problems; (3) religious reasons; and (4) a need to become adventurous.

In order to retain and sustain volunteer programmes it is important to scrutinise these motivational factors which attract people to volunteer in organisations. Volunteers are the most cost effective and positive way of rendering community-based programmes. Retaining them provides stability and continuity to the organisation's development and history.

THE ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE ORGANISATION

Volunteers play a vital role in welfare organisations. Their tremendous economic and social contributions to the labour force are important. There is empirical evidence confirming the importance of the role of volunteers. The national survey by the Independent Sector, a coalition of non-profit organisations promoting volunteerism and not-for-profit initiatives in general, reported the following data, as cited by Nassar-McMillan and Borders (1999:39):

- 94.2 million adult Americans, or 51% of the adult American public, volunteered in 1991;
- Volunteers contributed an average of 4.2 hours per week in 1991; and
- The amount of volunteer time equals 20.5 billion hours, representing the equivalent of 9 million full-time employees, and \$176 billion dollars in wages.

The survey further confirmed that many of these volunteers were found in social service agencies fulfilling a variety of roles. Some performed direct services or direct practice activities such as creating social relationships with patients, facilitating recreational or religious activities, lecturing or teaching patients about financial issues or other concerns and providing emotional support during a crisis.

The policy of enhancing social integration in Chapter 8 of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) focuses on bringing services to the people and care in the community. This chapter also stipulates that a range of social services should be made available to those with chronic illnesses such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, and families and children in need. Given the scarce resources and shortage of manpower, this approach confirms the important role that volunteers can play in communities.

As cited and confirmed by De Kock (1996:15), volunteers can fulfil a major role in the social welfare team. They can be involved in a variety of roles such as supporting families and vulnerable groups. Their experience and knowledge constitute valuable contributions to welfare teams. The volunteer's role supplements the work of welfare teams and also contributes towards continuation when services are withdrawn from the community.

The role of a volunteer in the organisation should indeed be to supplement and complement the contributions of paid staff to better serve the organisation. The National Association of Voluntary Bureau (1999:1) agrees that volunteering is a legitimate activity in its own right and that it is not a substitute for paid work. The best way to view a volunteer in any organisation is to accept a

volunteer as a non-paid staff person subject to specific policies and guidelines. In this way a volunteer becomes a member of the agency team in a non-paid status rather than featuring as some vaguely defined functionary of the organisation.

Many volunteer programmes fail because the role of volunteers in an agency and their relationship to paid staff have never been defined. This failure results in confusion for the volunteer and resentment on the part of paid staff. McSweeney & Alexander (1996:35), Blais *et al.* (1996:12) and Morrison (1997:1) argue that volunteers can be excellent, but if they do not know their roles, they will in all likelihood disappear. Volunteers should therefore have a clear idea of the tasks they are being asked to perform and of the responsibility which goes with the task. Their roles in organisations can be defined as the collection of expectations held by those in working relationships with volunteers. A written task description outlining the duties to be performed and stating the responsibilities of those who will be involved in the project is a prerequisite for the effective utilisation of volunteers.

A job description make volunteers feel secure about the fact that they are valued and that they are performing defined roles for the client or group being served (cf. Volunteer Management Programme for CANSA, 1998:10; Volunteer Centre's training manual in Cape Town, 1995:16; McSweeney & Alexander, 1996:93; Larmer, 1996:5). It furthermore helps to ensure consistency in care, service and approach to the client or task; it aids the overall monitoring of standards and quality of service; it indicates to others that the work they perform is taken seriously and, above all, it helps the volunteers to appreciate the expectations and parameters of their roles.

Jobs need to be designed in such a way that they are exciting, challenging, and rewarding. They should be something people look forward to and want to do. If they fail to provide such job descriptions, organisations will generally be prone to high turnover, unreliability and low morale. A desirable job, appropriately described, forms the cornerstone of all successful volunteer programmes.

To be able to clarify roles it is extremely important to define why organisations need volunteers. Every volunteer programme should start with an understanding of why the organisation wants or needs volunteer support. In the authors' opinion, it is crucial to ensure that genuine reasons exist to utilise the volunteers, as this will provide them with the challenge for continued success and, above all, the motivation to remain with the organisation.

In summary, volunteers need to be clear about their roles in order for organisations to retain and sustain them. Not only should the organisation have expectations about volunteers, but volunteers too will have expectations about organisations. They should be kept informed of changing expectations. Clarity of roles will also assist paid staff to have meaningful and lasting relationships with volunteers.

RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

Recruiting can simply be defined as getting the right person in the right job with the right skills at the right time. Not everyone enjoys the search for individuals to help fulfil a job or, in other words, finding and asking someone to volunteer. Recruiting should therefore be a process rather than a problem.

Blais *et al.* (1996:15), Labuschagne (1991:33) and Larmer (1996:1) suggest that volunteers should be recruited only when there are meaningful positions for them to occupy. It is emphasised that organisations need to be fully prepared to accommodate and orient new volunteers with a view to

volunteer as a non-paid staff person subject to specific policies and guidelines. In this way a volunteer becomes a member of the agency team in a non-paid status rather than featuring as some vaguely defined functionary of the organisation.

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retain them. Recruiting volunteers before defining the prospective job amounts to putting the proverbial cart before the horse.

When recruiting volunteers, it makes sense to describe the needs that the programme aims to meet in terms of what people can relate to, and also how volunteers will fill those needs, which groups of people would most likely be interested, and the best possible ways to reach particular groups.

Cuthbert (1992:123), Schindler (1987:65-67) and Kowi (1990:66) agree that in order to retain volunteers, it is important to recruit carefully. Once the volunteer opportunities are designed, the appropriate audience should be targeted to recruit only those who are truly interested in the project. It is also important to ascertain how many volunteers are needed, the type of work they will be assigned, what sources are available to recruit them and the needs that the programme aims to meet.

If the organisation designs worthy assignments, volunteers are provided with the challenge and motivation for continued success. It is extremely important to understand the characteristics of the existing team – and recruit volunteers to mirror such team. Above all, it is important to express the recruitment as a “request for help” as opposed to a “pleading”, so as to ensure that only volunteers who earnestly want to join get recruited.

The purpose of recruiting volunteers is to help spread the work amongst members, to keep the organisation alive, develop new ideas and get the work done. Larmer (1996:2-4) suggests the following steps when recruiting volunteers:

Step 1 – Define the job

The first step in recruiting volunteers is to define the type of job to be done. This will help ensure that the organisation gets the right person to fill the position. Individuals responsible for recruiting and all potential volunteers should have a clear understanding of what the job involves.

Step 2 – Determine the job qualifications

Once the job has been defined, qualifications required to do the job can be specified to facilitate the identification of potential volunteers. A job description is a useful tool that lists all the qualifications needed to do the job. This step clarifies for all those involved the expectations and requirements of the volunteer position. It gives the volunteer an idea of the part they play in the broader spectrum of the organisation.

Step 3 – Develop a list of potential candidates

Once an understanding of what the job entails is developed and what kind of person is required to do it, potential candidates for the job should be listed. It is important to be flexible when recruiting as one may not always find the perfect, experienced and qualified candidate. Additional training may be an option.

Step 4 – Interview the volunteer

This probably is the most difficult step in the process because of the fear of rejection on the part of the volunteer. However, if steps 1-3 of the recruitment process are followed correctly, it will be quite likely that the right person for the job is approached.

Step 5 – Appoint the volunteer

At the end of the interview it is important to summarise the decisions and actions that have been agreed upon to ensure clear understanding by both parties. Once volunteers have agreed to take

positions, the organisation would want to retain them. Therefore additional training, recognition, rewards and supervision are essential processes.

Larmer (1996:4), Labuschagne (1991:33) and Canadian Fundraiser (1994) further agree on the following recruitment suggestions:

- Get all active volunteers involved in thinking up new methods for recruiting and pool these ideas.
- Use every available source – radio, television, newspaper and personal contact.
- Offer a stimulating, in-depth orientation session.
- Have current volunteers tell their story in meetings or gatherings of members.
- Try to think what would be interesting in volunteering.
- The best recruits are volunteers who are happy with their organisation.
- People are attracted to programmes that utilise positive, honest, enthusiastic appeals.
- Be interested in members not only as volunteers, but as individuals.
- Involve volunteers in decision making.
- Recognise their efforts.

Finally, once recruited, a satisfied volunteer will perform a good job for the organisation, have good things to say about the organisation, give the organisation a good reputation in the community, recruit other volunteers by word of mouth and remain committed and enthusiastic.

ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Once the volunteer has been recruited, screened and selected, orientation and training are crucial. Kowi (1990:75) and Schindler (1987:72-73) confirm that orientation and training are absolutely integral parts of volunteer programmes. Orientation is vital since it provides a means of acquainting the volunteers with the organisation and eliminating possible frustrations owing to the fear of the unknown. Orientation is the process of integrating the new volunteer into an organisation so that he/she becomes an active member of the organisation.

The purpose of orientation is to: (1) facilitate knowledge and insight into the organisation and its policies and procedures; (2) create a positive image of the organisation; (3) create a feeling of belonging; (4) diminish fear or apprehension; (5) assist newcomers to identify with the organisation and social environment; and (6) stimulate acceptance of common goals.

Comprehensive training will, according to Morrison (1997:2) provide volunteers with a sense of belonging and status. It shows that the organisation values them enough to invest in them and it also helps to reinforce their commitment to the cause. As part of volunteer training sessions, general orientation into the organisation should be provided. This should include a discussion of the vision and mission of the organisation, an outline of the organisational framework and any codes of conduct that are enforced.

Orientation helps the volunteer to feel more comfortable in the organisation and have a better understanding of where they fit in. During orientation it is important to ensure that volunteers know the objectives of the organisation and its overall structure and services, and have been

exposed to clients and problems, practical information and rules. Experienced volunteers can assist with the facilitation of this orientation process.

Kowi (1990:75) and Schindler (1987:69) suggest that careful orientation and training help set the tone of the work area and allow volunteers to adapt more easily to the organisation's surroundings. They also clarify the expectations, roles and functions of different staff members.

Finally, ongoing training and orientation cause volunteers to feel competent in a task and to develop. Depending on the work they perform, training may be specialised. Orientation and training are some of the ways of showing care towards prospective volunteers, thereby contributing to the likelihood of retaining them.

RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTEERS

Recognition and incentives are essential forms of affirmation and reward in lieu of payment for the valuable contribution of a volunteer. No matter how sincere the volunteer's motives may be, all volunteers should receive recognition in some form or the other. Recognition for work well done motivates and inspires most people, but it is absolutely essential for volunteers. Even the most humble volunteer needs to know that they have made a difference. This highlights the reason why every plan for volunteer involvement must include a reward and recognition system.

Canadian Fundraiser (1994:3) suggests that two approaches, viz. informal and formal, can be used to develop more creative and meaningful methods of recognition:

Informal, spontaneous recognition can be given without much planning and effort. The most powerful motivator will be instant recognition. Some guidelines are:

Match the reward to the volunteer. Get to know volunteers and their personal preferences, so that they can be recognised in ways they feel are rewarding.

Match the reward to achievement. Consider the scope and significance of what has been accomplished. A long-term project or achievement deserves a more significant award than a one-time task.

Make the reward timely and distinctive. A reward should be made immediately after the achievement. If there is a delay, it will lose its power to motivate. It should also be clear why the reward is given.

Formal rewards and recognition are best for long-term contributions. These formal awards also lend credibility to the more spontaneous, informal reward.

Define the criteria and objectives. Who is eligible, what is it for, where and when will it be given?

Use meaningful awards. Pins, medallions, engraved name badges or plaques are suitable for all categories of volunteers. It should be kept in mind that high achievers appreciate formal awards.

Involve volunteers in defining and establishing the awards. Include those that can nominate, are eligible for the award, and those who may be on the selection committee.

Manage the award process consistently. Be true to the criteria. If the award is to be given annually, make sure that it happens. Everyone must view the evaluation process as fair. Presentations should not be delayed.

Bennet (1987:155), Kowi (1990:78), Schindler (1987:76), Cuthbert (1992:126) and Blais *et al.* (1996:5-8) confirm that one of the best ways of retaining volunteers is through constant

recognition. Different ways of showing recognition as cited by these authors include writing letters of appreciation, rewards in the form of honorariums and offering certificates at the end of training.

Recognition gives a volunteer the good feeling of being "accepted" by the organisation and that he/she is not taken for granted. Although always done with the best of intentions, the motivating power of recognition and rewards can either help or hurt, depending on how strategically it is used. Recognition, for example, that matches the person's specific motivation for volunteering results in increased volunteer satisfaction. Recognition reinforcing the society's motivation for volunteers, on the other hand, results in a more productive volunteer. The challenge therefore lies in motivating volunteers in such a way that they are both satisfied and productive.

The recognition of volunteers should in essence be something tangible in order to secure their retention. Organisations need to demonstrate to volunteers that their presence is appreciated. Failing this, volunteers eventually drop the entire idea of volunteering. It becomes equally necessary to keep volunteers informed, thereby recognising them for their endeavours as part of the overall team effort. It can be quite reasonably deduced that volunteers will feel more fulfilled when they are kept informed about matters relating to their job and when they receive praise for a job well done.

SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

The success of any organisation depends to a great extent on its leaders and their capability to supervise and inspire their people. This is especially true for volunteer organisations because the volunteers are not compelled to work. They may quit at any time when they become unhappy. A good leader will understand the psychology of the human being. The leader should have sufficient knowledge of what a person seeks from work and how it can best be satisfied.

A final element of a successful volunteer programme is a continual follow-up and evaluation process. Morrison (1997:2), Thompson (1995:21) and McSweeney & Alexander (1996:101) agree that effective follow-up provides feedback to volunteers and opportunities to improve their service. With a careful plan and continuous volunteer communication and training, it should be fairly easy to evaluate the success of the programme and to improve it over time, as required.

Volunteering should be a fulfilling experience. Through adequate support and supervision, volunteers should be able to develop, expand and change their work. Through evaluation the organisation should be able to assess and analyse those factors that may hamper progress in working with volunteers, and to make the necessary adjustments, if necessary, with a view to retaining them.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The researchers selected an exploratory design because of the limited knowledge about the phenomenon of retention of volunteers in African communities. According to Collins (in McKendrick, 1988:256), the principal objective of exploratory research is to define concepts and develop questions and hypotheses for further research. Since the study was intended to develop knowledge on the retention of volunteers, applied research was used. De Vos (1998:8) states that the goal of applied research is to develop solutions for problems and applications in practice. Applied research further seeks to develop principles that enable people to resolve problems or attain desired objectives.

A sample of 25 volunteers was selected from Atteridgeville, Mamelodi and Soshanguve. Because of the relative homogeneity of the sample, the researcher used purposive sampling, which is a non-

probability sample. De Vos (1998:190) describes this type of sample as based entirely on the researcher's judgement in that a sample is composed of elements which contain the most characteristics or typical attributes representative of the population.

Both qualitative and quantitative data-collection methods were used. Through purposive sampling, twenty-five volunteers were identified as respondents for the study. As a qualitative technique, a focus group interview was conducted with nine volunteers. For the purpose of quantitative data, a self-administered interview schedule was utilised for the remaining eleven volunteers. The interview schedule was pre-tested with social workers involved in Atteridgeville, Mamelodi and Soshanguve and revisions were made accordingly. The structured interview schedule for the focus group and individual interviews was the same and basically covered the following primary areas:

- Motivational factors for volunteering
- Process of volunteerism - how volunteers were recruited, the selection process, orientation, training, recognition, supervision and evaluation.
- Roles as volunteers with specific reference to service rendering by CANSA.
- Guidelines for volunteering – specifically with regard to recruitment, selection, orientation, training, recognition, supervision and evaluation.
- Reasons for considering leaving CANSA.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research were related to the assumption and objectives of the study, the purpose being to assess whether such objectives had been reached and whether the assumption was supported or not.

ASSUMPTION

Owing to the fact that very little is known about the motivational factors in retaining volunteers for CANSA in African communities, the researchers used an exploratory research design to explore the motivational factors and hence the following assumption was formulated: *CANSA would be able to retain volunteers, if the reasons and motivational factors for the retention of volunteers could be realised.*

It became evident that the majority of respondents supported the assumption made by the researchers by confirming that a successful volunteer programme takes into account a number of factors outlined in this article. The findings revealed that in order for volunteers to be retained, there were processes and factors to be considered and applied before and after recruiting the volunteers. The findings also confirmed that most people volunteered as a result of unemployment. Although they would like to remain with the organisation, the implication of this is that should they find employment, they will no longer be in a position to volunteer.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To provide an overview of the retention of volunteers, from a literature perspective;
- To determine the factors that will retain, motivate and sustain the current volunteers serving CANSA in African communities;

- To determine the role of volunteers serving CANSA in African communities from their own perspective;
- To provide guidelines to CANSA on how to retain volunteers.

Regarding the first objective, the literature confirmed that the issue of retaining volunteers is not a stand-alone matter. The theoretical framework in volunteerism confirmed that the retention of volunteers is a process. It is a process that starts with defining who a volunteer is and determining the motivational factors in volunteering. The process further proceeds to volunteer recruitment, orientation, training, recognition, supervision and evaluation. This overview provided a detailed synopsis supported by a number of authors on these factors. From the literature it is evident that a solid foundation is needed for an effective volunteer programme.

Given the scarce resources and shortage of manpower in CANSA, the approach of volunteer involvement in CANSA substantiated the important role that volunteers would play in communities. Also, with the increase of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which in most instances manifests itself through diseases such as cancer, the role of volunteers has become extremely important.

Findings on the second objective regarding the factors that will retain, motivate and sustain the current volunteers serving CANSA in African communities were supported by an overview of retention in the literature. The findings further confirmed that retaining volunteers is a process that begins with a need to have a volunteer programme and determining the motivational factors for volunteering, that is recruitment, orientation, training, supervision and evaluation. Once this process has been accomplished, a successful volunteer programme emerges within an organisation. These factors are recommended guidelines for retaining volunteers and will be discussed in detail under the fourth objective.

Regarding the third objective, respondents perceived their role as supportive of CANSA's services, particularly as they relate to a patient's care. The findings under this objective confirmed that the clarification of roles is an important exercise to help avoid ambiguity, conflict and overload. A dimension that proved to be most helpful when clarifying roles in this regard was the job description. Findings confirmed that a written job description will assist when volunteers assume the roles that they have actually been recruited for. Volunteers need to be clear about their roles in order for them to be retained and sustained within organisations.

The fourth objective entailed the provision of guidelines for CANSA on the retention of volunteers. The following guidelines were proposed as an outcome of the research:

Defining a volunteer - It is important to define who a volunteer is. In relation to the field of volunteering, it is clear from the findings that, although volunteers understand who they are, it is crucial to educate and orient them on volunteerism from the very beginning of the programme.

Determining motivational factors for volunteering - The findings revealed that determining motivational factors for volunteerism is crucial. Volunteers confirmed that the most common motivators for volunteerism are altruism, sociability, self-interest and the productive use of one's spare time.

Describing roles of volunteers - As was indicated earlier, volunteers need to be clear about their roles and one of the ways of ensuring such clarity is through establishing job descriptions. A clear job description not only helps avoid conflict but, if developed, it can also assist in the monitoring of services that the organisation provides. Being clear about roles will also assist in building meaningful relationships between paid staff and volunteers.

Recruitment - The findings confirmed that recruitment is indeed one of the crucial steps in retaining volunteers. The manner in which volunteers are recruited plays an important role in retention. When recruiting, it is essential to describe the needs that the programme is trying to fulfil and how volunteers will fill those needs. Once recruited, a satisfied volunteer will not only perform a good job for the organisation, but he/she will afford the organisation a good reputation and remain committed.

Orientation - The findings confirmed that once volunteers are recruited, they should be orientated about the organisation and trained for different roles. Orientation facilitates knowledge and insight into the organisation and its policies; it creates a positive image of the organisation; it diminishes fear or apprehension; and it stimulates acceptance of common goals.

Training - The empirical findings confirmed that training is an integral part of a successful volunteer programme. Training helps to set the tone of the work area and it allows volunteers to adapt more easily to the organisation's surroundings. This also helps to clarify the expectations, roles and functions of other members of the organisation (Kowi, 1990:75; Schindler, 1987:69).

Recognition - Recognition and incentives are essential forms of affirmation and reward following the valuable contribution of a volunteer. As already indicated, no matter how sincere and noble the volunteer's motives might be, all volunteers should receive recognition in some way or the other.

Supervision and evaluation - Lastly, the success of any organisation depends to a great extent on its leaders and their ability to supervise and inspire their people. This is even truer of volunteer organisations, because the volunteers are not compelled to work and they may quit at any time they become dissatisfied. Evaluation eventually enables the organisation to assess and analyse those factors that may hamper progress in working with volunteers and make amendments where necessary, with a view to retaining them.

Given the guidelines above, it is believed that many of the reservations and difficulties frequently expressed when using volunteers may fall away and a more dedicated volunteer and satisfied agency may emerge. From the research findings it became clear that if all the proposed processes in volunteerism are followed, retaining volunteers would be easier to manage. It can be concluded that a solid foundation is needed in order to retain volunteers.

DISCUSSION

Volunteers are one of a voluntary organisation's most prized resources. Without them the services promised to clients cannot be provided. Volunteers should be involved not only in achieving the organisation's purpose, but also because of the investment made in terms of the recruitment process. Once recruited, volunteers are a prime source of recruiting other volunteers through their wide networks of friends and acquaintances. Volunteers are valuable to organisations because they bring spontaneity and they relieve staff from routine work; they have a variety of skills and they provide extra manpower.

While volunteerism is not a new phenomenon in African communities, it still offers a fertile area for research. Not only are the subjects on volunteerism of academic interest – they are also of immediate use to practitioners in volunteer programmes. While volunteers have been around for a long time, formal volunteer programmes with a trained leadership are a recent development. As cited in the trainer's manual for the Volunteer Centre (1995:21), the most important feature in a successful volunteer programme is a positive and enthusiastic co-ordinator. Volunteers themselves have largely been taken for granted. It is a new phenomenon to consider them a subject worthy of study. This is compounded by the fact that, until only a few years ago, no academic major, either

at the bachelor or advanced degree level in most institutions, offered students courses in volunteer programme management. The subject was therefore considered for serious attention in this project.

As stated in the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:5), volunteers are a significant human resource, utilised by welfare organisations and development programmes. There is scope for the expansion of volunteerism in order to extend welfare services. The appropriate and effective utilisation of volunteers in developmental social welfare services is critical.

Starke (1996:23) states that the history and development of social work is inextricably linked with working with volunteers. Social workers have developed many programmes for recruiting, training and supervising volunteers. This knowledge and experience are important in the implementation of developmental social welfare, in which volunteers play an important role.

Ellis (1985:14) states that volunteerism can foster appropriate career development as well as enhance a job search process. Volunteerism can be beneficial at all stages of career development. An important psychological aspect of volunteerism in charity refers to the motives and attitudes of volunteers. From a functional point of view, the dimensions of attitudes are related to volunteerism. The act of volunteering may serve a humanitarian value function in the sense of promoting social responsibility or satisfying curiosity and the need for exploration through an experience of adventure. In addition, social functions in the sense of social commitment or social recognition and societal acceptance may be involved. These dimensions tap motives of volunteerism which are anchored in attitudes. The value dimension of social responsibility is generally highly approved among members of different volunteer groups.

Retaining volunteers is a process that begins with a need to have a volunteer programme, defining volunteers and determining the motivational factors for volunteering. The process expands to include the functions of recruitment, orientation, training, supervision and evaluation – as they are related to volunteers. Once these processes have been accomplished, a successful volunteer programme emerges within an organisation. A volunteer programme will be more successful if it is founded on a sound understanding of the reasons and motivation for volunteering. There is a need to be more aware of the principles of job design and to share experiences on how volunteers are kept stimulated.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, volunteers as much as paid staff, and perhaps more so, need to feel an integral part of the organisation. They need to be involved not only in the tasks they perform, but in the general running of the organisation. They need to know about developments in the organisation and they need to be invited to staff luncheons, annual general meetings and seminars. Above all, they need the recognition from the agency that they are an important part of the total service of the agency, for example to be recognised in the annual report.

Volunteers are important partners in social development. When managed properly, volunteers can contribute a great deal towards nation building. Each and every person knows something, can do something and can make time to be a volunteer. At the heart of volunteerism is participation, manifested as a process of mobilisation, which is required to transform the quality of life and which is sustainable. Basic to social work is an understanding of the individual and family within a community and societal context.

In order to achieve this, a social worker needs to encourage and strengthen partnerships between the government, communities and organisations. This involves a holistic approach, which includes

work with stakeholders and volunteers in order to enhance the social functioning of individuals, families and communities.

In a country such as South Africa, where the welfare services are so largely the responsibility of the members of the community and not the state, and where the philosophy is based on the community itself being involved with those who need special services and facilities, the opening of doors to service and the involvement of volunteers should be given serious consideration by social workers. The needs within communities are as varied as the talents of the volunteers and there is a need for knowledge and mechanisms to bring these two elements together to the mutual benefit of all people involved.

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