

# **The 21st Century volunteer**

**A report on the changing face of volunteering in  
the 21st Century**

**Commissioned by the Scout Association**

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## Introduction: challenging times for volunteering

Although volunteers began as the heart and soul of the voluntary sector, the rise of professional fundraising and the professionalisation of the sector as a whole over the past few decades have resulted in the role of volunteers often being downplayed. However, as the realisation dawns that volunteers' goodwill is as valuable an asset and as formidable a force as funds raised from supporters, the important role played by volunteers, and therefore volunteer managers, is again coming to the fore.

This is indeed a very exciting development, as it means that the volunteer managers of today are working with a relatively blank slate and have the power and opportunity to determine the way in which volunteering develops into the 21st Century. Of course, it is not just exciting; it is also an incredibly serious responsibility. The volunteering experience that volunteer managers create will shape not only the effectiveness of the sector but also the enthusiasm and attitude with which the British public will approach volunteering.

This report aims to help voluntary organisations understand the current volunteering environment and to anticipate how volunteering will change over the coming years. In particular, it aims to disseminate the ways in which volunteer management will need to develop in order to accommodate changes in the external environment. It is divided into three parts.

Part one examines the here-and-now of volunteering. It looks at trends in volunteering numbers, the demographic make-up of volunteers and their expectations and motivations. It also explores the implications of current political attention around volunteering. Its purpose is to help volunteer managers understand what they are currently working with.

Part two examines some of the key social and economic trends that impact on volunteers' lives in order to help volunteer managers better understand, attract and retain volunteers. Trends discussed include the ageing population, increasing affluence and the ICT revolution.

Part three highlights a number of issues that are going to be paramount for volunteer managers in the coming years, such as professionalisation, targeted volunteer recruitment and the volunteering brand.

## Part 1: Where are we now?

In order to anticipate the future, it is important to understand the present: Are volunteering numbers going up or down? What are the characteristics of the 'typical' volunteer? What are volunteers' primary motivations and why is it important for voluntary managers to understand them? What are the social and political forces that are or will impact on volunteering? What does it mean if 1 million extra people volunteer over the next three years? Part 1 of this report will examine these and many more questions relevant to voluntary organisations today.

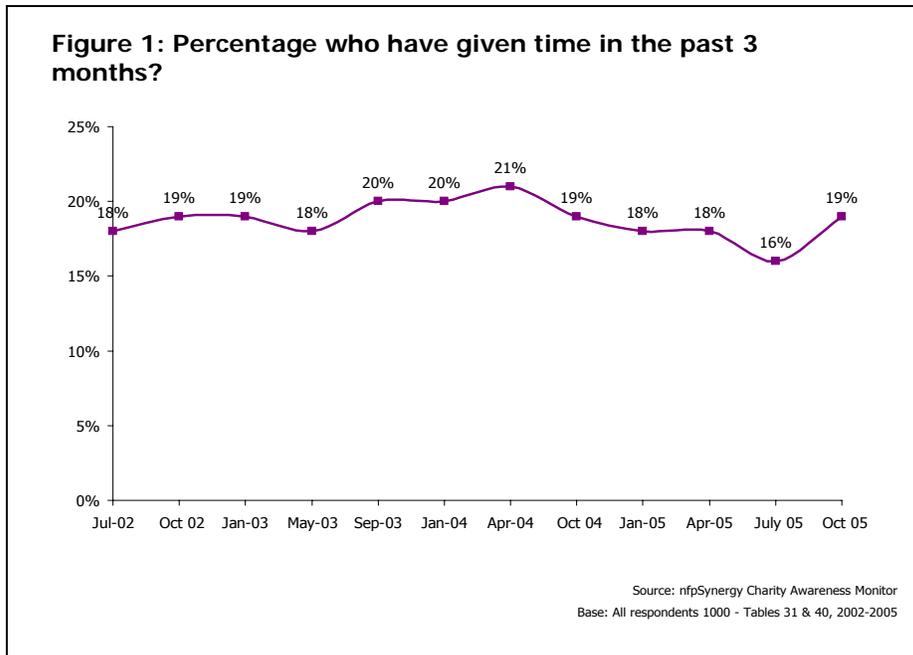
### Section 1: The new spirit of Britain? Trends in volunteering

Could it be that when Gordon Brown recently claimed to 'sense a new spirit in Britain'<sup>1</sup> he was correct? Despite often unfavourable comparisons with their American counterparts, the recent tsunami appeal demonstrated that when the need is made real to them, the British can dig deeper into their hearts and pockets than any other nation. (The average donation per head was £1.65, compared with an average donation of £0.58 per head for the US and £0.43 for France.)<sup>2</sup> Additionally, data from the latest Home Office Citizenship Survey indicates that the proportion of UK citizens who are at least sampling formal volunteering is on the rise.<sup>3</sup>

In 2003, 42% of the population had volunteered at least once in the previous 12 months. In 2001 the figure was 39%. This is an increase of 1,763,675 people in the space of two years. Interestingly, the finding that regular volunteering as defined by the Home Office (i.e. at least once a month for the last 12 months) remained static from 2001 to 2003 suggests that although people were increasingly willing to give time, they were opting for more transient and flexible ways to do so.<sup>3</sup>

Up until April 2004, regular research by nfpSynergy supported the increasing levels of volunteering reported in the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey.<sup>4</sup> It can be seen in Figure 1 that the proportion of people who claimed to have volunteered in the three months prior to being surveyed rose steadily, from 15% in October 2001 to 21% in April 2004. However, since then, the proportion of people who had volunteered in the last three months declined to mid-2003 levels, until the very latest wave. Interestingly, January 2005 was also the first time that the percentage of people who had given money in the last three months climbed over 76% (to 83% - this may be because of the Tsunami effect, but in April 2005 the figure remained high at 79%).<sup>4</sup> Could it be that more people are giving money because they cannot or do not want to give time?

It will be interesting to observe over the next few waves of the Charity Awareness Monitor whether these reduced levels in volunteering during 2005 are merely a flutter in the data, and the increase in the most recent wave is the impact of the Year of the Volunteer. It would also be useful to understand whether any apparent reduction in volunteer numbers is being accompanied by an increase in the average number of hours volunteered. This was certainly the situation discovered by the 1997 National survey of volunteering, where the average number of hours volunteered per week had jumped from 2.7 (in 1991) to 4 (in 1997)<sup>5</sup>. One wonders whether the related drop in volunteer numbers is the chicken or the egg: that is, are volunteers giving more hours because there is more work and less people, or are less people volunteering because voluntary organisations are demanding they give more hours?



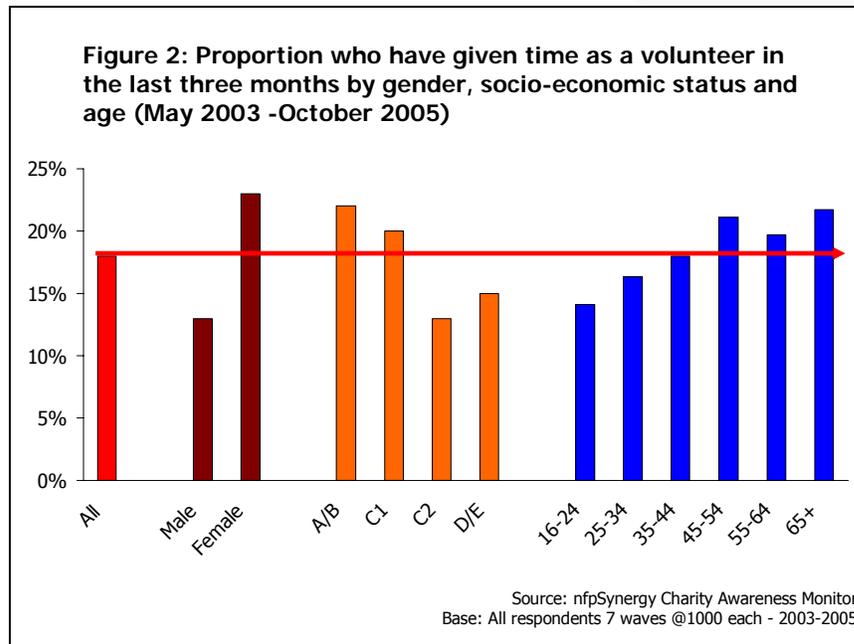
If this section has told us anything, it is that the frequency with which data is collected and the way the questions are phrased greatly influence whether volunteering appears to be increasing or decreasing. For example, although the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering revealed a steep drop in young people volunteering, subsequent research found that young people were actually volunteering at high levels; they just did not associate their voluntary work with the definition used by the NSOV.<sup>5</sup> It also raises the issue that trend data is only particularly useful if it is accompanied by a more qualitative understanding of why volunteer numbers are climbing or falling and what impact volunteers are actually having over time. This last sentiment was emphasised by Rob Jackson of Volunteering England when he commented:

*"It's my hope that the government has recognised that targets like 250,000 more volunteers are fairly meaningless. What is more important is what these extra volunteers are actually doing, what impact are they having?"*

## Section 2: Who volunteers?

A key source of data pertaining to levels of volunteering is nfpSynergy's Charity Awareness Monitor, which puts the question 'have you volunteered within the last three months?' to a representative sample of the UK public four times a year. The demographic breakdown to this question is shown in figure 2.

It is tempting to see these figures as about those who do volunteer. But rather charities should consider them as being about those who don't either because they are less willing, less able or targeted less effectively by voluntary organisations. The use of the word 'currently' is deliberate. The challenge for charities is to consider what it is they need to do in order to appeal to those demographic groups that are below the volunteering average.



### More women than men

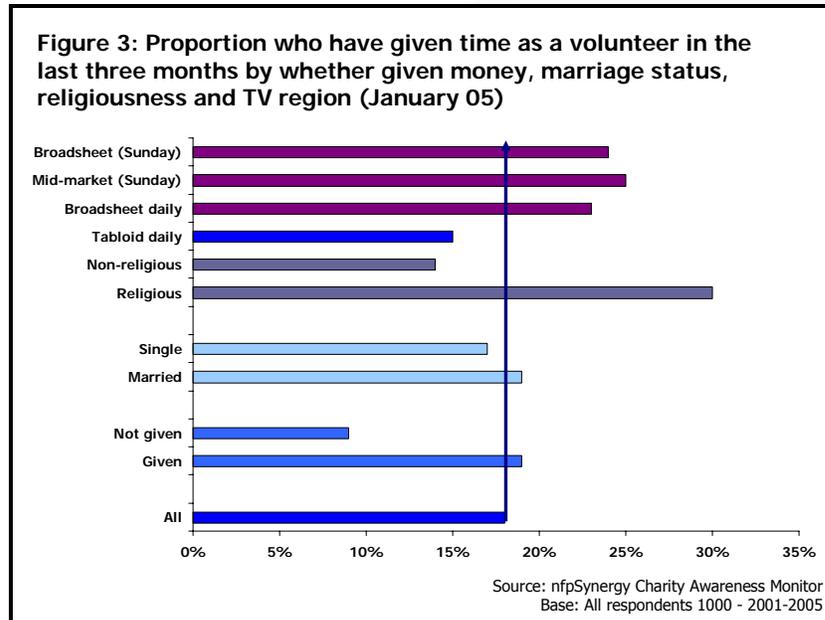
Despite evidence from the 1997 National Survey of Volunteering in the UK suggesting that men and women volunteer in roughly equal numbers<sup>5</sup>, the Charity Awareness Monitor reveals a consistent trend for women to be more likely than men to have volunteered in the last three months (see Figure 2). It would be interesting to investigate whether the gender biases that are found in Canadian volunteering are present in the UK. For example, the report 'Understanding Volunteers' indicated that while women are more likely to volunteer overall, men tend to give a greater number of hours. It was also found that women tended to volunteer in order to explore their strengths while men were getting on board because their friends were volunteers.<sup>6</sup>

### More middle class than working class

As is consistently found when the characteristics of volunteers are investigated,<sup>4,5</sup> those of a higher socio-economic status are more likely to volunteer. Again, it may be that those in the AB and C1 social groups are more likely to class their community contributions as 'volunteering'. It could also be symptomatic of the way volunteers are depicted in British life, that is, as well-to-do do-gooders. Perhaps those with a lower socio-economic status are simply not confident that their skills would be valued by the voluntary sector. Of course, it could also be a function of resource. That is, those with plenty of food on the table and money in the bank can afford to turn their attention to others. Initiatives like time banks, where time is bartered can help to counter this trend.

### The young and the old – but not just before retirement

Figure 2 reveals that levels of volunteering appear to increase steadily with age until a blip occurs between the ages of 55-64 years. This sudden drop in volunteering may be caused by the fact that this group is coming to the realisation that they have 10 years or less left to build their nest eggs before retirement. The surge in volunteering once people hit 64-75 has been attributed to a number of factors, such as, for example, the desire to remain busy and socially active after retirement. Recent research from Canada indicates that the drop in volunteering rates after 75+ years is largely caused by difficulties with health and mobility.<sup>6</sup> It is also possible that the growing social disconnection of persons in this age bracket prohibits them from hearing about volunteering opportunities.<sup>7</sup> Of interest is the finding that the ability to contribute and feel useful is actually of vital importance to the mental and physical welfare of people. Numerous studies have revealed that volunteering into old age enhances both physical and psychological health and lowers rates of depression and mortality.<sup>8,9</sup>



### Volunteers do more than just volunteer

While Figure 3 indicates that those who donate money are slightly more likely to donate time, it is clear that those who don't give money are significantly less likely to volunteer. Married people are a little more likely than singles to volunteer, but of greater significance is the way that volunteering is higher for those who say they are regular worshippers or churchgoers. Figure 3 shows that almost one third of those saying that they are religious had volunteered within the last three months (much higher than the 18% figure for the population as a whole), suggesting that church and religion still have an important role to play in building community cohesiveness and encouraging altruistic behaviour. The take home message here is that charities should be getting in touch with their local parishes (regardless of denomination) and communicating what it is the organisation does, why it is important/of benefit to the community and how parishioners can help.

### **More broadsheet than tabloid**

Those reading broadsheet newspapers (daily or Sunday) or mid-market newspapers (Sunday) are more likely to volunteer than are those reading the daily tabloids. This is probably isn't particularly surprising given the types of people who read different types of newspaper.

### **Charity starts at home – or at least in the community**

*"Local and community engagement will grow, because you will have all these people working from home looking to have that sort of social bond, and they're going to look for it within their local community."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

With the trend for more people to work at home, the question of whether this will lead to more or less community engagement has been raised. Will these home workers be more isolated and therefore less engaged with voluntary work or will they be more in tune with their local community and therefore more active in charity work? Voluntary organisations will no doubt be pleased to hear that a large-scale European study has revealed that home workers are almost twice as likely to volunteer as their non-home working counterparts. 28.6% of those who did not work from home were involved with community or charity work, whereas an enormous 45.8% of home workers were involved. The researchers were at pains to point out that this difference between home working and volunteering may simply be explained by the fact that home workers tend to have a higher socio-economic status and can afford to manage their time more flexibly.<sup>10</sup>

### **The power of the cause or just having time to burn?**

'Understanding Canadian Volunteers'<sup>6</sup>, a report based on the 2001 National Survey of Giving and Volunteering in Canada, highlighted the differing profiles of long-term and short-term volunteers.

It was claimed that long-term volunteers tended to show a pronounced commitment to the organisation's cause and that their primary motivation was achievement and affiliation. They tended to invest themselves emotionally in their voluntary role and gained a sense of identity/self worth through their efforts. They saw their contribution as largely self-directed; that is, they felt they had quite a lot of autonomy in their roles and they were usually recruited through one of three mechanisms:

1. Self-recruited.
2. Becoming increasingly connected to the organisation over time.
3. Having a close affiliation with existing volunteers.

It was argued that the best ways to recognise long-term volunteers is to give them greater opportunities for involvement in the organisation and/or the advancement of the cause.

Short-term volunteers, on the other hand, were usually recruited more actively, possibly for participation in a specific event or by being put on the spot by a friend, co-worker or employer. It was found that they sought well-defined roles of limited duration. It was suggested that short-term volunteers are motivated by having their personal achievements recognised and by being allowed to move on when they have had enough.

These findings point to the importance of providing quality volunteer experiences and equipping volunteers with the tools they need to be effective recruiters, for example, public speaking skills or business cards. In part 3 of this report, we discuss the ways in which short-term volunteers can be shaped into long-term volunteers.

## Section 3: Volunteer expectation and motivation

### The importance of understanding volunteer expectation and motivation

It was emphasised by interviewees that in order to recruit and manage volunteers effectively, voluntary managers must understand what it is that attracts, maintains or scares off current and potential volunteers.

*"A good volunteer manager will know what every volunteer is expecting to get out of their experience and how they are feeling about it, through effective recruitment and supervision." John Ramsey, Citizens Advice*

*"[Engendering volunteer commitment] is really about matching needs and about acknowledging that as an organisation we have certain needs in relation to volunteers. But it is also about acknowledging that volunteers themselves have a very wide range of needs. Where we can make those two sets come together, then we have the basis for a good relationship with volunteers." Carolyn Myers, Oxfam*

This understanding of volunteers needs to occur at two levels. The first is to understand people (and therefore potential volunteers) in general: to understand what their lives are like; what they expect; why they volunteer. Later sections of the report will address this more general understanding. However, organisations also need to understand their volunteers on a more personal level. They need to understand what makes those particular volunteers that approach their organisation tick and the best way to do this is to ask. Ideally, this will be done from the time volunteers approach an organisation right through to the day they leave. By regularly asking volunteers, "Why did you come here today? What are you hoping to get out of the experience? What have you achieved so far? Why do you keep coming back?" (Or, "Why are you leaving?") volunteer managers can derive four key benefits.

### 1. Understand and manage what people expect from their volunteering experience

Imagine that you are from a social welfare agency and that you have asked two newly recruited volunteers to go door-knocking for donations. One of them is the daughter of one of your long-term volunteers and fully expected to be doing this sort of thing. The other approached your organisation after seeing an exciting promotional leaflet for the year of the volunteer and had imagined they would be providing hands-on support to people in need. Which volunteer do you think is most likely to come back for more after their door knocking experiences? The one who's expectations matched the reality. This does not mean that charitable organisations can or should aim to meet volunteer's expectations in every instance. After all, it is the beneficiary's needs and not the volunteer's that should be of supreme concern.

However, by knowing what volunteers expect from their experience, volunteer managers can better prepare them for what the realities are, ensuring that they do not go away disillusioned. For example, it could be explained to the second volunteer that in order for the organisation to provide effective hands-on support, the organisation needs to raise a certain amount of funds for training and equipment. It could also be negotiated that the volunteer would be trained in a more hands-on role after three months of helping on the fundraising team. The important point to remember is that if volunteer managers never ask about expectations, they will have no idea why their new and enthusiastic recruits disappear after their first assignments.

## 2. Encourage ownership and excellence in volunteer working

How often have you heard someone say, "I find it much easier to learn when I'm interested in what's being taught"? People like the things that they are good at and they are good at the things they like. If volunteers are engaged in task of their own choosing, they are more likely to throw themselves in wholeheartedly. By understanding what it is that volunteers desire to do with their chosen organisations, volunteer managers can better match volunteers to roles that they will more naturally enjoy, excel at and take ownership of.

## 3. Manage volunteer satisfaction and reward

When 3,000 volunteers recently were asked by the Scout Association, "Is there anything we could be doing to support you better?" a common response was, "Talk to us more; ask us what we think about things". The very act of asking what volunteers want, what they are enjoying and what they are not, says to volunteers that you care and that they are important. Furthermore, by getting volunteers to think about why they volunteer, you reinforce their commitment to the organisation. If volunteers are **not** encouraged to remember why they are there in the first place (for example, 'to make a difference' or to 'learn new skills'), there is a danger that they will start to view their volunteering as pointless.

## 4. Recruit volunteers effectively and continuously

In an online survey, the Scout Association asked volunteers what motivated them. Below are just a few of the glowing responses.

*"I volunteer as I like to think I am helping to shape better future generations, and I feel I am making a positive contribution to my local community. I really enjoy helping the children to enjoy themselves, to learn, to socialise and to grow."*

*"Having fun and enjoying the company of young people is a huge reason for Scouting. If I come back from a camp without a couple of hours of hilarity to review, then it has been a rare camp."*

*"Our friends are all there. We feel a part of something good."*

*"I enjoy Scouting as a complete break from my demanding (and enjoyable) job: being a Cub Leader forces me to balance my life in ways which would probably otherwise get squeezed out by work."*

*"There is a belief amongst those with the true Scouting spirit that we can and will change the world into a better place for all society to live."*

Who would not want to volunteer for the Scouts after reading such reports? By regularly documenting current volunteers' motivations, an organisation can stockpile information and quotes that will help them target future volunteers more effectively. Further, it will become possible to better understand which types of people are drawn to your organisation (and could therefore be recruited easily) and identify gaps. For example, if it turns out that you have very few volunteers who are interested in increasing their skill base, perhaps the organisation could look at targeting Mum's wanting to re-enter the workplace or the unemployed.

## Beware: Expectations are changing

Once upon a time, voluntary organisations had a steady supply of volunteers who did not particularly care either for whom they volunteered or how effective the organisation was, so long as it filled their time and felt like charity work. These were the archetypal charity shop workers. However, as the UK population has become more cash rich but time poor, an organisation's aims and effectiveness are becoming increasingly important to the potential volunteer. Armed with an extensive education and the finely honed investigative skills that come from dealing with the proliferation of choice in every aspect of their lives: jobs; shopping; finance; leisure; volunteering, the average punter has learnt to be more discriminating and more demanding.

Research from the Work Foundation reveals that 'interesting and stimulating work' was considered to be the most important factor (named by 40% of its sample) that made an employer good to work for.<sup>10</sup>

Now consider if people expect their *paid* work to be interesting and stimulating – is it likely that they will expect anything less from their voluntary work?

As Peter Hammond from The Samaritans commented, *"Voluntary organisations need to remember that they are selling a product, an experience, a sense of meaning and that people will shop around until they get the product that fits their agenda."* Combine this with people's growing need for self-fulfilment and the scene is set for a more qualified and demanding pool of volunteers. Already this is being felt on the ground as is illustrated by the comments below.

*"Personally, I have experienced a much higher level of expectations from volunteers that we (as VMs) will be organised, have meaningful work for our team, give appropriate training, support and recognition and, most importantly, the volunteers will have a say in what the organisation does and how it does it."* Aداire Palmer, SAFECOM

*"People's expectations have been raised, and they will continue to increase in terms of what they expect from their volunteering experience and what they expect from their volunteering organisation."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"More and more I think people are looking for personal satisfaction and may try a variety of organisations before they settle for one."* Rachel Salt, Rugby

As was mentioned previously, there is a general feeling within the sector that the government may be compounding this effect with their well-intentioned awareness raising campaigns.

*"We've raised people's aspirations to find out about volunteering and to expect that there is something at the end of their search, but the reality is that most people are getting quite disappointed because there isn't something that meets their area of interest; and if it does, it doesn't meet their time commitment."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

Greater choice and purchasing power, combined with rising expectations of levels of service, means that people increasingly feel that if they look hard enough or wait long enough, something that more exactly suits their needs and desires will appear. It is arguable that this exposure to greater choice and information in people's everyday lives is what is driving the demand for more flexible volunteering opportunities, as much as lack of time. This is not to say that people are not feeling time pressured. It is just that this pressure is largely self-inflicted; people expect to compress as much activity and experience into each 24-hour day as they can.

Volunteers now expect a lot more from charities in terms of being given meaningful work, having a say in how the organisation is run and receiving appropriate training, support and recognition. Volunteers now want to know exactly what it is that they are getting into and how it compares with what others are offering. And they may be prepared to shop around....

## So what are volunteers' primary motivations?

The motives for volunteering are as complex and as numerous as the volunteers themselves. Having said this, the three motivations most often cited by volunteers are:

1. Belief in the cause/want to make a difference.
2. Desire to impart skills and experience.
3. Having been somehow touched by the cause (even if only through the voluntary work of friends and family members).

Volunteers' indication that they are primarily motivated by a belief in the cause and a desire to make a difference would suggest that if it is made clear to them that their role (no matter how mundane) contributes to the greater cause of the organisation, they will remain engaged. Other key motivations that are frequently mentioned both by volunteers and volunteer managers are training and skills, social opportunities, and the desire for an experience or insight. The full range of motivations that volunteer managers should keep in mind when designing volunteer roles and advertising materials are presented in Table 1. One of the consequences of a growing demand for volunteering that meets the volunteers' needs as much as the organisations' may be the development in a volunteers equivalent to Investors in People – so that volunteers know that their 'employer' is meeting certain standards and criteria.

<b>Soft (less tangible) motivations</b>	<b>Hard (more tangible) motivations</b>	<b>Altruistic motivations</b>
Ability to work with others	Skills (organisational; leadership; management)	Contribute skills, knowledge and/or experience
Communication skills	Qualifications	Make a difference
Social opportunities	Specific training (e.g. counselling)	Desire to 'do unto others as you would have done unto yourself'
Confidence	Allowances	Advance a cause that is close to your heart
Time on hands	Travel	
Fun	Team building	
Relieve boredom		

A number of interviewees were keen to point out a worrying swing towards catering for the harder motivations and associated incentives for volunteering. However, Rob Jackson from Volunteering England suggests that these motivations have always been there, it is simply becoming more acceptable to express them. He comments, *"Egoism is gaining equal weight to altruism but, as with anything new, the former is getting a higher profile because it is being expressed more than before. This will balance out in time."* It was emphasised that volunteer managers should not overlook the power of soft and altruistic motivations when appealing to potential volunteers. It was seen that these motivations were more in keeping with the general ethos of the sector and concentrating on these would ensure beneficiaries' needs were not subverted by volunteers' needs.

It is also useful to consider that regardless of motivation, for 47% of volunteers, the reason they started volunteering was because somebody asked them to. Similarly, 37% of non-volunteers said they would be interested in doing so and that a key incentive for doing so would be 'being asked'. Volunteers rarely stop volunteering out of disengagement with a cause. Instead, they generally do so because of low recognition and support; lack of autonomy and freedom; or because they are poorly matched to a task in terms of skills or experience.<sup>4</sup>

## Section 4: Volunteering as a political objective

With a plethora of initiatives, including millennial volunteers, the Home Office Citizenship Survey, an Active Community Pilot in Schools, a new volunteering hub (Volunteering England) and the Year of the Volunteer (2005), the current government appears thoroughly committed to strengthening the role of volunteering and civic engagement in UK citizens' lives.

And it is not all talk, millions has been allocated to volunteering for the Year of the Volunteer and the ChangeUp volunteering hub. Certainly Dr Justin Davis Smith of the Institute of Volunteering research

feels that the ball has now rolled far enough to maintain momentum, even if the government was to change, stating, *"whoever is in power in the future, volunteering will be high on the political agenda for two reasons: 1) As part of the public sector reforms (i.e. public sector can't deliver on its own) and 2) Due to increasing recognition that volunteering is good for society and good for the community cohesiveness."*

Though commentators welcome the government's recognition of and commitment to the power of community engagement through volunteers, it was generally agreed that government initiatives tended to fall short in three key ways:

1. They were often not structured in a considered and sustainable manner.

*"I think the biggest problem is that they (the government) tend to rush things in. They think, 'that's a great idea, let's do it' without actually thinking, 'hang on a minute, let's set this up in a way that is sustainable'."* Rachel Salt, The Rugby Football League

*"It's all very well funding something for 2-3 years, but in volunteering terms that's nothing. You've got to build up environments and structures and what have you and 2-3 years is not long enough."* Rachel Salt, The Rugby Football League

2. They do a great job in raising awareness about and generating demand for volunteering but are not so good at helping voluntary organisations develop the supply side to meet the resulting expectations.

*"There is a supply and demand side to this, and the government has put a lot of focus on stimulating demand for volunteering through promoting and celebrating the work of volunteers. But actually, a lot could be done on the supply side to get the infrastructure right so that it's as easy as possible for people who want to volunteer to volunteer."* Richard Harries, Head of Unit, Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit

*"The importance that organisations and government place upon volunteering is increasing, but there isn't necessarily an accompanying importance or investment being put on organisations' ability to effectively engage volunteers."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

3. They tend to opt for new, headline grabbing programmes where building on what was already in existence would be more cost-effective and sustainable.

*"My advice would be, don't look at it as a way of grabbing the headlines. Do it on what works, do it on what exists, build on good practice and build on long-term funding (not three-year projects)."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"Certainly for a successful government policy, I think the important thing is to deal with some of the less glamorous, less sexy, less headline grabbing issues of building the infrastructure up and getting that into a good state."* Richard Harries, Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit

*"Government initiatives have worked less well when the government has tried to enforce a new programme on the voluntary sector and when the government runs them from Whitehall. It's better when the government distributes resources for the voluntary sector to run."* Dr Justin Davis Smith, Director, Institute for Volunteering Research

A clear concern expressed by interviewees was that government was building public expectation regarding what volunteering could deliver without first helping to ensure that the voluntary sector was prepared to meet this growing demand and expectation. The negative effect that this could have on the enthusiasm of potential volunteers was encapsulated by a recent experience Rob Jackson, Volunteering England, had on the Year of the Volunteer website, *"I went onto the Year of the Volunteer website on Tuesday, looked for a volunteer opportunity local to me in one of my hobbies, which is music, didn't find anything, and I was disappointed! And I've been working in this field for 10 years!"*

A comment by Carolyn Myers of Oxfam summarised well the general feeling of interviewees, *"We have got people in government who are very committed to the concept of developing the sector further but don't necessarily understand what that means or what that support needs to look like."*

The problem, of course, is that defining what that support needs to look like is no easy business. Certainly the voluntary sector seems to be no clearer than the government in terms of what the concrete steps forward should be.



## Part 2: 21st Century life and its impact on volunteering

*"Society changes all of the time, and I think it can be quite dangerous just to get used to one way of doing things."* Lesley Bourne, Operations Manager, do-it.org.uk

There are a plethora of economic, social, political and technological trends that will potentially impact on volunteering over the coming decades. It is not possible to do them all justice in this small space and so instead seven key trends and their implications for volunteering have been summarised: the ageing population; unprecedented affluence; changing family and household arrangements; escalating education and delays in financial independence; mushrooming choice; the ICT revolution; and raised aspirations. For our report 'Five Key Trends in the Voluntary Sector' please email [reports@nfpsynergy.net](mailto:reports@nfpsynergy.net).

### Trend 1: An ageing population

The profile of the UK population is getting older. In fact, it is predicted that by 2023 there will be a greater proportion of people over 50 years old than under. Put more explicitly: by 2023 there will be an additional 5.5 million people aged over 50 - from 18.3 to 23.8 million. There are also problems ahead for state pensions. If we look just 16 years into the future (2020), the ratio of those of working age (16+) to those over retirement age (65+) is predicted to shift from 4.6 people working to 1 retired person to 3.8:1.<sup>11</sup>

On the one hand, this may mean that there will be a large body of older people looking for something to do with their post-retirement time. On the other, the impending pensions crisis will likely result in older people remaining in the workforce for much longer and therefore having less time to give for charity. It may also mean that voluntary sector resources will be increasingly directed towards the elderly.

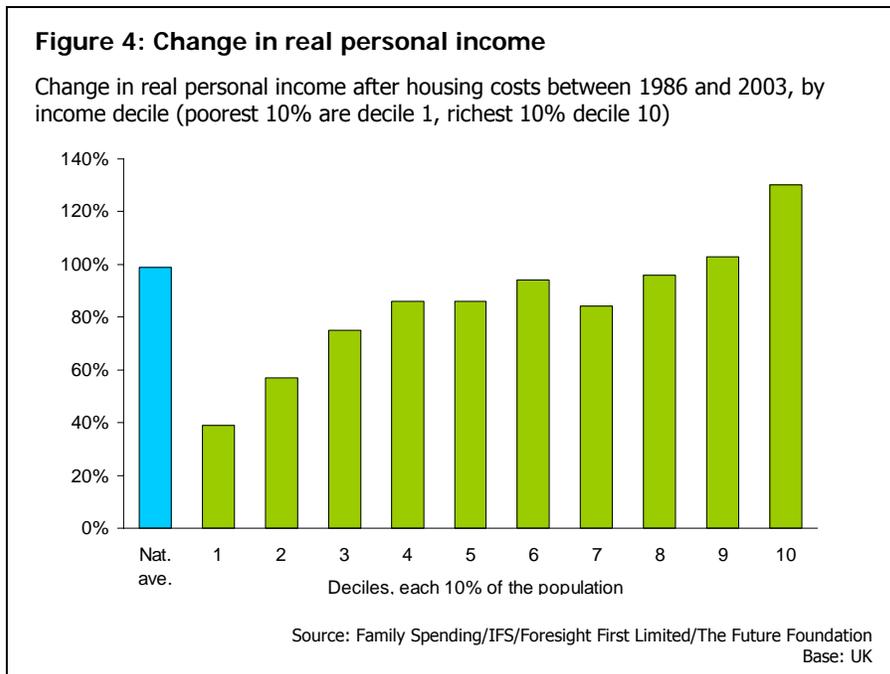
### Trend 2: Society is getting richer (on average)

It is well-documented that levels of volunteering are related to social class, with those having a higher socio-economic status being more likely to volunteer (at least formally).<sup>3,4,5</sup> It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that the more affluent people are, the more likely they are to 'give something back' by volunteering - if merely by virtue of the fact that they can afford to. Given that the average annual wage in the UK is predicted to rise from £24,689 to £57,699<sup>†</sup> over the next c30 years,<sup>11</sup> it would seem there is reason for charities to get excited. Though this wealth looks like it will be increasingly concentrated in the over 50s and in the wealthiest 10% of the population, Figure 4 reveals that all levels of UK society are becoming better off. This has practical and spiritual implications in terms of volunteering.<sup>11</sup>

The declining need (for the affluent majority) to worry about whether there is enough money for food, shelter and small luxuries means that UK citizens can increasingly think beyond their own immediate need for survival, to that of their own emotional and self-esteem needs as well as the needs of others. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that our growing affluence is associated with a greater desire for self-fulfilment:

- In 2000 40% of UK citizens indicated that they 'work hard' at self-improvement, which is a 10% jump since 1980.<sup>11</sup>
- The proportion of people choosing self-fulfilment as their main wish ahead of 'to be highly esteemed', 'to be able to afford something' and 'to have more friendship' has doubled since 1983.
- 85% of people feel that 'being involved to create a better society' is important/very important would suggest that this growing desire for self-fulfilment could be harnessed by any voluntary organisation that offers people the chance to fulfil their potential. This could be in terms of gaining new skills or friends, contributing existing skills and experiences towards a greater good or simply feeling that somewhere, somehow they've made a difference in someone's life.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Calculated at 2000 prices



### Trend 3: The 'any way up' family and more isolated living

Half a century ago a child was typically a part of a broad family unit made up of grandparents and parents as well as a number of uncles, aunts, cousins and siblings. As people began to live longer and have fewer children, the family has become 'taller' (with children increasingly likely to know their great grandparents) but 'narrower' – less children means less uncles, aunts, cousins and siblings. It doesn't stop there. This more 'vertical' family structure has become increasingly complicated because of the increase in divorce and remarriage and decrease in marriage. In 1998, the divorce rate was a staggering 52%, up from 6.5% in 1960. This widespread fracturing and reforming of the family unit has resulted in some very complex and disjointed family arrangements.<sup>11</sup>

Related to this are the significant changes in living arrangements. Most notably:

- Married couple households are decreasing in number (from 70% of all households in 1971 and forecast to be less than 40% of households in 2021).
- Single-person households are increasing in number (from less than 20% of all households in 1971 and forecast to be over 30% of households by 2021), and many single householders are older people.
- The number of cohabiting couple households is also increasing: from virtually zero in 1971, it is forecast to be over 10% of all households by 2021.<sup>11</sup>

This trend towards increasing fragmentation and isolation is bad news for voluntary organisations on a number of fronts. First, the strong relationship between volunteering and social connectedness, would suggest that a breakdown in family and household connectedness will likely lead to a breakdown in volunteering.<sup>6</sup> Second, social support is a well-known protective factor against personal crisis.<sup>12</sup> As families and households become increasingly bereft of support they once contained, the voluntary sector will have to work harder and will need to recruit more volunteers in order to pick up the pieces. The fact that alcohol<sup>13</sup> abuse and related deaths<sup>14</sup>, depression<sup>15</sup> and self-harm by children<sup>16</sup> have all been increasing since the 1970s may be evidence that this is already happening. Seeking out these disconnected people and wrapping them in the warmth and social connectedness of volunteering is a role the voluntary sector could embrace over the coming years. Indeed with the decline in 'traditional' families and the rise of more complex families arrangements may mean that for many people their need for kinship and community is met by their volunteering work.

### Trend 4: The escalation of education and delays in financial independence

In just 26 years, annual enrolments in tertiary education in the UK have shot up by over 2 million places (from 1976 to 2002). This means that in 2002 alone there were nearly 3 million people

beginning their tertiary studies – this is greater than the number of people by which the UK population increased in the same time frame (1976-2002)! In 2001, only 5.4% of 15-24 year olds were without qualifications. For those aged over 65, the figure was 56%.<sup>17</sup> A recent NatWest survey showed that the average debt of a student graduating in 2002 was approximately £10,000 – an increase of 54% from the year before – and concluded that it would take most students 4-10 years to pay this back<sup>17</sup>.

This has a number of key implications for organisations that rely on volunteers.

1. Students now represent a sizable and relatively easy-to-reach pool of potential volunteers. Given that higher levels of education tend to be associated with higher levels of giving, this is good news for charities.
2. Increasingly, those people who volunteer will be highly educated and will expect that their knowledge and skills will be used effectively.
3. Given women's increasing commitment to education, it is possible that once they have children, they will minimise the time they have to spend at home and in the community. This may mean that more fathers will share child-rearing tasks and will therefore be available during the day for voluntary work. It also may mean that if charities want to take advantage of stay-at-home parents, they should target those with very young children.
4. As the workforce becomes increasingly educated, practical experience will become more important in terms of differentiating between which students will get snapped up into employment and which will not. This means that students will be more willing to volunteer for organisations that offer appropriate experience. It also means that students may opt to volunteer in the corporate sector in order to get their foot in the right door.
5. Students are now graduating with more sizable debts. This may mean that volunteering for purely altruistic reasons may need to be put on the backburner for some time.
6. Increased time spent in education and greater student debt may give modern workers a greater ownership of any financial success. They may therefore be more reserved giving 'handouts', wanting to better understand who their time is helping and why this group is so deserving.

### **Trend 5: Choice is mushrooming**

Choice across every aspect of society is growing. This growth in choice is driven in some cases by market competition, but also by deregulation and the new technologies of TV, phones and the internet. Some examples of how choice is growing can be found in virtually every aspect of life, but include<sup>18</sup>:

- **Choice driven by competition** (for example over 4,400 mortgages, 1,600 models of new car on sale, 200,000 titles in high street bookshops and 40,000 products in the average out-of-town Tesco (up from 5,000 in the early 1980s).
- **Choice driven by technology** (120 mobile phone tariffs in Carphone Warehouse alone (not to mention choices of ringtones), 600 internet service providers and 900 choices of TV channels (up from four a decade ago).
- **Choice driven by deregulation** (16 choices of electricity supplier, 22 choices of gas supplier, 11 choices of telephone supplier, and all from a base of no choice of utility supplier as recently as 1990.

It has already been mentioned that as UK citizens become more adept at managing this proliferation of choice and competition, they also become more discriminating and demanding in terms of what they expect when they commit to any particular option, e.g. a voluntary organisation.

### **Trend 6: ICT as the new way of life**

If your organisation is not currently considering the role of new information and communication technology in recruiting and retaining volunteers, be prepared to be left stranded on a sinking jetty as the boat of opportunity sails off into the sunset with any number of your competitors on board.

The recent nfpSynergy report 'Touch and Go'<sup>19</sup> made clear the competitive edge that can be gained through early mastery of increasingly proliferate technologies such as the internet, digital TV and mobile telephony. Some excerpts from the report are included below. For further information, email [reports@nfpsynergy.net](mailto:reports@nfpsynergy.net) and request 'Touch and Go'.

#### **Mobile phones**

There are 1.36 telephone subscribers for each UK inhabitant, and 77% of people own at least one mobile. Men and the higher social grades are more likely to own a mobile phone but, with the exception of DEs at 69%, this effect is becoming insignificant. A text message campaign, for example, would still be a very good way to target older people - assuming of course that most owners can use basic features on their phone!

### **The internet**

In the last two years, internet access has shown a real convergence in terms of demographic access, with gaps that previously existed between age groups and genders beginning to close. For example, 16-44 year olds are now indicating the same high rates of access, 70%, with 55-64 year olds not too far behind at 60%. Not surprisingly ABs have the highest rate of access at 80%, C1s and C2s come in a fair way behind at 63% and 51% respectively, and DEs access is incredibly low at 29% - although this still means a third of those in the lowest wage bracket have access to the internet.

### **Digital TV**

Digital TV has had the most rapid uptake of all the discussed technologies, with 44% of all households accessing it within 5 years of introduction. In 2001 there were a staggering 420 TV channels; in 1998 there were 120, and in 1994 there were four. This diffusion of viewers will mean that charities moving into digital TV will have to be strategic, either targeting niche markets with their own TV shows or targeting channels with high access rates.

### Trend 7: Aspirations are high and rising

Research shows that it is not just more self-fulfilment that UK citizens are chasing as their wealth increases – it is more of everything. Eurobarometer data indicates that not only do more of us feel that the basics of a good job and sufficient accommodation are 'absolutely necessary to live properly',<sup>11</sup> we also feel a greater need for friendly neighbours and to be useful to others. Perhaps most striking of all is the increase in the proportion of people claiming that sufficient leisure time and at least one holiday a year are 'absolute necessities'.<sup>11</sup> It would seem that we are witnessing the evolution of the status of leisure from that of luxury to necessity. As John Ramsey of Citizens Advice points out this has implications for volunteering when he warns, *"It's not about us competing with the Samaritans or whatever, it will be us competing with cinema or holidays or golf."*

The number of different leisure activities that people partake in during any 12-month period has almost doubled since 2003, from 5.6 to 10.3. So too has expenditure on leisure: a whopping £108billion was spent on home leisure alone in 2002. The average person currently spends 37 hours on leisure activities a week (two thirds of these hours are spent in front of the television). The typical UK citizen claims that they socialise 110 times a year, eat out or have take-out 65 times a year, go out 65 times a year, play sport 45 times a year and partake in cultural activities 10 times a year.<sup>11</sup>

It is no wonder that 53% of the population claim that they feel under time pressure in their everyday lives! When it is considered that a good deal more time is being spent in education and that today's married women are more than three times as likely to be in full time employment than those in the 1950s, it is also no surprise that time has become something of a precious commodity for UK citizens. As Watts Wacker and Jim Taylor (American Futurists) warn, *"Busy people are busy absolutely. Psychic abuse can be endured. Financial abuse is unwelcome but bearable. It is time abuse that most strains loyalty to any organisation."* In an ironic twist, research shows that it is those groups who say they feel most time pressured that volunteer the most (i.e. women and 34-54 year olds).<sup>11</sup>

#### **Gazinta – voluntary managers ignore it at their peril (and the bigger the Gazinta the better)<sup>11</sup>**

For American academic Lee Burns, the ability to maximise the ratio of satisfaction to time (the amount of satisfaction derived / the amount of time invested = Gazinta) has become paramount for citizens of the western world. He explains that this can be done in one of two ways: 1) by increasing the amount of satisfaction gained during any given period of time, e.g. by ensuring everything a volunteer will need to get their work done is ready when they arrive, or 2) by reducing the amount of time taken to achieve the same amount of satisfaction, e.g. by ensuring the volunteer has access to time-saving computer programmes. Voluntary managers should ignore this equation at their own peril!

## Part 3: Looking to the future – key issues for creating a land of flourishing volunteers

In many ways the future of volunteering will be what voluntary organisations make of it. Although there are many social trends that will influence who volunteers and how, it is ultimately the sector itself that will determine whether the volunteering product is something that people want to buy into. In the same way that the government shapes economic or environmental policy, so too should charities be consciously shaping the volunteering experience and brand. Part 3 of this report examines six key areas (brand, professionalisation, targeted marketing, flexible opportunities, collaboration and 'selfish' volunteers) that volunteer managers will need to come to grips with if they are to manage a flourishing department of volunteers into the 21st Century.

### Section 1: Renewing the image of volunteering

*"Where the majority of the public see volunteer recruitment is charity shop windows. This has a negative effect as all they see is 'Help – we desperately need volunteers'. You only have to look at the sitcoms to see what most people's impression of a charity shop volunteer is and therefore what their first impression of a volunteer is."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"I find that the very word "volunteering" puts off a number of potential recruits, especially in the 16-25 age group."* Adrian Smith, Crime Concern

*"I believe that managers of volunteer programmes have ensured this stereotype [of volunteering meaning amateur] continues to exist. They stay traditional and recruit volunteers for roles that are not challenging and do not require specific skills sets. Granted the manager of the volunteer programme often doesn't know the tasks that could be done by a skilled volunteer but it is their job to find out."* As entered on the e-volunteerism forum - Colleen Kelly, Executive Director, Volunteer Vancouver

It was widely argued by commentators that volunteering was in need of a new brand or image, but there is a question of what this brand should be. Should it be 'fun and career enhancing' in line with the Russell Commission finding on what young people are looking for? Should it appeal to the generation of retiring baby boomers who are looking to keep their lives busy, socially engaged and fulfilled? Or should it aim to increase diversity by appealing to sections of society that do not really fit the white, middle-classed, affluent profile? The answer seems obvious – it needs to encapsulate a degree of all of the above. As many of our interviewees were quick to point out, you cannot have one message or one image and expect it to appeal to all age groups and all cultures. As such, the volunteering brand needs to reflect dynamism and diversity.

So whose job is it to nurture this volunteering brand? Although Volunteering England, local volunteering centres and the government have an important role in promoting a dynamic and coherent brand, it is the role of the individual voluntary organisations and volunteer managers that is paramount to the brand's success.

*"Managers of volunteers need to look beyond their own programmes, develop an awareness that they are part of a larger piece, and take some responsibility for how the world views volunteering."* As entered on the e-volunteering forum - Linda Graff, Linda Graff Associates

Consider a product such as Coca Cola. While state-of-the art branding and marketing will ensure that people are inspired to try Coke, if the drink itself tastes like dishwater, the brand will fall over. People will not go back for seconds and they will tell all their friends not to bother; that the exciting image is all hype. It is therefore vitally important that efforts by centralized bodies such as the government, e.g. Through the Year of the Volunteer, and Volunteering England to promote volunteering are preceded by efforts to ensure the sector can actually deliver on what is promised. Similarly, voluntary organisations need to be prepared to meet these centralised bodies half way. There are many things that individual organisations can and should start doing today to improve the experience and therefore the word-of-mouth image of volunteering.

For example, volunteer managers can ensure that available volunteering roles are diverse, coherent and vision-based; they can ensure that volunteers skills are used effectively and that their time is not wasted through poor organisation; they can provide more creative and flexible opportunities; and they can collaborate with other organisations to consolidate their efforts.

A final issue worth mentioning is that perhaps when addressing the brand of volunteering it is worth considering how the beneficiary is depicted. Too often in our westernised society, volunteering is conceptualised as a generous gift of time from the empowered and virtuous volunteer to the helpless recipient. Where is the sense of communal good; the understanding that together volunteers and beneficiaries are the heads and tails of the same coin with the volunteer's good fortune and prosperity often being the flipside of the beneficiary's poverty or misfortune? Where is the comprehension that beneficiaries also have much to give and that it will often be the volunteers themselves that come away the richer for their volunteering experiences? It is arguable that more needs to be made of the interconnectedness between volunteer and beneficiary and that the elements the beneficiary brings to the table should be better promoted.

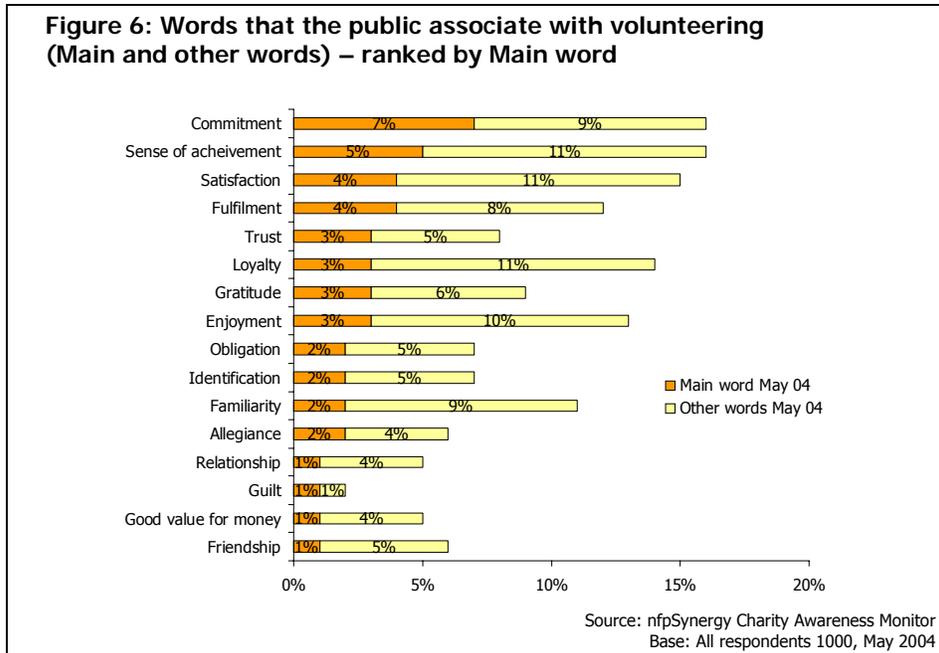
### **How is volunteering perceived?**

There is little rigorous research looking at volunteering's public image, however nfpSynergy's Charity Awareness Monitor asked members of the public to select the words they associated with volunteering out of a predefined list: Figure 6 reveals that:

- 'sense of achievement' (16%),
- 'satisfaction' (15%),
- 'enjoyment' (13%)
- and 'fulfilment' (12%) all made it into the top six.

Encouragingly, words such as 'obligation' (7%) and 'guilt' (2%) were selected far less frequently, suggesting that the public's perception of volunteering is really quite positive.

Of slight concern was the fact that more people associated the word 'familiarity' (11%) with volunteering than 'allegiance' (6%), 'relationship' (5%) or 'friendship' (6%), and that when asked to perform the same task for the word 'giving', people tended to select twice as many words (suggesting that the mostly positive words listed did not really hit home with people when asked to think about volunteering). Research from the recent Russell Commission report would suggest that young people tend to see volunteering as 'stuffy and out of touch'.



We also asked people from the charity sector to tell us the first word, thought or phrase that popped into their mind when they heard the word 'volunteer'. Figure 7 reveals a selection of the positive and questionable responses. It can be seen that while for many, volunteers represent energetic, giving people with a social conscience, for others they are seen as old, amateurish and a pain to have to manage. The most common words or associations were 'free/cheap/not paid'; 'old/retired lady'; 'selfless'; 'enthusiastic'; 'good person' and 'helping others'.

**Figure 7: Words and phrases the charity sector associate with volunteering (unprompted)**

Positive		Questionable	
Selfless	Friend	Middle aged person	Oh god, alright then.
Thoughtful	Social conscience	Do gooder	Chaos
Good people	Enthusiastic	Worker	Annoyance
My mum	Caring	Shop	In need of experience
Worth their weight in gold	Hero	Amateur	Cheap
Active, involved	Smile	Tin rattler	Well-meaning
Happy	Salt of the earth	Old	Stupid
Generous	Vital	Argh!	Bit of spare time
Mad but wonderful!	Life changing	Hospital tea ladies	Prig
Opportunity	God send	Middle class	Retired lady
Noble	Indispensable	Someone who feels guilty	okay
Yes, please	Respect	Kind but time consuming	Exploited

## Section 2: Increasing professionalisation and marketing of volunteering

### Why professionalisation should not be ignored

*"One of the things we'll see increasingly over the coming years, especially with how government are playing out their connection with the voluntary sector, is a lot more professionalism."* Carolyn Myers, Oxfam

There has been much talk about the professionalisation of volunteers and volunteer management – but what does this really mean and why is it important? We put this question to the UK forum for volunteer managers (UK VPMS) and their responses are outlined below.

*"For us our volunteers are integrated (as much as is practical) within our project teams. Although their roles are different, we need to know our volunteers have the same training in child protection, have the same level of CRB checks, are offered the support they need and get the opportunities to use their experiences more fully."* Adrian Smith, Crime Concern

*"It is important to us in the provision of social care because we are increasingly reliant on volunteers to deliver services and also to highlight the need for new and more services. The voice of volunteers can (and should) be powerful, but only if it is harnessed and within a framework will it be taken seriously by others."* Debbie Usiskin, Volunteers Co-ordinator, Nightingalehouse

*"For me, being professional encompasses treating my volunteers with respect, ensuring they are not taken for granted, that they understand our obligations to them and vice versa, to name but a few things. They are volunteering their time and we should ensure that it is not wasted."* Sean Cobley, Volunteer and Office Co-ordinator (UK VPM member)

*"We're doing it (professionalisation) for very positive reasons, which is really about duty of care and giving volunteers the same kind of rights as employees. So it's like a moral right rather than a legal right."* Carolyn Myers, Oxfam

*"I think the principles which come through good employment law like making sure that you have a good clear disciplinary policy and procedure. I think those sorts of things are increasingly going to apply to volunteers. And it's not really about trying to create a bureaucracy; it's actually about trying to create fairness."* Carolyn Myers, Oxfam

In many ways, the professionalisation of volunteering was seen as an artefact of good practice; as volunteers are increasingly responsible for frontline work with beneficiaries, it becomes more and more important to ensure appropriate standards and checks. Given the current climate of accountability, this was seen as both an ethical and legal responsibility.

The important role that volunteers play in representing any charitable organisation was also seen as a compelling argument for extending professionalisation. This is particularly relevant for organisations such as the Scout Association, where there are 80,000 volunteers and only 160 staff. If a member of the public comes into contact with the association, probability says it will be through a volunteer. This means that it is crucial to invest in the appropriate infrastructure to ensure that volunteers are effective advocates. Part of this is about ensuring that there are appropriate recruitment, evaluation, grievance and dismissal processes in place; the one force more powerful than a happy volunteer is an unhappy volunteer.

Commentators also argued that professionalisation of the sector as a whole was inevitable, given the increasingly educated and professional backgrounds of key participants. This was obviously an issue, even back in 1997, when 71% of respondents to the National Survey of Volunteering in the UK said that a major drawback of volunteering was that their organisations were not properly organised.

Greater professionalisation was not, however, seen by interviewees as a reason to deny volunteers the greater flexibility, creativity and autonomy they might expect in their roles in exchange for their gift of time. Instead, it was proposed that volunteers should have all of this within a well-managed framework that makes clear the procedures and consequences inherent in any situation.

*"The last 20 years have seen positive steps in terms of realising that volunteers need training and support, but a problem is that we have basically imposed a workplace management model on volunteers whose needs and expectations may be different to those of paid employees."*

Dr Justin Davis Smith, Director, Institute for Volunteering Research

*"As a volunteer myself I know how frustrating it is to be treated as nothing more than just another unit, a resource for an organisation."* Richard Harries, Head of Unit, Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit

*"There is a resistance to being managed like a paid member of staff because you are still giving your time for free. However, I think volunteers do expect good organisations and a good experience. If they don't get that the first time round, then that's one of the biggest stumbling blocks. We had somebody write to us once who was an accountant and had applied for a finance vacancy – when she went to give her time, they actually weren't prepared at all and got her to sweep the floor instead – she felt insulted and said that she would never go back. It is things like that that are going to be important – professionalism but without making it a cold."*

Lesley Bourne, Operations Manager, do-it.org.uk

Perhaps the most important point made was that the professionalisation of volunteering does not mean turning voluntary work into the equivalent of paid work, minus the pay cheque. Rather, it means that volunteers should be managed in a way that increases their effectiveness and decreases the risk of any ill effects or fall outs.

*"Society is increasingly reliant on volunteer involvement in civil society and mission-based organisations, and for this to be done effectively, there needs to be resources and standards to ensure such. Professionalisation of volunteer management is a good avenue to achieve that."* Jayne Cravens, Virtual Volunteering

*"With legislation constantly changing and excellent practice in a wide number of organisations, it is essential to have a professional approach to looking after and working with volunteers."* Adrian Smith, Crime Concern

*"The sector needs to become more professional to protect volunteers from issues like litigation through the practice of good risk management, OH&S and volunteer HR practices. This requires a much higher level of skills and knowledge than ever before."* Adaire Palmer, SAFECOM

*"It's probably more important that the volunteer manager becomes more professionalised. A well-managed team will present a well-managed appearance and get the job done in a well-managed way. The VM is crucial to enabling this to occur through professional recruitment, selection, training, placement and recognition practices (to name a few)."* Adaire Palmer, SAFECOM

Further to this, our experts were adamant that it was no longer acceptable for 'Volunteer Manager' to be a position that was simply tagged onto the end of a staff member's job description. There is a clear feeling that if volunteers are to be effective in their role, they need effective management and support.

*"Volunteer management is not a role that you can do just coming off the streets. It is a specialist skill that needs to be invested in. You need to be supported, and you need training in it. Like any job, you get better with experience but you still need that initial knowledge and skills to start with."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

It was emphasised that there was much work to be done in terms of providing an infrastructure that enabled volunteer managers to work to their capacity. Initial indications are that the new volunteering hub will go a long way in filling this gap.

*"Compare it to fundraising - we've got a full professional infrastructure for fundraising now, we've got professional qualifications, we've got self-regulation coming up, we've got industry standards. There's nothing like that for volunteering. There's no professional qualifications, no career path, no NVQ's, there's nothing except national occupational standards."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"I think if you want to move forward, you need to invest in a professional body which can advise you and give you a certain standard to which you have to achieve."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

### **Learning from fundraisers**

For many the gap between the volunteer management and fundraising management is stark. For Rob Jackson this is one of his greatest bug-bears.

*"The perception in the past has been that giving money is more important because we need money to pay for things. There is not much acceptance of the fact that people giving their time makes the money that we have go further. There's been that divergence in terms of thinking, with volunteer managers left feeling that they're the poor cousin to fundraisers."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"Over the last 10-15 years fundraisers have increasingly become more proficient in understanding their audiences, in understanding their market and in marketing fundraising to them effectively, which is something that in my experience, has passed volunteer managers by."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"I liken the situation we're in at the moment to one that fundraising people were in a few years ago, where fundraisers were a necessary evil in order to bring money into the organisation but nobody really invested a lot of time or effort in equipping those people with the skills to do it more effectively, and the same is true now, I think, of volunteering."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

It does seem that the realisation that effective engagement with volunteers can deliver the same, if not greater, benefits to those of an effective fundraising campaign, is slowly dawning within the sector. Having said this, it is important for organisations to understand that they will be desperately disappointed if they look to volunteers simply as a means of cutting costs. Getting a productive volunteer programme off the ground requires investment and infrastructure. However, once that investment and infrastructure is in place, volunteers can become a much more powerful and cost-effective force for the organisation than staff could ever be.

Volunteers are often giving their time for love, not money, and may therefore be more passionate than staff and may be considered as more trustworthy by beneficiaries and key stakeholders (because they are not seen to have ulterior motives or to be 'part of the system'). They also provide relatively risk-free opportunities to explore innovative solutions. For example, if an organisation is interested in setting up a particular new service, they could ask volunteers to do the necessary research and to set up and evaluate a pilot programme. If it works out, great, if it doesn't, then little donor money has been wasted and volunteers have had the opportunity to try their hands at something challenging.

Of course, volunteer management and fundraising are not mutually exclusive. If fundraisers are the legs of a voluntary organisation, then volunteer managers are the arms. The fact that these two sets of organisational 'limbs' often do not work together is quite simply criminal. Both aim to mobilise the gifts that supporters give, whether this be time or money, both have access to pools of potential supporters through which the other could benefit and both need to understand the various needs and motivations of their supporters. Having spent the last two decades becoming more proficient in understanding how to target different market segments, fundraisers have something of a head start in this respect.

As such, volunteer managers should endeavour to work more closely with their fundraising teams and to learn their secrets. This process need not be all one way. Volunteer managers have access to the most dedicated supporters of all: those who are willing to give time. This means that fundraising teams can use the volunteer manager's skills and expertise in order to coax financial supporters into also giving time or expertise.

Carolyn Myers from Oxfam has these words of advice for volunteer managers who are hesitant to recruit for a role rather than for the organisation as a whole:

*"I think the key is having something that is tangible and meaningful for volunteers to apply for. A really good example is a student I have, who is one of three on my team at the moment studying marketing. I've been wanting for some time to do some marketing research into people's propensity to do volunteering for Oxfam, and I defined a role in such a way that there were two very big substantial projects within that and responsibility to respond to any queries around marketing. So the person who applied and was successful wasn't specifically applying because it was Oxfam – he was applying because it was the sort of role that he wanted to do and he felt that he had an opportunity to make a real impact."*



## Section 3: Targeting different volunteer markets

If you wanted to build a house, would you hire a fishmonger? If you wanted your garden tended, would you call an accountant? Of course not. So why do we insist on matching volunteers with tasks with which they are not particularly suited? And why are recruitment messages so consistently generic and unimaginative?

*"They (volunteer managers) try and use one recruitment message to appeal to everybody, whether they're 16 or 55 but, of course, people all through their lives have got different demands on their time and all kinds of different things going on that won't make that message resonate with them."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"I think with volunteer recruitment, it's about understanding that we're selling a product and that we need to learn how to sell products. You don't sell a particular product by saying 'if you want to volunteer, come here – that's not how you sell it. You've got to target your customers with what you're offering, you've got to target them with what they want from it and convince them that we will meet their expectations."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

In the report 'Understanding Canadian Volunteers', Norah McClintock recommends a five-step process for targeting specific volunteers for specific tasks in a considered and effective manner. Figure 8 illustrates how this process could be applied. When thinking about motivations, remember to consider not just hard motivations such as learning skills, but also the soft and altruistic motivations outlined in Table 1<sup>6</sup>.

1. Define the task/role that needs to be addressed (wish list).
2. Select an appropriate target group.
3. Consider:
  - What are their motivations?
  - What are the barriers to their involvement?
4. Based on key motivations and barriers, consider how the task/role could be packaged.
5. Outline your message:
  - What will the volunteer gain?
  - What will the task/role accomplish for your organisation/for the community?

When designing the tasks/roles that need to be addressed, it is vital that organisations continually refer back to their vision and mission. What is the organisation trying to achieve? How is it trying to do this? Are there things the charity would like to achieve that are not currently being addressed? Are there things the charity is currently doing well that it would like to do more of? Are there things the charity is currently doing that could be done better? And finally, what are the discrete tasks and roles in all of this for which volunteers could be responsible (also called a 'wish list')? By taking this vision/mission driven approach, charities not only ensure that volunteers are being managed effectively to fulfil the organisation's purpose, they also make it easier for volunteers to see 'the point' in what they are doing; it makes it easier to communicate and sell the ways in which volunteers are actually making a difference.

For those organisations that lack volunteers, the use of the 'wish list' of volunteer tasks and more targeted advertising will help attract the right volunteers. For those lucky organisations that have a surplus of volunteers it will provide a strategy for actually using their talent and good will!

<b>Figure 8: Application of the five-step process for developing an effective recruitment/management strategy</b>	
Task	Organise a major fundraising event
Target group	20-25 year olds
Key motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a difference</li> <li>• Enhancing career potential</li> <li>• Opportunity to socialise</li> </ul>
Relevant trend data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students more likely than non-students to volunteer so consider targeting universities</li> </ul>
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time, especially during classes and in block exams</li> <li>• Money for travel and expenses</li> </ul>
Packaging considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people are looking to enhance their careers, but we do not have the resource to offer full training. Instead we will target students with the relevant theoretical knowledge (e.g. hospitality students) and offer them the chance to apply their skills in the real world</li> <li>• In order to a) ensure the job is done properly and b) provide the young person with extra incentive, consider contacting potential corporate partners to find an appropriate 'mentor' for the young person – a person on whose advice and experience they can draw, even if the support is provided only through email</li> <li>• Plan event for the end of the summer holidays so students will not have to worry about conflicting priorities in terms of classes and exams</li> <li>• Consider allocating the task to a number of students so that the role feels supported and is socially fulfilling</li> <li>• Allow the young person/people to work from home if they prefer</li> </ul>
Message	<p>Are you a hospitality student looking for fun, work experience, the chance to meet people and a way to make the world a better place? Then do we have an opportunity for you. Here at Rainforest Concern we are looking for three enthusiastic and talented students to work together in developing and overseeing a major fundraising event. Funds raised from the event, which will be held at the end of the summer holiday, will go towards the preservation of the beautiful but disappearing Peruvian rainforests. Successful applicants will be given complete creative control and will receive tutelage and support from one of the commercial sector's leading event managers. Travel expenses and a professional reference will be provided.</p>

When designing your message, it can be useful to keep in mind a series of words that have been found to grab readers' attentions: 'gain'; 'achieve'; 'win'; 'avoid'; 'special'; 'easy'; 'health'; 'discover'; 'love'; 'unique'; 'amazing'; 'free'; 'you'. Of course, it is also important to have a good understanding of the groups you are targeting. The following sections aim to provide volunteer managers with a more in-depth understanding of three key target groups: baby boomers; students; and employees.

## Key target group 1 - baby boomers

*"The baby boomer generation is no less giving than the previous generation in terms of volunteering and volunteering in the future. What is different is that baby boomers are more assertive, better educated and more demanding than any generation before them."* J. Esmond

A deeper understanding of the baby boomer (born between 1946 and 1962) generation will be crucial for voluntary organisations interested in future planning. Their significance is not limited to the fact that they are soon to reach retirement age en masse, nor to their incredible spending power. The baby boomers laid the foundations for the values and experiences that many younger people now take for granted. They therefore represent something of a sea change in volunteer attitudes and expectations that is unlikely to recede.

Speculation about the effect that the baby boomers' retirements will have on volunteering is rampant throughout the sector. Some feel it could be a huge boon. Others worry that the complexity that comes from living longer, being more engaged in leisure and travel, having to take greater responsibility for their pension and being subjected to both children who do not want to leave home and parents who seem almost immortal, will mean that they are less likely to be the volunteering windfall charities would like them to be. A number of our interviewees give their views below.

*"If we have a larger group of people with more time on their hands and more experience under their belts, this could be a real boon to volunteering. It could change the profile and understanding of volunteering in very productive ways."*

*"I'm wondering whether there would be more interest in people going overseas as well from that generation because I think lots of people are looking to use some of their time to travel, and I think maybe combining that with overseas volunteering could also be quite a big trend."*

Lesley Bourne, Operations Manager, do-it.org.uk

*"They are going to be the first and last generation that will be affluent in retirement. They'll have money and spare time, but may be asset rich and cash poor. They will be living a lot longer so, per year, the extra money may not amount to much. They may also have their children and other relatives depending on them more than in previous generations. So I don't know! Either they won't have much time and hard cash, or they will be this fantastic pool of volunteers who will want to be involved."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"Retiring baby boomers will have very different expectations of volunteering from their predecessors. They will want to use the affluence that they've built up during their working life to travel the world and whatever else. Voluntary organisations need to respond to that, and I don't think they're going to be able to do so effectively when a lot of people are still saying they have one volunteer manager for an organisation the size of Barnardo's or whatever."*

Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

In order to reduce some of the uncertainty, we approached Target Direct, which has been involved in a good deal of research with the over 50s. We are delighted that Paul Farthing, formerly Director of Corporate Strategy at Target Direct and now at Cancer Research UK, was able to compile the following section regarding what voluntary organisations should know about the next generation of older volunteers.

## **Baby boomers: Getting older or recapturing youth?**

As described in Section 2 the number of over 50s is rising, with 19.5 million people aged over 50. As the baby boomers reach maturity, commentators talk about their growing economic power, increased leisure time and their demand for more political attention. But do we understand what is driving their behaviour? How do they feel about getting older?

Their parents approached retirement with both relief and foreboding - for many would be dead within five years. The baby boomers are not the same, for they approach, even embrace, a retirement that could last 20 years or more. Further, many will be financially independent, living off the value of their property and private pensions, and will be healthier and active for longer.

## **Attitudes to retirement**

Retirement is no longer a time for rest. Today retirees are embracing their new freedom. Describing 50 as the new 40 reflects their focus is on 'living life to the full'. This approach is rooted in three unique features of the baby boomers existence:

1. Different life experiences from their parents: baby boomers grew up through huge social change. They challenged authority like no generation before, and that rebellious spirit still feeds their imaginations and actions today. The average age of a Harley motorbike buyer is over 45 and the Rolling Stones still pack stadiums at 60. The difference is greater for women, who are the first educated generation and who introduced the notion of 'career women'.
2. Expectations of fun: with the kids leaving home they look ahead to retirement so they can spend more time on themselves. They expect retirement to fulfil their dreams. It is the chance to do what they have always wanted, whether this involves extensive travel, spending time with their family or on their hobby. They can take up sports or even join a gym for the first time. They expect their life to be active and pleasurable.
3. Opportunities: this is the first generation that has the opportunity to fulfil their expectations. They have the financial means, and their children are less reliant on inheritance to provide for their homes and give them financial security.

The report 'BOOMNET'<sup>20</sup> emphasises that when targeting baby boomers it is important to remember that they do not want to be reminded of their 'oldness'. It goes so far as to claim, "*Any organisation that aims to recruit baby boomers now and in the future would be well-advised to adopt the strategy of restructuring their recruitment campaign around a more youthful message and to advertise a range of challenging and creative opportunities.*"

## **How did they get this way?**

*The New Old*,<sup>21</sup> a report by Demos, identifies that their approach to retirement is rooted in the particular value base of 'baby boomers'. They are described as individualistic. This takes the forms of being more anti-establishment, more non-conformist and less trusting of those of authority. Financial independence and better education raised their expectations, making them challenge conventions. They carried this attitude through to their 50s, with a greater focus on the spirit of consumerism.

It is also rooted in their liberalism, particularly over personal lifestyle issues such as sex before marriage and cohabitation. They were the vanguard of the 'sexual revolution', also at the forefront of progressive movements such as anti-racism, women's liberation and environmentalism, (the founders of Greenpeace are in their late 50s). This liberalism also means they are more internationalist. They focus more on action and outcomes than on positions and process. Although they may have retained

some notions of civic duty from their parents, they are suspicious of government and the church as moral leaders.

### **Meeting expectations**

Their experience of consumerism has driven their focus on 'experience' and 'service'. They have grown up in a service culture, and business is constantly pushing the horizon on good service. They do expect an organisation to be run effectively and for their 'volunteering experience' to be positive and deliver a tangible sense of achievement. This need for a positive experience is behind any demand to have a 'say' in how things are run. They are not doing it just for the charity, they need to feel valued and to see the impact of their efforts.

They are already filling their time, with 69% agreeing they have enough leisure and recreation activities already, and 68% agreeing that they have a fulfilling social life. They are travelling more, re-engaging with hobbies (60% spent a lot of time on their hobbies) and being more social.<sup>23</sup>

This social aspect is key, especially for the increasing number of single people in their 50s, whether by choice or through divorce. Volunteering can provide many of these opportunities, but only if it is structured correctly and only if programme managers focus on meeting the needs of volunteers for social contact. If it is not, they may be inclined to pursue other activities in the pursuit of social contact and self-fulfilment.

Of concern is the finding of a recent national survey in Canada that revealed that over 50s were more likely than under 50s to say that the reason they did not volunteer was that they had already given time.<sup>6</sup> As the baby boomers have already been active volunteers, it is important that the voluntary sector take appropriate measures to keep them engaged, to let them know their services continue to be needed and valued. It may also be necessary for charities to think about how they can give baby boomers that 'me' time they so desperately desire after a life of trying to have it all. Again, the idea of introducing more flexible and creative volunteering opportunities is a good one.

### **Keeping them engaged**

In the Jane Forster report, 'Potential of a lifetime',<sup>22</sup> older people revealed that the best ways for voluntary organisations to keep them engaged were:

1. Listening to their suggestions
2. Keeping them informed of developments within the organisation, for example, through a newsletter, email alerts or an extranet
3. Involving them in the management side of the organisation
4. Giving them autonomy in running their projects

All in all, they were much the same principles that volunteer managers should keep in mind with any group of volunteers.

### **Growing pressures**

The popular perception of a 'golden age' overshadows another growing reality. It may even be that the 'golden age' is drawing to a close just at the point we all realised it was happening. The Age Concern LifeForce survey<sup>23</sup> (Nov 2004) found that 59% of those aged 45 and over still working thought they would have to work for as long as possible before they could afford to retire. Pensions, the stock market, even now property prices are raising alarms over whether older people can afford to retire, given greater life expectancies and anticipated care costs.

If it is not themselves, then it is their still-alive parents, or their children they are concerned about. Many aged 50 and over have one or both parents still alive, with the occasional grandparent. Then their children and grandchildren are faced with the burden of graduate debt or cannot get into the

property market. The requirement for one's inheritance to be there to help the next generation is coming back into play, but skipping to the grandchildren. Even their time is being eaten up with family commitments, with 80% of today's grandparents actively involved in regular childcare, compared with 33% in the 1930's and 13% devoting 20 hours or more to caring for their partner.

### **Recruit now or forever hold your peace**

One thing that is incredibly important for charities to remember is that, by and large, older people are *not* more likely to volunteer after retirement. They are, however, likely to increase the number of hours they volunteer after retirement if they are already engaged with a voluntary organisation. This means that organisations wanting to tap into the potential baby boom windfall should act now. It really is a case of the early bird getting the worm. A possibility raised in 'Understanding Canadian Volunteers' is that of designing retirement transition packages that can be marketed to employers. However, even then, charities could be leaving it too late.

### **Key target group 2 - young people**

When it comes to young people and volunteering, the focus is generally on students. This is likely for two reasons: 1) Canadian research has shown that students are generally more likely to volunteer than non-students<sup>6</sup>; 2) Most young people can be found in an educational institution of one form or another.

### **Developments in student volunteering**

*"When I was at school, we had the choice of sport or community service on a Wednesday afternoon, so you can imagine what that told us about people who chose community service. If the new national framework can create that change in attitude, an acceptance and belief in the value of volunteering, starting at school, then I think that will be the biggest impact we will have ever seen in volunteering in the UK."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

As one of the two major themes for this year's Year of the Volunteer, it is set to be a big year for student volunteering. As a result of the Russell Commission's findings that there is a vast pool of young people who are prepared to volunteer their time, the government has declared its intention to put aside up to £100million pounds over the next three years for the development of a new national framework for youth engagement<sup>24</sup>.\* Gordon Brown has also announced that the government is aiming to increase the number of student volunteers by one third over the next five years – that's a million more students expected to volunteer.<sup>1</sup>

### **Having trouble reaching students?**

Our interviewees were almost unanimous in the view that if organisations were having trouble reaching students, it was probably down to the fact that they simply had not tried in any targeted or considered fashion, as is expressed below.

*"Millions of pounds have been pumped into student volunteering over the last few years. Most universities have a student volunteering group. So, the infrastructure's being built there. If organisations are having trouble recruiting student volunteers, it's likely because they haven't actually spoken to student volunteers to see what they want."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"If organisations are finding it difficult, then it seems to me it's a question of working with existing bodies like Student Volunteering England and having the equivalent of the employment milk round where you go out and you reach out to students. We know that the one thing that is the biggest draw into volunteering is being asked by someone to volunteer. So if we have a difficulty getting student volunteers in, go out and ask, because that's the only way."*

Richard Harries, Head of Unit, Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit)

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\* Note: It has been argued that this is a misleading figure from the government and that the actual new money is more like £45 million.

Given the finding in Canada that 42% of young people volunteer because their friends are involved, it would seem that getting those first few young people on board and enthused and inviting them to participate in recruitment can be key.<sup>6</sup>

### **What do students want from voluntary organisations?**

According to Kim Brunel-Osman from Student Volunteering England, what students want from volunteering is really no different from what the rest of us are chasing: the ability to make a difference; flexible placements; interesting and challenging roles; and good support. She insists, *"Though students list a variety of motives for volunteering, including employability, they still list 'making a difference' as their primary motivation."*

Carolyn Myers from Oxfam concurs, saying that in her experience giving students tangible and meaningful roles for which they can take personal responsibility is a sure way to build commitment and a sense of belonging not only to the organisation but also to a greater cause. She highlighted the fact that the voluntary sector was uniquely placed to fill that 'void of meaning' that young people are increasingly beginning to feel, *"Within the voluntary sector, we have a massive opportunity to give students a meaningful and responsible role in a way that student's going into a placement in a company in their third year wouldn't get."*

However, charities need to be aware that as is happening with the wider pool of volunteers, students are becoming more discriminating and expecting greater accountability from the organisations they work with. John Ramsey from Citizens advice recounts his experience while at Student Volunteering England, *"The students I encountered were expecting greater support, more information about what they were doing, how it affected the organisation they were working for, how they were going to become involved, how they would be involved in the decision-making process. I think younger people are less likely to just want to stay in the background and volunteer and more likely to want to become involved, and if they don't feel that there's those avenues, they are going to become frustrated and move on."*

It was also noted by interviewees that organisations seeking to build long-term relationships with students should provide flexible placements that take into account both holiday periods when they may go home and also exam times. That students would expect to be able to find out about and sign-up for volunteering opportunities online was also stressed.

The Samaritans ([www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)) is an example of an organisation that is doing both of these things well. Not only does it have a system whereby young people can easily transfer to a different regional office during their holiday time, it has also got its website right on a number of levels including:

1. The website and subsequent volunteering page is easy to find.
2. The page stresses how important volunteers are to the organisation and emphasises the opportunity to make a real difference.
3. It highlights that volunteering with the Samaritans will be an 'experience' – a challenging and rewarding one.
4. It offers various mechanisms through which people can volunteer, including the internet.
5. Highlights a more flexible, light-hearted option for those who might be concerned about making a more serious commitment (to be a volunteer at a major festival).
6. Provides additional information about possible volunteer opportunities including details about what skills are needed, what training will be given, what support will be given and the level of commitment that is expected.
7. Provides pictures and stories of young volunteers from various ethnic backgrounds. This sends the clear message that the Samaritans is a place where a diverse range of vibrant looking young people volunteer.
8. All this is done in a concise manner –readers do not have to wade through a lot of unnecessary information to find what they want.

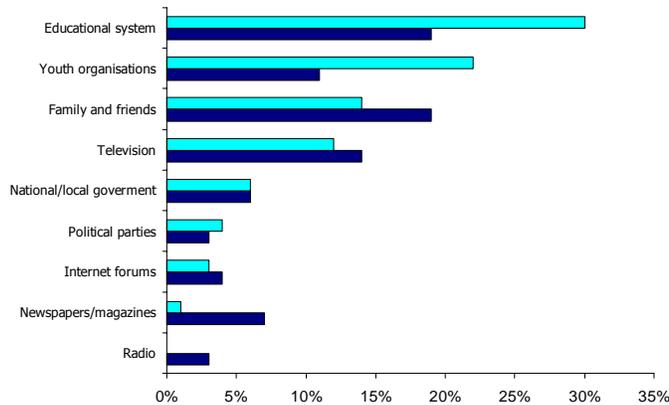
### **Towards more structured and inclusive volunteering?**

The recent analysis of findings from the Russell Commission, 'Consultation on Youth Action and Engagement'<sup>25</sup>, highlighted the tension between meeting the needs of young people (e.g. Fun, social opportunities and training) and meeting the needs of the community. Also commented upon was the difficulty of engaging young volunteers from poorer socio-economic backgrounds without financial incentives. However, the success of a curriculum-based volunteering programme in the United States points to an innovative and inclusive way forward.

Designed to reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy and school drop-out by providing young people with a sense of achievement and control, the 'Teen Outreach' programme incorporates volunteering into the school curriculum. Participating students spend approximately two hours a week in supervised voluntary service and are also engaged in classes that help them to disseminate what they have learnt and achieved through their volunteering experiences. Activities undertaken include helping in hospitals and nursing homes, participation in walk-a-thons and peer tutoring. Evaluations of the programme indicate that it is effective in its aims, with participation reducing rates of teen pregnancy and school drop-out by approximately 50%. Of interest is the finding that the programme is particularly effective in reducing course failure in females and ethnic minority groups.<sup>26</sup>

Why should this be of interest to the voluntary sector? Because it demonstrates that when working in conjunction with other sectors, e.g. The education sector, voluntary organisations can better position themselves to not only meet the needs of their beneficiaries through increased volunteer support but also those of a diverse pool of volunteers.

**Figure 9: Improving the participation of young people in society: Proportion of 15-24 year olds who selected factors as being of primary and secondary importance to their improved participation in society**



Source: Eurobarometer/nVision  
Base: 800 aged 15-24, UK, 2001

### Key target group 3 - employee volunteers

Though there is a dearth of research (at least in the UK) looking at the ways in which charities could better engage with employee volunteers, it was generally agreed that if corporate volunteering is to be packaged as an extension of a person's work life, then it is going to need to slot easily into the work day and provide an immediate sense of achievement.

*"An employee probably wants to do an hour on their way home from work in the evening or an hour at lunchtime, and most organisations in my experience aren't geared up for that."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

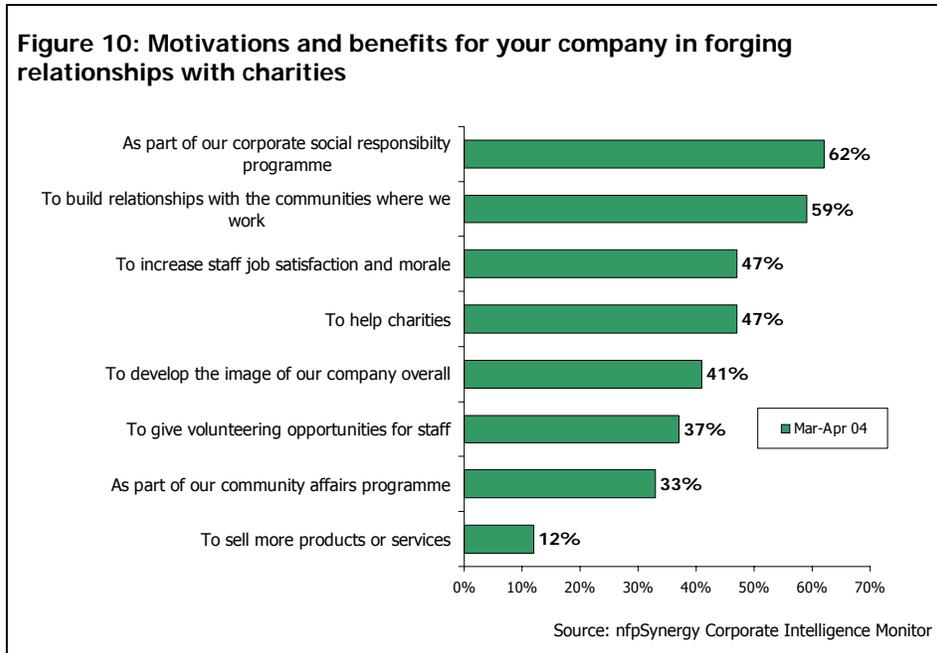
*"A lot of employee volunteering is limited to a couple of days of work, so they might do some project where they repaint a house or something where it is a quick fix of two days, rather than the more ongoing nature of volunteering."* Liz Smith, Girlguiding UK

One solution for organisations looking to engage with employee volunteers might simply be to approach businesses that are within walking distance of the organisation's headquarters with time-limited opportunities that could be fulfilled before work, on lunch breaks or after work.

### Underselling the potential?

It could be argued that the sector has not yet sold the full potential of employee volunteering to the corporate sector. Perhaps the reason employers and employees are not yet ready to commit to charities on a deeper level is that there has been little quantification or qualification of the benefits that can be derived through employee volunteering. For example, where are the figures demonstrating increases in staff retention or decreases in training costs through engagement with the voluntary sector? Where are the case studies revealing increased staff morale, more effective team working and the cross-germination of innovative ideas?

It is entirely likely that employee volunteering will be found to have a multitude of benefits, however, as was noted by John Ramsey of Citizens Advice, *"It is up to us to persuade the commercial sector why employee volunteering is beneficial to them because all they will probably see is the short-term, 'well actually we're losing them for a certain number of hours a week'. We need to provide them with hard statistical data which I think we're bad at. We're not good at providing hard data as to the benefits of volunteering."*



Certainly the raw material is out there, with a growing number of corporations undertaking social responsibility programmes and acknowledging the many benefits of charity partnerships. Some of these are shown in Figure 10. It is of note that 59% of organisations surveyed in a wave of nfpSynergy's Corporate Intelligence Monitor saw charity relationships as a way of building relationships within the communities in which they work, and that 47% saw them as a way to increase staff morale.

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### Employee volunteers versus volunteers who happen to be employed

*"At the end of the day, Corporates are people, they're not some entity that have no soul or something!"*  
Carolyn Myers, Oxfam

*"Employee volunteering in its broadest sense, that is, accessing people through their employers, has a massive amount of potential. The big problem is cracking the whole small, medium-sized business market."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

The question needs to be asked: Are we approaching employee volunteering from too narrow a perspective? Should we be investigating a wider programme of accessing people through their employers rather than relying on the employers to instigate volunteering programmes? Taking it a step further, what could be done to encourage ground-up employee movements? That is, where employees themselves start encouraging others in the organisation to volunteer in their own free time, as opposed to top-down ones where employers build volunteering into the work programme.

### **Building relationships in the corporate world**

On speaking to a variety of volunteer managers about corporate volunteering, it became clear that the key to a successful employee volunteering programme was to establish an ongoing relationship (and ongoing volunteering opportunities) with one or more organisations. Figure 10 reveals that this sentiment appears to be shared by the corporations themselves.

The greatest motivation for forging a relationship with a charity was to fulfil the objectives of a social responsibility programme (although it is likely that the 41% of organisations that admitted their voluntary sector engagement was designed to enhance the organisation's image, is probably an under-representation). The lesson here would seem to be two-fold:

- 1) For individual organisations, the easiest success is likely to be found through contacting organisations that have established corporate responsibility programmes. Otherwise, the charity is going to need to be able to do a much harder sell on the benefits of volunteering.
- 2) There is a role for an umbrella body to encourage more corporations to engage in socially responsible practices.

Interestingly, corporations indicated that they were less inclined to form partnerships with charities working with animal welfare, third world development, environmental protection and homelessness than they were with those addressing child welfare, disability or health and cancer. What this probably says is that corporations are more willing to engage in those causes that have a more universal appeal than those that are politically popular. It does not mean that the likes of RSPCA should give up on the prospect of an employee volunteering programme, it just means that they might have to be a little more creative in their approach.

## Section 4: Creating a two-way street - the need for flexibility & incremental involvement

*"I don't think that larger national charities in particular have done enough to think about how they need to fit volunteering around peoples' lifestyles now. We find people are often quite interested in stuff that we have on the database but when they go to give their time, they find that the organisations they are applying to are still a bit inflexible about things like time and the length of time for which people might want to commit. It feels like charities are putting up a little bit of a barrier sometimes and when you think about how much more time pressured a society we live in, things like people's working lives have changed, and I think that the voluntary sector hasn't really necessarily caught up with that way of thinking."* Lesley, Bourne Operations Manager, do-it.org.uk

Interviewees were adamant that organisations relying on long-term volunteers or even very regular volunteers were going to have to rethink the way they designed volunteering opportunities if they wanted to survive well into the 21st Century. This notion is supported by Canadian research that found that of those who do not volunteer, 69% nominated 'lack of time' as a key reason and 46% said they were unwilling to make a year-round commitment.<sup>6</sup>

There was a consensus among interviewees that in order to accommodate the growing aspirations and busy lives of potential volunteers, charity personnel were going to have to become more flexible and imaginative in the way they design volunteer roles.

*"People aren't going to give their life to volunteering; it's going to be short bursts of volunteering."* Liz Smith, Girlguiding UK

*"Volunteers want to sign up for roles where there's a clear beginning, middle and end – which is this horrible term 'episodic volunteering'. It can mean somebody does it for a day, it can mean somebody does it for two years, but they know when they are signing up that they are not signing up for the rest of their lives."* Rob Jackson, Volunteering England

*"Creativity and flexibility are needed if organisations want to recruit and retain their volunteers."* Dr Justin Davis Smith, Director, Institute for Volunteering Research

*"I think we're going to have to break down what our needs are so that we can have those bite sized chunks that people can do. And people who want to come in and develop their skills or just help for a short period of time can dip in and dip out again."* Peter Hammond, The Samaritans

*"Don't expect to rely on long-term volunteers! Organisations will need to find ways to find smaller chunks of opportunity, taster roles which may then lead to longer roles."* Dr Justin Davis Smith, Director, Institute for Volunteering Research

*"We've got to be much more flexible. We've got to make it easier for people to do more short-term volunteering, like holiday-style breaks and that sort of thing. We need to make it possible for people to be able to dip in and out and to fit their own types of lifestyle and circumstances."* Liz Smith, Girlguiding UK

According to Rob Jackson, when designing any volunteering opportunity, the key is to ensure that there is a clear beginning, middle and end so that volunteers do not feel that they are signing their life away. Part of this is about giving volunteers the chance to feel that they are making progress. Even for longer-term roles, it is therefore important to ensure the volunteer has some short and medium-term goals to help keep them motivated. Volunteer managers can even encourage volunteers to set these goals themselves. Volunteers will often set much more challenging goals than managers would, and research has shown that the very act of setting a goal means a person is more likely to achieve it.<sup>28</sup>

Of course, completing one short-term role does not mean a volunteer cannot then move onto another if they are feeling enthused. In fact, given that they will probably have received a real buzz from

achieving what they were brought in to do, there is an excellent chance that they will start looking for their next challenge.

This brings us to a discussion on episodic volunteering. The idea of bite-sized roles that volunteers can dip in and out of was very popular with commentators who tended to feel that these taster roles would mean that less committed volunteers would either fall by the wayside prior to any great sum of training money being invested in them or would develop a greater commitment to the organisation, leading to frequent bursts of short-term volunteering or even longer-term roles. Interestingly, Steve McCurley, a volunteering guru from the United States, has speculated that offering short-term roles could potentially lead to a bigger and more diverse pool of long-term volunteers. His line of reasoning is that the opportunity for no-strings attached volunteering will entice more people to try voluntary work and that these small commitments will lead to larger commitments. This would suggest that the hesitance that many charities have in providing short-term volunteers with a proper induction and training may be misplaced.

*"All the research says that if you volunteer while you're young, then you're much more likely to volunteer when you're 30 or 40. So the investment you've put in there has actually had a long-term benefit."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"I don't think that because someone's coming in for a short, intensive period of time that that gives us an excuse not to recruit and induct and manage them properly."* Carolyn Myers

The available research suggests that Carolyn Myers (see above quote) is absolutely right. Even quite small commitments such as agreeing to be interviewed can build a cycle of involvement and lead to much more significant commitments. This is because people tend to work out 'who they are' by looking at their own behaviour. For example, a person who has just agreed to supervise a once off Scout camp will begin to see themselves as a 'volunteer', a 'helper of children' and a 'Scouts supporter'. Next time they are asked to do anything that is consistent with any of these identities, they will now be more likely to say yes than if they had not agreed to do the camp.<sup>29</sup>

As soon as a person agrees to a small request from a charity, they will begin to see themselves as a 'giver' and as someone who supports that particular cause and will more likely agree to a larger request if followed up in a timely fashion. This is even the case when the initial commitment is something as insignificant as agreeing to buy cookies or putting an "I support such and such charity" sticker in their window. Therefore, if a volunteer is inducted and allowed to perform a short stint of volunteering for an organisation, they have taken the first step towards seeing themselves as a [your organisation] supporter. This means that the next time you need their help, they will remember their identity as a supporter of your organisation and will feel more compelled to say yes.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, there will be times when a short stint with a charity will end with the volunteer deciding the organisation is simply not for them. A number of commentators, including Volunteering guru Susan Ellis (President of Energize Inc. in Philadelphia and author of over 11 books on volunteering) propose that charities should not be remiss about letting these people go, or even encouraging them onto a more suitable volunteering opportunity with another organisation. John Ramsey from Citizens Advice explains how this would work, *"In my volunteer friendly world, voluntary organisations work with each other. We all offer slightly different opportunities, so what we do is market these opportunities to volunteers, the ones they most want to do. And we invest in that and then if they want to swap over to another organisation, they actually take that investment with them so that the second organisation doesn't have to invest in it."*

This idea, that charities should see energy invested in every supporter or volunteer, regardless of how transient, as an investment in the future health of the organisation, was one that was repeated often.

Carolyn Myers for Oxfam was particularly passionate on this topic, emphasising the need to look for 'lifecycle supporters' over 'lifetime volunteers'. She explained, *"We treat volunteers as people who have an engagement and an involvement and potentially an involvement over a long period of time with Oxfam. They might come in as a student but if we can engage with them and press the right buttons, then they might support Oxfam in other ways when they're earning money. They might be able to give*

*financially, they might be able to get involved with campaigns and then we hope that by the time they retire they might actually come back and volunteer for us again. For us, we try to see it more like a volunteer lifecycle where we engage people at different points of their life in different ways. It's not just about the experience that the person has here and now, although that's very important – it's also about investing in the future."*



## Section 5: the rise of the press-ganged volunteer

*"Perhaps the answer is that the true meaning of volunteering can only ever be self-defined, an act of personal expression that we each define in our own way as it relates to our lives, views and experiences?"* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering defined volunteering as *"any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or to benefit the environment"*.<sup>5</sup> Although this at first provides a relatively straightforward classification, the lack of clarification regarding the degree of coercion that is allowable before a volunteer becomes a 'voluntold' has become an issue within the current environment. With the Russell Commission's investigation into the possibility of providing students with study credits and discounts for high street stores and Gordon Brown announcing plans to get the corporate world to fund gap year students so that they can better afford to volunteer,<sup>30</sup> the debate about what it is that constitutes 'true' volunteering has been raging.

If someone volunteers for anything other than a purely altruistic reason, are they still a volunteer? Does work experience count? Should the sector even consider incentivised volunteering positions? Here's what a number of our interviewees and representatives from the sector had to say:

*"At the end of the day, the whole concept of volunteering is about wanting to volunteer and not being made to, and I think things like new deal have really blurred the boundaries for a lot of charities."* Carolyn Myers, Oxfam

*"Soft incentives are great and I think that's what you should do. I disagree strongly with the idea that you should have some sort of financial incentive - other than expenses - to encourage people to volunteer."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"Paid volunteering'. The two words mean completely different things. It's like saying I'm going to drive up to Manchester by plane - it doesn't make sense."* John Ramsey, Citizens Advice

*"Office colleagues recognise by the way I'm being polite through gritted teeth, that I've got yet another doting parent on the telephone asking for some 'voluntary work' to help their child prodigy get into Oxbridge. They should be able to hear the handset creak, as I grip it tighter, when they say, 'Oh, if you're busy, just a couple of days in the Christmas holidays will do, just so he can put it in his personal statement or UCAS form.' To me, that's far worse than benefit fraud or fiddling your tax returns."* Volunteers Co-ordinator in a National Park

*"Work experience can be and should be classed as volunteering. It often fits the definition in that it is based on personal motivation and choices, freely undertaken. Over one third of our volunteers, a wide range of people (including ages) volunteer for us purely for work experience and whose main aim volunteering is to ultimately find work in the sector. We realise that they will not volunteer for as long as people with other reasons for volunteering, but they are nonetheless important to our organisation. We also have had several very good year 10 school placements who have chosen to come to us."* Contributor from Glasgow Museums

It is tempting to wonder whether it really matters how volunteering is defined or why people volunteer as long as the job gets done. In the interest of social inclusion, should we not be enabling the less affluent to participate in voluntary action? Should we not be extolling the virtues of coerced volunteering like work experience, community service and New Deal so that the most unlikely candidates get to experience that wonderful feeling of 'making a difference'?

It could be argued that Richard Harries, Head of the Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit, hit the nail on the head when he said, *"Volunteering is a personal gift. We don't want to take that away from people by turning it into something else. Having said that, we do need to reach out to those who wouldn't normally volunteer - so perhaps there needs to be two strains of volunteering."*

The way in which volunteering is defined and packaged absolutely matters because it affects the way in which volunteers are perceived by staff and volunteer managers. Of course, this then shapes the way in which different types of volunteers are treated within the organisation and in turn influences volunteers' own perception of their roles.

By taking a more generous view on how you define who is a 'true' volunteer, an organisation can engender commitment from a more diverse range of persons. The box 'you are how you are seen' reveals the importance of holding volunteers in high esteem.

**You are how you are seen: the psychology of living up to other people's expectations<sup>26</sup>**

People tend to behave in a way that is consistent with how they believe other people perceive them. An extreme example of this is that if a teacher is instructed to treat the not-so-clever kids in their class as though they are really clever, their marks improve dramatically. The kids internalise the teacher's belief: if the teacher thinks they're smart, they must be and since they are smart they should behave like the smart kids do, i.e. They should do their homework, engage in class discussion etc.

As a result of their change in behaviour, they really do become much smarter. The same will be true for your volunteers. The more that you demonstrate that you see them as giving, committed and generous with their time, the more they will incorporate these perceptions in with their own view of themselves and the more they will act in a way that is consistent with this view. And remember, you are not the only one transmitting perceptions to your volunteers. It is important that all staff are encouraged to coach volunteers in this positive manner.

Of course, the notion of supporting volunteers financially introduces a whole new dimension into the equation. Of interest is a piece of research revealing that the level of financial compensation provided for performing a mundane task can affect how satisfying people found the task to be. Students who were paid \$1 to put a series of pegs in holes for 20 minutes generally reported that the task was more enjoyable than students paid \$20 to do the exact same thing. Why? Because if a person cannot attribute their behaviour to external forces (e.g. Incentives, payment or brute force) they tend to attribute it to internal forces (e.g. enjoyment and commitment to the cause). Because the \$1 payment was not sufficient incentive to explain their participation, students receiving this amount unconsciously decided that they must have participated because they *wanted* to, because the task was interesting. They then reported that they would be happy to participate in similar activities in the future. However, for students who had received \$20, the financial incentive provided good enough reason to have participated and they were quick to report that the task had been dull. They were also more reluctant to agree to future participation.<sup>31</sup>

The take-home message here is that while it is admirable to enable a larger pool of people to experience the joys of volunteering, unless the external reasons for these people's volunteering are kept to a minimum, their level of satisfaction and commitment will simply not compare well with that of non-incentivised volunteers. This is most true for volunteers who are required to do dull or uninteresting tasks. There are three ways voluntary organisations can address this:

1. To campaign for any payments to be kept low enough that they are not an incentive on their own (as stressed in the Russell Commission report, volunteers should certainly not be disincentivised by having to pay for their own travel etc, and small payments would not be problematic).
2. To actively change people's perspective on why they volunteered, either through the language that you use, for example, "we are so happy you *chose* to volunteer with us, we really need *enthusiastic* volunteers such as yourself," or by providing them with such a rewarding experience that the financial payment becomes secondary.
3. To create a second pathway into voluntary work which is defined by mutual benefit rather than by altruistic giving.

The way in which volunteering is defined also has important implications for an organisation's ability to work effectively with beneficiaries. As is illustrated in the quote below, vulnerable persons often feel more comfortable accepting support from someone who is motivated out of the genuine desire to help. However, this does not mean that 'voluntolds' (i.e. volunteers that are 'told' what to do) should not be

given the chance to work with beneficiaries. It simply means that organisations working with vulnerable people should ensure that their key volunteers are those who truly care.

*"Because we do a lot of work with disaffected young people, the use of volunteers has greater impact on them than staff would - staff would often be seen as a part of the system, whereas young people recognise that volunteers are doing the work because they care about things."* Adrian Smith, Crime Concern

A final issue worth mentioning is that organisations hoping to appeal to a diverse range of volunteers should consider that the word 'volunteer' has different connotations in different countries. Richard Harries of the Home Office Volunteering and Charitable Giving Unit explains, *"In France, what they call beneficial workers comes much closer to the British definition of a volunteer, whereas what they consider to be volunteers usually involves a contract, not necessarily of employment but a contract, which is quite different to the British experience. I think it was the representative from Greece who was saying that the phrase volunteering has a very political element. If you're a volunteer, it's assumed you're involved in the political process. But they obviously have non-political volunteers; they just don't call them that. Of course anyone from Central and Eastern Europe had a different interpretation again because a lot of what we consider to be volunteering, they saw as basically being like the young pioneers, basically working for the state, and it wasn't well liked, but the work of NGO's is absolutely liked, but they don't see that necessarily as volunteering. So it's important to understand that this one word can have many different interpretations."*

## Conclusion: harnessing selfish altruism

*"Only the non-profit institution can provide opportunities to be a volunteer and thus enable individuals to have both a sphere in which they are in control and a sphere in which they can make a difference."*  
Peter Drucker

Volunteering is often seen both by volunteers themselves and the voluntary organisations they serve as a favour; a gift. This perception is shaped as much by the voluntary organisations that rely on desperate-sounding appeals to the grace and virtue of potential volunteers as by volunteers own sense that they are giving something for free. However, volunteering is more than a mere gift of time; it is an opportunity; a privilege; a stride towards greatness. In this day and age where UK citizens are less interested in their moral duties than they are in their spiritual and experiential development, voluntary organisations need to internalise and publicise this powerful message.

By tuning into volunteers' changing desires and expectations; appreciating the many benefits of volunteering (soft, hard and altruistic) and engaging with the key strategic issues outlined in this report, volunteer managers can begin to develop the volunteering product in a way that does it, and the organisation's cause, justice.

Throughout this report we have aimed to provide insights and ideas about how volunteering will change over the coming decade. In this conclusion we synthesise the nine key trends that we believe will be the most important in understanding volunteers and volunteering into the 21st Century.

If you remember nothing else, hold these key ideas up to the light:

### **Trend 1. The rise of the brain volunteer and the demise of the brawn volunteer**

If there is perhaps a single theme that runs through all our trends and ideas concerning the future of volunteering, it is that 'volunteers are doing it for themselves'. Volunteers will increasingly want to know what is in it for them: whether it be career-experience, a life-changing experience, to use their skills, to build their workplace teams, to overcome loneliness or find that special friend. However, all this means is that volunteering experiences where people are simply asked to do the drudgery that paid staff will not do will be increasingly untenable (one charity we know used to have a room for volunteers where they searched the sacks of empty envelopes to make sure that no cheques had been left in!).

In a world full of competition, choice and consumer driven marketing, today's volunteer is used to getting their wants and needs met. It should therefore not be surprising that when they sign up with a charity, they will want and expect to be getting some of whatever it was that inspired them to volunteer. For many, this will be a stimulation of the old grey cells or some degree of experience, adventure or challenge.

## **Trend 2. The rise of the cause-driven volunteer and the slow decline of the time-driven volunteer**

Alongside the change in the kind of volunteering experience that people are looking for is a change in what motivates people to volunteer. Sectoral accounts suggest that, in the past, people volunteered because they had spare time to give; who they gave it to was not as important as the need to fill their days. However, as people have more and more ways to spend their leisure time volunteering has to compete with many exciting alternatives. We believe this means that people will want to have a more rewarding volunteering experience or be more discerning about where they do their drudgery (or both). Either way, people will increasingly be as selective about whom they give their time to as they are about whom they give their money to.

## **Trend 3. The rise of the selfish volunteer**

Take these two shifts together, and we have what we call 'selfish volunteers': people who are as interested about what they get out of volunteering, as what they put in. As some of the quotes in this report suggest, the idea of people who are 'selfish' about how they give their time is alien to volunteer managers. But there is a good role model: paid staff. Nobody would expect a person applying for a paid job to be uninterested in the salary, the holiday entitlements, the skills they might learn and how satisfying the job might be. So our prediction is that more and more volunteers will resemble staff in everything except how they get paid. Witness the way that volunteers are now suing charities if something about their volunteering was not quite what they thought it should be.

## **Trend 4. Volunteering needs to be more like fundraising (and fundraising needs to be more like volunteering)**

Fundraisers and fundraising are becoming increasingly professional and professionalised. While the public aren't totally sure this is what they want, market forces for charities to raise more money drive the changes on. Charities invest in recruiting new supporters at a loss, because of their return over the long term. Charities hire a host of different fundraising specialists: individual fundraisers, corporate fundraisers, community fundraisers and the like. All of this has reaped dividends for those charities that have invested. The income of the largest 100 charities is growing much faster than the sector as a whole.

Compare this to volunteering management, which has just discovered the internal combustion engine. Professional volunteer management is in its infancy. Very few charities are prepared to invest in recruiting and nurturing volunteers the way they are prepared to do for donors. And there is no trade body equivalent to the Institute of Fundraising (with 4,000 members and no funding from government) nor the whole marketing and audience-orientated approach that is at the heart of modern fundraising.

Having said that the flow is not all one way. Volunteers are far more likely to use words such 'enjoyment', 'satisfaction' and 'achievement' to describe their experience than are donors, who tend to emphasise commitment, satisfaction and loyalty. So fundraising could benefit from understanding how it can give its donors an experience more like that of volunteers.

### **Trend 5. Volunteering as a factory for community social capital**

How does society create cohesive communities? With great difficulty is one answer: particularly in urban areas or commuter-filled dormitory suburbs and towns. One of the difficulties in creating more social capital (broadly speaking the ways in which people come to interact in a locality) is that so few people need to get to know each other any more.

Volunteering has a role in creating those links because it is one of the ways in which people do get to know each other (another being the regular attendance at a place of worship). Door-to-door collections (such as those that take place in Christian Aid week) are one of the best ways in which people can meet their neighbours – on whose doors they might otherwise have no reason to knock. One of the ironies is that many fundraisers may target those streets that are traditionally most lucrative. And those streets may be the most lucrative because they already have the highest level of social capital (try saying 'no' to an envelope collector you know as opposed to one you do not).

To get round this fundraisers could be encouraged (even subsidised?) to knock on doors in areas where the very act of volunteering helps build communities in the long-term. Volunteering brings people together, helps people to know their neighbours and colleagues, and knocking on doors and asking for money is one of the simplest and most powerful ways for people to do that.

### **Trend 6. The rise of young activists and the decline of young volunteers**

The current government has an obsession with volunteering - particularly youth volunteering. That in itself is no bad thing. But investing money alone is not enough; ideas and innovation are also needed. The worry is that too much of the money is invested in either the quasi-compulsory schemes that appear to be the outcome of the Russell Commission or in projects that are out of alignment with young people's interests and aspirations. Young people with social consciences are pro-activists (they are pro-active in making choices about how they spend their money, how they give time or money). So the kind of volunteering that appeals is not about giving time in the traditional way, but about being active global or local citizens.

In this sense organisations such as People & Planet ([www.peopleandplanet.org](http://www.peopleandplanet.org)), which works with students to help them take part in actions and activities that create a better world, are much more dovetailed with the youth psyche. Yet the government funding goes anywhere but to organisations that help young people ask why the world is the way it is, and how can we change it. Volunteering grants from government rarely fund campaigns - so it is severely hampered in being able to nurture active citizens, and in turn youth pro-activists (i.e. volunteers).

So if we want young people to volunteer, we must not call it volunteering and we must encourage activism and a social conscience, rather than the unfashionable and uninspired giving of time. Youth volunteering needs to have a radically different image, and activism (or pro-activism) matches that image perfectly.

### **Trend 7. Experience-seeking employee volunteers hunt in packs**

Ask volunteer managers for their nightmare request and it is usually a group of employees who want to do something en masse on a given day to help with team-building. Yet the Faustian deal between charities and companies is increasingly heading in this direction. Charities want a large cheque with no strings attached, and companies want volunteering activities that will build their teams, improve store morale, root their companies into their local communities and give employees new and different experiences. Yet for charities this kind of volunteering is far from easy for most to deliver.

So the deal that will work best is where volunteering is seen as an activity that a company needs to pay for the privilege of having, and a corporate donation is the reward for delivering intangible benefits such as skills, increases in morale and satisfaction. The charities that can negotiate those deals are set for huge rewards (ask Habitat for Humanity).

### **Trend 8. From nursery to nursing home: integrating the experience of giving**

Charities have taken the giving process and cleaved it in half like an enormous fruit. One half, the one called 'giving time' has been left virtually untended for the last quarter-century. The other half, the one called 'giving money', has been nurtured, loved, tendered and generally given all the attention.

The time has now come to re-integrate these two parts of the giving experience, for the simple reason that at most times in our 21st Century lives, people are rich in either time or money - but rarely both simultaneously. So if we want to keep supporters through all of their lives - from the nursery to the nursing home - we need to be able to respond to whatever the needs are in their lives at that point in time. As teenagers and students, people have time but not money. As 20-something couples, people have money but not time. As families with young children, people often have neither money nor time, but when the children leave home to spend money on university, the time floods back but the money goes on flowing out for a while longer.

So if charities want to keep supporters through all these socio-economic twists and turns, opportunities are needed for people to progress from one way of giving to another. To the commercial world this kind of match between product and lifestyle is nothing new. Just look at how certain kinds of car are geared towards certain kinds of people. Successful charities will make sure that they integrate their 'giving' products so that their supporters can move seamlessly from one type of engagement to another and back again.

### **Trend 9. The most important idea of all: the productisation of volunteering**

So what do charities do about all this? We have painted a fairly turbulent and exhausting portrait of volunteering thus far. We have presented far more challenges than solutions. So our very last point is perhaps the most important of all: how to respond to all these changes.

For us the key solution is to productise volunteering opportunities. By this we mean, giving time needs to be packaged (and marketed) just as fundraising now is. Fundraising now asks for specific amounts of money or specifies exactly how the money will be used - £2 will save a child's life, or rescue an abandoned pet, or help us answer a cry for help and so on and so on.

The donor knows exactly what is required of them and exactly how the money will be spent. Witness the success of child sponsorship or National Trust membership or committed giving in general. The donor is being asked to take part in something where the key elements are clear and prescribed. The amount is clear. The benefits are clear. The feedback is clear. How the money is spent is clear. People can engage knowing what they are letting themselves in for. Perhaps one of the best examples of the productisation of giving money is the challenge event - where, for example, people give up their holiday to ride bareback across the Gobi desert with a group of complete strangers, providing they can raise a specified amount of money.

Forgive us for saying so, but McDonalds can teach charities a thing or two about productisation. Not for them a menu without prices, a meal with an ill-defined portion size, or a restaurant waiting time that is unclear and unpredictable. The price is set, the contents are clear and the waiting time is (allegedly) low. And because it is really easy, people have a shorthand for ordering: a clear product name such as the Big Mac or the Happy Meal. People know exactly what they are getting, for better and worse with McDonalds.

Compare this to the average volunteering request, where the amount of time required is unspecified, the benefits are unclear, the duration is usually indefinite and how the organisation will use the time is unmentioned.

But productising the volunteering experience (making the appeal SMART, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-related) may be relatively straightforward in many cases. Take the usual charity shop's volunteering request:  
'Our shops need volunteers'

The step-by-step productisation of this request is easy:

Step 1: Our shop needs volunteers to help us for four hours once a week (how much time).

- Step 2: Our shop takes £40 for each four-hour shift by a volunteer (the outcomes of the time).  
Step 3: Will you be 1 in a 100? Our shop raises £40 for each four-hour shift by a volunteer and we need 100 volunteers to make each and every week (the tangibility of success).  
Step 4: Will you be an 'ABCcharity shopaholic'? This shop is run 100 'ABCcharity shopaholics' who each give at least four hours a week of retail therapy that raises us £40 through the till (the branding of the product).

Not all requests to volunteer can be productised (or packaged if you prefer) so easily. The key ingredients are to identify how the gift of time can be standardised and packaged - given that many individual volunteering experiences will be different. Those involved in raising money are often the easiest. It should be straightforward to work out how long the average house-to-house collection takes and how much money it raises. But even those volunteering opportunities that are not about money can be packaged so that volunteers understand how much time will be needed each week, for how long, and what the benefits are to you and to them.

We believe that productisation is so important because it builds on so many of the successful techniques that fundraisers and the commercial sector have used to build their market and their success.

### **And finally.....**

*"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know about Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know about the second theory of thermo-dynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love."*

*Martin Luther King*

Volunteering is a universal gift. Substitute the word 'serve' for 'volunteer' and Martin Luther King expresses the universal potential of volunteering. We all have time (even if we do not all have money). And we can all give the gift of time to others: our children, our parents, our friends, our children's school, our street, our community and our world.

But giving time is a gift that gives back as well because giving time is now as much about what we get back, as what we give. To help people be altruistic, we need to help them be selfish. Volunteering can help volunteers overcome loneliness, meet friends, gain skills, get jobs, or just feel good about themselves. The selfish volunteer is not a bad person, or part of an unwelcome trend – it is at the heart of the future of volunteering.

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