

# Recruiting and Retaining Volunteers in Today's Economy

Jeffrey L. Brudney, Ph.D.

Albert A. Levin Chair of Urban Studies & Public Service  
Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs  
Cleveland State University

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# Seizing the opportunity: The unemployed as volunteers



## The New York Times

### From Ranks of Jobless, a Flood of Volunteers

March 16, 2009



By JULIE BOSMAN

# Volunteering for government: New York City

## The New York Times

### Mayor Urges New Yorkers to Get Out and Volunteer

April 21, 2009



By **FERNANDA SANTOS**

# Serve America Act (Signed April 21, 2009)

## The Boston Globe

**President Signs \$5.7 billion Measure to Boost Volunteerism:  
Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act Expands 16-year-old AmeriCorps**  
April 22, 2009



By SUSAN MILLIGAN

# The ethics of seeking volunteers among the unemployed

- Volunteers are pro-social rather than self-sacrificing
- Volunteering can yield for participants:
  - Improved health and longevity
  - Greater self-esteem and self-satisfaction
  - Higher sense of meaning and involvement
  - Increased professional and social contacts
  - New job skills
  - Enhanced resumé
  - Structured activity
- Agency offers opportunities to volunteers that benefit those who give time -- and the organization

# Benefits to the agency from volunteers

- Involving volunteers can help your organization to achieve a variety of worthwhile benefits:
  - Supplement staff resources, skills, and experiences, thus, adding value to the organization and its work
  - Further the agency mission both directly and through supporting the work of paid staff
  - Bring distinctive skills and added effort to the organization that would otherwise lie beyond its means
  - Allow quick reaction to changing needs or crisis situations
  - Experiment with new or pilot programs
  - Increase the quality of the services/programs agency offers
  - Provide services that agency otherwise could not supply
  - Offer more detailed attention to the people agency serves

## How can your agency attract -- and retain -- “skills based” volunteers?

- Develop a quality website
- Create multiple, relevant volunteer work assignments
- Design volunteer jobs around project/impact
- Ask questions of the unemployed volunteer
- Manage volunteers well
- Treat every volunteer experience as an opportunity for your agency -- and the volunteer
- Involve volunteers with the goal of retaining them

## Develop a quality website

- Visitors to nonprofit websites are more likely to donate money, volunteer time, and recommend the nonprofit to others if they are satisfied with their online experience (ForeSee Results, 2009)
  - Study used methodology of University of Michigan American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to gauge satisfaction of over 2,000 respondents who visited nonprofit websites
  - Nonprofit websites scored lower (73 on the ACSI 100-point scale) than many other online industries, including Online Banking (83), E-Retail (74), E-Government (74) and Automotive Websites (78)

## Develop a quality website

- Highly satisfied visitors to nonprofit websites are 49% more likely to donate money to the nonprofit and 38% more likely to volunteer when compared to dissatisfied online visitors (ForeSee Results, 2009)
- Satisfied web visitors are also 66% more likely to use the website instead of a costlier channel as their primary resource
  - Results of study suggest that by channeling visitors to the website for information and donations, nonprofits can reduce costs and increase donations

## Develop a quality website

- “Good nonprofit websites offer a unique opportunity to cut costs by reducing the use of more expensive channels like direct mail and call centers, all while making people more likely to donate and volunteer. It’s a win-win” (Larry Freed, President and CEO of ForeSee Results, 2009)
- “This study shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that nonprofit websites have long been underestimated and misunderstood and actually have tremendous power and influence over donor and volunteer behavior” (Larry Freed, ForeSee Results, 2009)

# Create multiple, relevant volunteer work assignments

- Most nonprofit organizations involve volunteers in “traditional” activities as:
  - Clerical
  - Intake
  - Maintenance
  - Direct service activities
  - Support of paid staff
  - Event staffing
- Nonprofit organizations can also benefit from more “skills based” volunteering

# The economic value of skills based volunteering

- According to the Taproot Foundation, at least six million professionals in corporate America are available to volunteer (Deloitte, 2009)
- If those volunteers provide one hour of hands-on volunteering, the value to nonprofits would be \$108 million, based on the Independent Sector's (2007) advised rate of \$19.51 an hour
- If those same volunteers applied their professional skills and resources – valued at an average consulting rate of \$200 an hour – to help nonprofits, the value to the nation's charities would be closer to \$1 billion

# Volunteers can fill important roles

Nonprofits are using volunteers to fill important roles within their organizations, including the following:

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| ▪ Board of directors                      | ▪ Financial management and accounting |
| ▪ Strategic partnerships                  | ▪ Technology and information systems  |
| ▪ Fundraising and development             | ▪ Legal counsel                       |
| ▪ Organizational development and training | ▪ Administration support              |
| ▪ Marketing and communications            | ▪ Program and service delivery        |

Source: "The New Volunteer Workforce," 2009.

# Translating for-profit skills to nonprofit agencies

Departments	Skills/Functions	Needs of Nonprofits
Accounting/Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgeting/forecasting</li> <li>• Accounts payable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgeting</li> <li>• Fiscal planning</li> <li>• Billing &amp; collections</li> <li>• Cash flow analysis</li> </ul>
Advertising/PR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Relations</li> <li>• Communications strategy</li> <li>• Event planning &amp; promotion</li> <li>• Message Creation</li> <li>• Audience Segmentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media Exposure</li> <li>• Event planning &amp; production</li> <li>• Reaching target audiences</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> </ul>
Creative Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation &amp; design of materials</li> <li>• Brand strategy &amp; management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistent branding</li> <li>• Promotional materials</li> </ul>
Customer Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer surveys</li> <li>• Issue resolution</li> <li>• Tracking customer feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donor &amp; client feedback</li> </ul>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting &amp; retention</li> <li>• Performance review process</li> <li>• Training &amp; development</li> <li>• Diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting &amp; retention</li> <li>• Performance review process</li> <li>• Training &amp; development</li> <li>• Employee Morale</li> <li>• Employee feedback</li> </ul>

# Translating for-profit skills to nonprofit agencies

Departments	Skills/Functions	Needs of Nonprofits
IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data security</li> <li>• System solutions</li> <li>• Tech support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donor/client database</li> </ul>
Marketing/Sales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer prospecting</li> <li>• Sales presentations</li> <li>• Merchandising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased fundraising</li> <li>• Donor development</li> <li>• Donor recognition</li> </ul>
Product Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer trends</li> <li>• Competitive analysis</li> <li>• Product testing</li> <li>• Quality Assurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community needs assessment</li> <li>• New services development</li> <li>• Measuring outcomes</li> </ul>
Operations/Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational effectiveness</li> <li>• System &amp; processes</li> <li>• Building security</li> <li>• Maintenance</li> <li>• Space planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer coordination</li> <li>• Improved use of physical space</li> <li>• Improved processes</li> </ul>

**Source:** 2009 Executive Summary: Deloitte Volunteer IMPACT Survey  
 ([http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/cda/doc/content/us\\_ci\\_skillsbasedvolunteerism\\_112408.pdf](http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/cda/doc/content/us_ci_skillsbasedvolunteerism_112408.pdf))

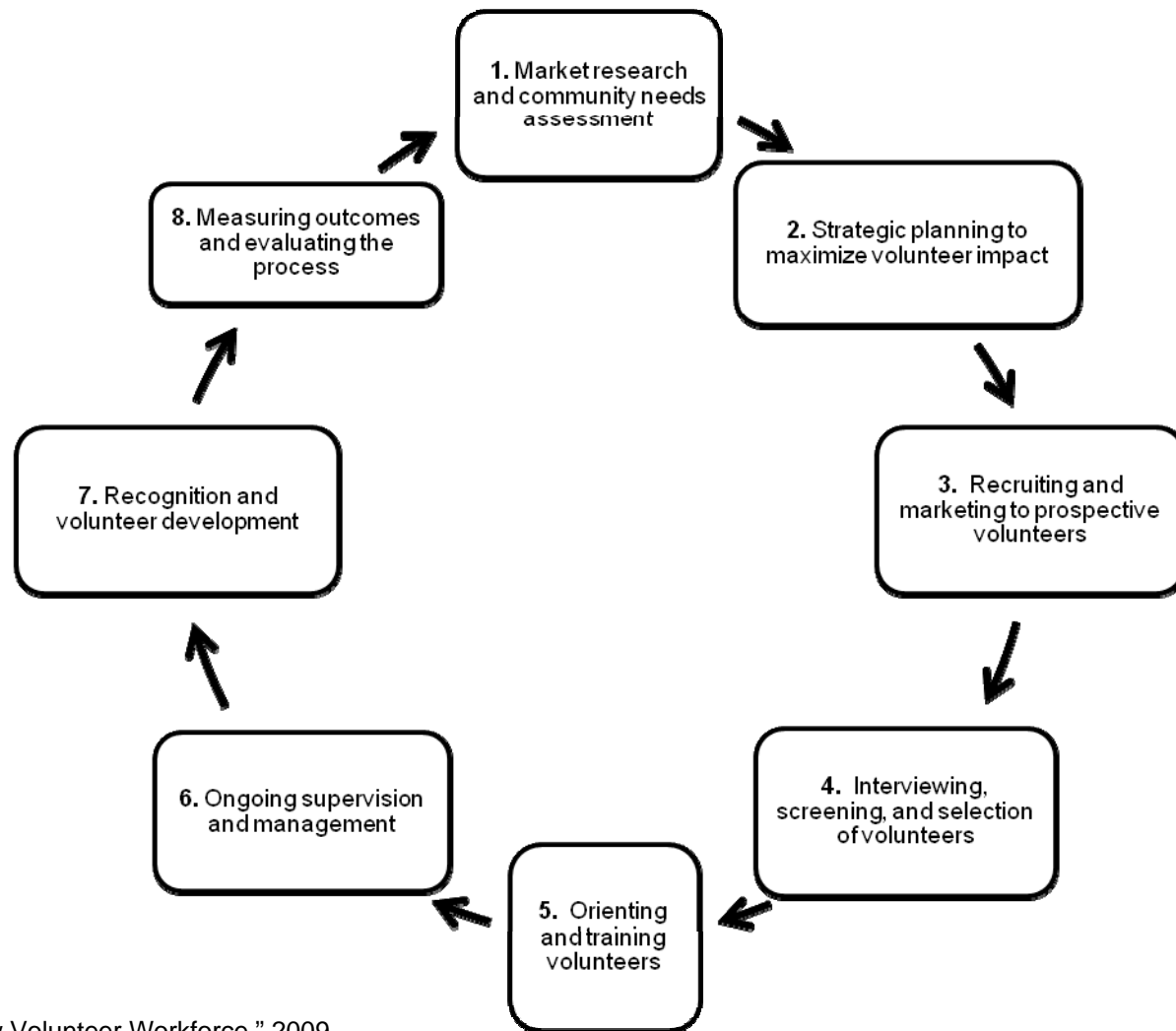
## Design volunteer jobs around project/impact

- Be careful about placing unemployed skills based volunteers in ongoing work assignments that must be performed regularly or that would suffer from a sudden interruption
- Consider placing volunteers in special assignments and projects that lead to products or outcomes
  - Allow volunteers to participate in project design
  - Recognize the resumé value of a volunteer project
- Ask for commitment to completing the project, regardless of the job status of the volunteer
  - Make clear that completion of the project is the goal
  - Explain that if paid work materializes, project can (must) be completed, for example, on a different volunteering schedule

# Capitalizing on volunteer talent

- The Strategy of the “The New Volunteer Workforce:”
  - “If nonprofit leaders want highly skilled volunteers to come and stay, they need to expand their vision of volunteering by creating an experience that is meaningful, develops skills, demonstrates impact, and taps into volunteers’ abilities and interests” (Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, Washburn, 2009, p. 35).
- Elements of the strategy:
  - Rethink work roles
  - Assign appropriate tasks
  - Support and train volunteers
  - Strengthen volunteer administration
  - Use new technology
  - Develop strategic plans

# Creating a strategic plan for increasing the value of volunteer involvement



Source: "The New Volunteer Workforce," 2009.

## Ask questions of the “job-hunting volunteer”

- Susan J. Ellis (2009) suggests that agencies ask questions in regard to the “job-hunting volunteer:”
  - Why did this person select your agency for a potential volunteer assignment?
  - How long does the person intend to remain a volunteer with your agency?
  - Does the person see volunteering as a vehicle to paid employment in your agency?
  - What is the level of commitment of the person to the volunteer role?
  - Why was the person let go from her or his employment?
  - Does the person have psychological issues (anger, depression, etc.) that could affect performance as a volunteer?

# Manage volunteers well

- In “The New Volunteer Workforce,” Eisner, Grimm, Maynard, and Washburn (2009) maintain:
  - “Nonprofits rely heavily on volunteers, but most CEOs do a poor job of managing them. As a result, more than one-third of those who volunteer one year do not donate their time the next year -- at any nonprofit. That adds up to an estimated \$38 billion in lost labor. To remedy this situation, nonprofit leaders must develop a more strategic approach to managing this overlooked and undervalued talent pool. The good news is that new waves of retiring baby boomers and energetic young people are ready to fill the gap.” (p. 32)

# “Mismanaging Volunteers”

Good volunteer management practices	Percentage of nonprofits that use practice regularly
Matching volunteers' skills with appropriate assignments	45%
Recognizing the contributions of volunteers	35%
Measuring the impact of volunteers annually	30%
Providing volunteers with training and professional development	25%
Training paid staff to work with volunteers	19%

**Source:** Urban Institute, *Volunteer Management Capacity in America's Charities and Congregations*, 2004. Cited in Eisner, David; Grimm, Robert T. Jr.; Maynard, Shannon; and Washburn, Susannah. "The New Volunteer Workforce." *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2009, p. 34.

# Treat every volunteer experience as an opportunity for your agency -- and the volunteer

- Agency does not ask volunteer to give up/sacrifice: organization offers volunteer an opportunity
- Opportunity for the skills based volunteer:
  - Make a difference/have impact
  - Hone/develop job skills
  - Be part of something larger (professionally, socially, etc.)
- Opportunity for the agency:
  - Educate volunteer
  - Promote the agency
  - Create advocates/proponents/supporters
  - Raise funds
  - Increase volunteering

## Involve volunteers with the goal of retaining them

- Robert Egger, president and founder of the D.C. Central Kitchen in Washington, DC, “estimated that the paint on the walls of his facility near Capitol Hill is probably three inches thick as a result of the various service projects .... The big questions is ... what are we asking them to do? Do we have the capacity as a sector to adequately manage volunteers and then challenge them intellectually beyond something physical they might do?” (Hrywna, 2009, p. 10)

# Involve volunteers with the goal of retaining them

- Ellis states, “The unfortunate fact is that most organizations are not ready for volunteers, or their involvement with volunteers is at a low level and unimaginative. It’s a myth that people won’t volunteer, but it’s that so few places offer attractive and interesting things to do as volunteers” (Hrywna, 2009, p. 10)
- Rules for retention:
  - Retention starts from the outset
  - Short-term equals long-term
  - Practice low-tech, high-touch
  - If you’ve seen one volunteer ... you’ve seen one volunteer
  - Achieving more with volunteers means giving more

# References

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# Thank you!

Jeffrey L. Brudney, Ph.D.  
Albert A. Levin Chair of Urban Studies & Public Service

Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs  
Cleveland State University  
1717 Euclid Avenue, UR 238A  
Cleveland, OH 44115-2214

j.brudney@csuohio.edu  
(216) 687-5269 (voice)  
(216) 687-9342 (fax)