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# Attraction and Motivation of Millennial Generation Volunteers by Nonprofit Organizations

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Attraction and Motivation of Millennial Generation Volunteers by  
Nonprofit Organizations

By

Yuliya Shkuro

An Alternate Plan Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for Master of Arts

In

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May 2011

Attraction and Motivation of Millennial Generation Volunteers by Nonprofit  
Organizations

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This alternate plan paper has been examined and approved by the following members of  
the alternate plan paper committee.

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## Introduction

I am an organizational communication scholar who is interested in nonprofit organizations and their functions in our society. Nonprofit organizations are one of the most important aspects of a democratic society. Herman (2005) believed that a nonprofit organization is “an institutional contributor to the building of a viable democratic society...The nonprofit sector arises as an institutional response to social disquiet and need” (p. 59). Nonprofit organizations “...as unified and coherent “sector” dates back only to the 1970s” (Herman, 2005, p. 3). Because nonprofits organizations are relatively young, the work of volunteers plays a significant role in the functioning of nonprofit organizations. Currently, nonprofit organizations struggle with “fiscal, operational, personnel, and service demands, and all continue to issue a resounding call for volunteers” (Caracciolo, 2003, p. 8). Without the help and support from volunteers, especially during days of unstable growth or stagnation, nonprofits would have a difficult time surviving as a viable means of our society.

Volunteerism in the United States has come a long way since the “ ‘Minutemen’ fought for American independence and community barn raisings were a way of life. Volunteers of all ages have served the needs of the community, state, country, and world” (Caracciolo, 2003, p. 1). In fact, volunteers’ help and dedication has become an essential resource that has made a difference in the public, private, professional sectors (Caracciolo, 2003). Harvey and McCrohan (1988) argued that “taking part in formal voluntary organizations is more likely to occur with those who are women, when male participants in religious and labor institutions are controlled for 33-55 years old, married, more educated, in good health, of higher occupational status, and more socially mobile”

(p. 143). In the past people used to volunteer, because they had been taught that it is right to do so, "...because they felt altruistic, because their parents had done so before them, because in churches and schools they were taught the values of volunteering" (Connors, 1980, p. 5). Although many of these motivations are still present in the voluntary world, there are generational differences that should be closely taken into consideration when examining modern volunteerism.

Currently, people who volunteer are the Generation X or Baby Boomers. According to Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius (2006) Baby Boomers are "generation of children born between 1946 and 1964... As the 78 million boomers have aged, their participation in the workforce and their earnings have increased" making them an important volunteering market (p. 75). The Baby Boom generation is followed by Generation X, "which includes the 15 percent of the population born between 1965 and 1976. This period is also known as the baby bust, because the number of children born each year was declining" (p. 75). Those born during the "boom" are argued to be established and having reached their career goals. Baby Boom is a generation of people who are "...self reliant, entrepreneurial, supportive of racial and ethnic diversity, and better educated than any previous generation. They are not prone of extravagance and are likely to pursue lifestyles that are a blend of caution, pragmatism, and traditionalism" (p. 75). Generation X and Baby Boomers volunteer to self improve and to help others. But what about Generation Y volunteers? What motivates this younger generation to donate their time and effort to help others? How can nonprofit organizations with limited resources attract and retain Generation Y volunteers? Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius (2006) stated that Generation Y "includes the 72 million Americans born

between 1977 and 1994. Generation Y is also called Millennial Generation who is “...growing up at a time of unprecedented prosperity—and unprecedented pressures” (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p.7). Millennial characteristics, behaviors, and attitudes represent “a sharp break from Generation X, and are running exactly counter to trends launched by the Boomers” (p. 7). Generation Y can be described as optimists, team players, rule followers, smart, affluent, more ethnically diverse (Howe & Strauss, 2006, p. 8-9). Therefore the non-profit organization must use clear, persuasive communication techniques in order to create in potential volunteers a perception of both a social need to be filled and such organization's ability to provide a means or position to fill such a need.

This paper will examine what factors have been found to motivate Generation Y to volunteer in nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, the paper will focus on examining literature pertaining to help nonprofit organizations gain information about attraction and retention of younger volunteers. Finally, areas for research will be discussed pertaining to nonprofit organizations and volunteerism. This review should be of interest to organizational communication scholars and managers who are in charge of nonprofit organizations.

### Literature Review

In this section of the paper, I will first review relevant literature on the role of nonprofit organizations in a democratic society. Second, I will explore and discuss volunteerism, motivation, retention and motivational factors of volunteerism. Third, I will detail the existing research on the unique characteristics of Millennial generational cohort. Finally, the role of communication on volunteers' motivation will be examined.

## The Role of Nonprofit Organizations

Nonprofit organizations play an important role in American democratic society. Dyer, Buell, Harrison, and Weber (2002) stated “There are currently over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States and hundreds of new nonprofits are forming every year. Nonprofit organizations hold \$2 trillion of assets, have annual income of \$1.1 trillion employing one twelfth of the American work force” (p.13). The nonprofit sector grows every year helping people in need.

It is difficult to formulate a concrete definition of nonprofit organization because they differ in structure and purpose. However, nonprofit organizations have one essential element that unites them-- voluntary action. Connors (1980) explained that voluntary action is “what one is neither paid to do nor made to do” (p. 3). Nonprofits can be described as the collective forms of individual voluntary action. Nonprofit organizations are the “vehicles by means of which people pursue together goals that are not primarily remunerative and they are not forced to pursue” (Connors, 1980, p. 3).

Nonprofit organizations or voluntary organizations are also “those that receive substantial contributions of time (volunteering), below-cost goods or services, or money (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p. 3). A nonprofit organization is a term broadly used to refer to “the larger universe of formal and informal voluntary associations, non-stock corporations, mutual benefit organization, religious bodies, charitable trusts, and other nonproprietary entities” (Powell & Steinberg, 2006, p. 32). The main goal of these institutions is to help the disadvantaged and to influence the “ethos of self-sacrifice for individual spiritual growth and communal improvement” (p. 19). The operational technique used by nonprofit organizations is to provide volunteers the opportunity to



express their beliefs through voluntary work. Nonprofits want to provide volunteers with the satisfaction that their values are being put into action. Powell and Steinberg (2006) believed that nonprofits mission creates “a sense of purpose that energizes and justifies organizational existence” (p. 591). Depending on the purpose of nonprofit organization they can help with different causes, such as cleaning up the environment, helping out with a church work, supporting a political candidate, and others.

One of the biggest challenges facing nonprofit organizations is “attracting and retaining volunteers to help deliver their programs. For many nonprofits, volunteers are their lifeblood, their sustaining force” (Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker & Wells, 2008, p. 3). Despite recent reports and popular media that argue volunteering by people younger than age 35 has increased (Roberts, 2006), many nonprofit organizations report a struggle to recruit this age group as volunteers, donors, or employees (Berkshire, 2006, Brudney, 1999, Gaudiani, 2003, Morton, 2002, Paul, 2001, and Siska, 2003). Yet, nonprofit organizations play an important role in the provision of health and social services. In fact, nonprofit organizations provide a wide array of tangible (clothing, shelter, food, health) and non-tangible (support, recreation, counseling) services” (Kosny & Eakin, 2008, p. 149). Nonprofit organizations have strong and distinct values that attract people to volunteer. Thornton (2010) argued that nonprofit organizations “such as health care delivery, education, arts and culture, human needs, and social welfare—represent a significant portion of the economic engine of this country...” (p. 1). All these institutions heavily rely on the help of volunteers who provide service to nonprofits. The next section of the paper examines the nature of volunteerism in relationship to nonprofit organizations.

## Volunteerism

Volunteerism is one of the most significant elements of democratic society because citizens take part in improving the quality of life for themselves, their communities, and others. In a democratic and free society people feel socially responsible to donate their time and effort to help other people who need support. People who are established and stable in their lives are proud to give back to community. Roesch, Spitzberg and Dwiggins-Beeler (2006) described volunteers as "... a rapidly growing population of the workplace, contributing both time and resources to the success of many organizations" (p. 1). Volunteerism forms the core of nonprofit organizations in the United States (Snyder & Omoto, 1992; Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2003). Wilcox et al. (2003/2004) argued "most nonprofit organizations such as the United Way and the Red Cross depend on a constant supply of volunteers to function smoothly" (p. 354). Volunteerism contributes to the community building and development. Van Vuuren, de Jong, and Seydel (2008) believed that volunteerism also plays an important role "in hybrid organizations where both paid and unpaid members work together towards achieving the organization's goals" (p. 315).

Volunteerism involves people who want to help others in need and because volunteers usually help people with whom they have no association, "it is a form of helping that occurs without bonds of prior obligation or commitment to the recipients of volunteer services" (Omoto & Snyder, 2002, p. 847). Wilson's (2000) defined volunteerism as "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause. Volunteering is part of cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more

commitment than spontaneous assistance...” (p. 215). Wilson further suggested that volunteerism requires regular donation of time and effort to help others.

Roesch, Spitzberg, & Dwiggins-Beeler (2006) conducted focus groups and survey research in a southwest large urban area and concluded that “Social motivation is the only motivation that lacked a significantly positive association with the dimensions of organizational communication, whereas altruistic and material motivations were positively associated with organization communication” (p. 22). People who are altruistically motivated were more likely to volunteer in the nonprofit organization. On the other hand, Wilson (2000), Omoto and Snyder (2002) argued that social benefits and recognition of volunteers’ achievements among people are more important than materialistic benefits.

Ellis and Noyes (1990) conducted similar research and defined a volunteer as someone who chooses “to act in recognition of a need, with an attitude of social responsibility and without concern for monetary profit, going beyond one’s basic obligations” (p. 4). Volunteering is an individual’s choice to act for the benefit of others (Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991). Dutta-Bergman (2004) argued that “a sense of responsibility emanates across the personal and social domain of individuals who volunteer” (p.353). Volunteers are concerned with a desire to improve one’s own quality of life through meeting others and feeling that he/she is making a difference somehow, somewhere, in someone’s life (Connors, 1980, p. 5).

A review of the literature offers some interesting questions for future research, such as: Why do members of the Millennial Generation volunteer? What keeps Millennials attracted and motivated and what limits them in their volunteering? From the

preliminary research on volunteerism, volunteerism appeared closely related to social influence and recognition. In the next section, specific reasons for Millennial volunteering are examined.

#### Needs Based Approach: Motivation

Motivation has been found to be a key factor in volunteerism. Effective motivation contributes to a high performance and satisfaction of volunteers which results in volunteers staying longer with nonprofit organization. There are a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration when examining volunteers' motivation. In this section of the paper, I will define the word motivation and discuss Maslow's Hierarchy Theory.

Steers and Porter (1991) believed that "The term 'motivation' was originally derived from the Latin word *movere*, which means 'to move' (p. 5). Vroom (1964/1991) defined motivation as "...a process governing choice made by persons...among alternative forms of voluntary activity" (p. 5). Jones (1955/1991) explored "...how behavior gets started, is energized, is sustained, is directed, is stopped, and what kind of subjectivity reaction is present in the organism while all this is going on" (p. 5). On the other hand, Campbell and Pritchard (1976/1991) believed that motivation "...has to do with a set of independent/dependent variable relationships that explain the direction, amplitude, and persistence of an individual's behavior, holding constant the effects of aptitude, skill, and understanding of the task, and the constraints in the environment" (p. 5).

Meyer, Becker, and Vandenberghe (2004) defined motivation as "...an energizing force-it is what induces action in employees" (p. 992). Katzell and Thompson (1990)

determined that “people have certain innate or acquired propensities to seek out or avoid certain kinds of stimuli. These propensities, called motives or needs, influence behavior and are major determinants of performance” (p. 145). People have different needs and they try to find different ways to satisfy them. Volunteers feel a need to be helpful to other people. Motivation is a desire and need to engage in activity that would produce fruitful results and achievements.

Hull (1943/1991) in his major work *Principles of Behavior* “...set down a specific equation to explain an organism’s “impetus to respond”:  $\text{Effort} = \text{Drive} \times \text{Habit}$ ” (p. 11). Hull defined ‘Drive’ as “an energizing influence which determined the intensity of behavior, and which theoretically increased along with the level of deprivation” (p. 11). ‘Habit’ is defined as the strength of relationship between past stimulus and response which multiplicative function produces a motivational force to do something (p. 11). Hull’s equation can be used to understand how motivation works and how it can be applied to explain why Millennials are driven to volunteer. Thus, if people are driven to help others this state of determination can help cause the habit to volunteer in a regular basis and for longer periods of time.

According to Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius (2006) motivation is “the energizing force that stimulates behavior to satisfy a need” (p. 126). People who donate their time to nonprofit organization have different needs and purposes to volunteer. People who volunteer usually should reach their physiological needs before they can move to self-actualization needs which involves personal fulfillment (Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius, 2006). Self-actualization is a term being used to describe person’s “...self-realization, continuous self-development, and the process of becoming

all that a person is capable of becoming” (Steers and Porter, 1991, p. 34). Volunteerism is a good way to appeal and motivate people for self-actualization. Self-actualizers seek opportunities for learning, for personal growth, and for making significant contributions to the society. Thus, through helping others people can feel like they are important and needed.

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory people first have to meet physiological, safety and security, social, and personal needs before they can start helping others—self-actualization. Maslow’s five needs are placed “...in a hierarchy of importance which he called prepotency. Higher-level needs are not important...until lower-level needs are satisfied. Once lower-level needs are satisfied, needs at the next highest level emerge and influence behavior” (Steers and Porter, 1991, p. 34). For instance, people will not donate their time unless they feel safe, secure, etc.

Thereafter, people can use volunteerism for self-actualization purposes. Steers and Porter (1991) claimed that self-actualization refers to:

The process of developing our true potential as individuals to the fullest extent, and expressing our skills, talents, and emotions in the most personally fulfilling manner. The need for self-actualization tends to increase in potency as individuals engage in self-actualizing behaviors. (pp.35-36)

McClelland’s learned need for affiliation is defined as “...a desire to establish and maintain friendly and warm relations with other individuals. Individuals with a high need for affiliations possess the following characteristics:

1. They have a strong desire for approval and reassurance from others.
2. They have a tendency to conform to the wishes and norms of others when they are pressured by people whose friendships they value.
3. They have a sincere interest in the feelings of others” (Steers and Porter, 1991, p. 41).

Motivation is an important element that triggers people to volunteer. According to Roesch, Spitzberg, & Dwiggins-Beeler, (2006) “Volunteers are not typically motivated by extrinsic rewards such as financial incentives, promotions, or benefits but rather through intrinsic rewards such as personal fulfillment “(p. 2). Eisenberger (1972/1991) defined intrinsic motivation as “...behaviors that are motivated by ‘rewards that do not reduce tissue needs” (p. 49). Steers and Porter (1991) argued that intrinsic motivation is based in innate, organismic needs for competence and self-determination (p. 50). When volunteers feel intrinsically motivated they experience interest and happiness, “...enjoyment, they feel competent and self-determining, they perceive the locus of causality for their behavior to be internal...” (p. 50). Intrinsic motivation includes concern and sympathy for others.

Based on this review, motivation is the most important element in volunteering; it can be caused by different factors. These specific factors will be explored in the next section of this paper. This review also found that volunteers desire to be affiliated and associated with good cause and they also like to self-improve, self-actualize.

#### Retention Based Approach and Motivational factors of volunteerism

Fundamentally, the nonprofit sector has turned to motivational techniques to retain and encourage volunteers. Funding for nonprofit organizations is often limited, therefore many of these organizations rely on volunteer work to function. Volunteers not only help accomplish goals of nonprofits without increasing costs through wages, but they are also a major source for networking for donations, recruiting new volunteers, and being vocal for nonprofit organizations (Ruggle, 2001, p. 10).

Understanding and supporting the motivation of volunteers is essential. The factors that influence and determine volunteers' decision to donate their time and energy come from both inside and outside the volunteer's own decision-making. Connors (1980) argued that common motivating factors include "the feelings of 'I want to because it sounds fun and interesting,' 'It's my duty to help,' 'Something needs to be done,' 'They want and need me....'" (p. 9). Each of these motivations are distinct and separate factors.

Other important factors that motivate people to volunteer or influence their behavior towards volunteerism are the "...situational factors such as community size, social exchange capacity, personality, such as self-esteem and efficacy, attitude—such as community interest or perceived benefit to the community" (Harvey & McCrohan, 1988, p. 143). Lewin (1947/1980) examined the motivational factors or forces that come from the inside the self ("Own Forces") and those that originate from the outside the self, in the relationship one has with other individuals and the membership one has in groups ("Interpersonal and Group Member Forces"), and those based on the characteristics of the situation of the volunteer: issues of geography, time and space, transportation, economics, etc ("Situational Forces"). Examples of the Own Forces include "It's a chance to learn new skills, The visibility could help me on my job, I need something to do, etc." Examples of the Interpersonal and Group Member Forces would include "My best friend is asking me,' 'Service is a tradition in our family—it's expected." Finally, examples of Situational Forces would include "It would be a new world, an adventure,' 'I'd make new friend" (3-12).

Rubin and Thorelli (1984) found that continuing to volunteer depends on costs and rewards. Therefore if volunteers feel they are being rewarded in any way it is either



via social appraisal or recognition; then they will have a more positive attitude and perception towards volunteerism. The higher the rewards the higher the chances volunteers will stay longer with a nonprofit organization. Ruggle (2001) stated that “Long-term volunteers have various motives for continuing to work, ranging from learning new skills that will assist them volunteers in their careers to enjoying the personal relationships which develop in the volunteer workplace” (p. 8). Understanding and finding a perfect match between organization’s needs and a volunteer’s goals can be helpful with regard to the volunteer’s motivation, retention, and organization’s success.

Interestingly, Caracciolo (2003) identified five volunteer motivations that can also be applied to explaining Millennials motivation and attraction to volunteering. The first motivation is altruistic motivation and the nature of humanitarianism and philanthropy. Altruistic motivation is a relatively “selfless desire to meet the needs of others (Roesch, Spitzberg, & Dwiggins-Beeler, 2006, p. 5). People simply donate their time for the benefit of others. The second motivation is achievement, which motivates volunteers to learn new skills and expand their knowledge. The third, affiliation helps with socialization and networking. The fourth, motivation of influence can be understood as elements of leadership and control. Finally, recognition can be referred to as praise and appreciation. Thus, Caracciolo (2003) stated that recognition “announces to others that volunteer service is a much valued resource” (p. 10).

Volunteers are motivated by different forces, which in the case of this study are intrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards can be defined as “...internal motives and personal beliefs about the work that people perform” (White, 2001, p. 7). Intrinsic rewards come from the intrinsic motivation which “consist[s] of the feelings attached to or resulting

from performing specified activities. Thus, intrinsically motivated people would be satisfied, happy, enjoy themselves, favor the things they do” (Thierry, 1984/1990, p. 69). Volunteers do not seek extrinsic or financial reward for their achievement, but rather they seek social approval or rewards that come from recognition. Intrinsically motivated volunteers are concerned with sympathy for others.

Harvey and McCrohan (1988) also believed the purpose and mission of the nonprofit organization as well as the program itself can positively influence and motivate people to take part in volunteering. Minkoff and Powell (2002/2006) argued that mission “serves to signal what a nonprofit organization regards as good and important” and through that signal, encourages volunteers to invest their time, energy, and resources (p. 591). People like to be a part of an organization that creates benefits and goodness for those who are disadvantaged. Organizational size and goals can affect people to donate their time. Ruggle (2001) believed that “Building volunteer loyalty to encourage retention requires the presence of the same factors that build loyalty to employers in paid workers: a safe, secure workplace, a sense of pride and belonging to the organization, intrinsic rewards, and a personal life/volunteer life harmony” (p. 10). Research indicates that altruism, achievement, affiliation, influence, recognition, organizational size and mission are the factors that contribute to volunteers motivation to donate their time to nonprofits (Harvey & McCrohan, 1988; Caracciolo, 2003; Ruggle, 2001; Roesch, Spitzberg, & Dwiggins-Beeler, 2006).

In the next section, I will specifically explore the Millennial Generation and its unique characteristics in order to understand their possible behavioral attitudes.

Understanding Millennial generational cohort will help nonprofit organizations to target their resources to attract and retain this generation effectively.

### Millennial Generation

There is some inconsistency in the literature regarding when the Millennial Generation begins and ends, most scholars place this generation's birth years between 1982 and the 2000s (Howe and Strauss, 2000). Other researchers such as Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius (2006) argued that Millennials were born "...between 1977 and 1994 (p. 76). This was a period of increasing births, which resulted from baby boomers having children, and it is often referred to as the echo-boom or baby boomlet" (p. 76). These young individuals are called Millennials because this generation starts with the high school graduating class of 2000 (Greene, 2003). The term Millennials is also used to refer to younger members of Generation Y who view "wireless communication as a lifeline to friends and family and has been the first to use text messaging, cell phone games, and built-in cameras" (Kerin, Hartley, Berkowitz, and Rudelius, 2006, p. 76). Millennials can be also referred to as Generation Y, Generation Net Kids (because of the prevalence of the Internet), Generation Next, or the Echo Boom (Dohrman, 2009).

McClellan (2009) argued that Millennials- self named through the Internet as suggestions sent to ABC News'- website "...follow Gen X and the Boomers, they are not carrying on most of these two generations' traits or legacies" (p. 259). Millennials are "achievers, team players, and institution builders who will set high standards, get organized, and do civic deeds" (p. McClellan, 2009, p. 259-260). Howe and Strauss (2000) argued Millennials are:

Unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are

beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct. (p. 4)

Howe and Strauss (2000) identified seven key traits of Millennials: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and achieving (p. 43-44). Due to these positive traits Millennials can perform well at internships and jobs. This generation can be also called a post-awakening generation that would bring a positive change to American nation. McClellan (2009) argued that Millennials "...expect respect, individualized attention, and prompt response to any problems they perceive" (p. 263).

Exploring Millennials characteristics helps scholars and leaders of nonprofits to make sense of and utilize the behavioral attitudes of this generation. Understanding Millennials attitudes would give nonprofit organizations a chance to use specific language in their messages that would more directly appeal to Millennials.

In the next section of this paper, I will examine volunteers' attraction to nonprofit organizations and possible solutions for nonprofit organizations to attract Millennial volunteers.

#### Volunteers' attraction to nonprofit organizations

The nonprofit sector is spending organizational resources to try to investigate ways in which to attract younger individuals to become involved with their organizations as volunteers. Dohrman (2009), in his research, developed an organizational identification model which can have significant benefits for reaching out to the Millennial generation in three specific ways: "providing multiple identification options, offering exclusivity and local celebrity, and promoting the mission as a symbol of the elite" (p. 2).

One strategy that nonprofit organization can adapt in order to recruit and attract younger volunteers is called “Young Friends” group which “...typically focus on recruiting younger individuals through events, programs, and informative materials geared specifically to this demographic” (Dohrman, 2009, p. 3). ArtLink is an organization that helps attract and recruit young individuals for four various organizations that have a strong focus on art. Dohrman suggested that ArtLink can be compared to organizations such as United Way which helps raise donations for different organizations in their communities. ArtLink can be viewed as an effective and appropriate organizational model that can help nonprofit organizations “solve the problem of an aging donor population and the lack of younger donors to take the older donor’s places” (Dohrman, 2009, p. 5). ArtLink is an organizational model which reflects the needs and characteristics of the Millennial Generation and can help promote the organizational identification which would attract Millennials.

Younger people, especially the Millennial Generation, like to identify and associate with different organizations, people, places, etc. Identification is a “process by which the goals of the organization and those of the individual become increasingly integrated or congruent” (Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, 1970, p. 177). Cheney (1983) stated that organizational identification is the process by which “a person acts to identify with some target(s), i.e., personas, families, groups, collectivities, and to a lesser extent, values, goals, knowledge activities, objects” (p. 145). Cheney (1983) explained the purpose and functions of these identifications: the labeling or naming of ourselves (e.g., “I am a St. Louis Cardinals fan”) and the way that these identities “serve to enhance the ‘self’, granting us status and even prestige” (p. 146).

Millennial individuals want to be identified with a particular person or group through self identification, so Cheney (1983/2009) focused on the way organizations can help create these identities for younger people through the use of mass communication such as: television, radio, direct mail, and Internet. Role identity with the organization are important because the “volunteer role becomes part of his or her personal identity” (Roesch, Spitzberg, & Dwiggins-Beeler, R., 2006, p. 7). The Millennials are now entering what Hoge, Johnson, and Luidens (1994) referred to as the “impressionable period.” Dumheller (2005) argued that “During this period, which lasts from late adolescence to very young adulthood, social and political attitudes are formed” (p. 50). Nonprofit organizations should positively influence younger generation’s perception about volunteering through sending message that volunteering and being associated with a nonprofit organization is “cool.”

The Millennial Generation relies heavily on the media and the internet. Morton (2002) believed that young people of this generation have “access to an average of 62 television channels, the Internet, personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile phones, and video games” (p. 47). Millennials have grown-up with better access to websites and are used to multitasking both online and in their lives (Dohrman, 2009). Because of this intense media exposure Millennials are profoundly influenced by celebrities and athletes. Additionally, due to their “experience with talk shows, reality television, and the Internet, [individuals of this generation have] a mentality that anyone can be a celebrity, and that regular people deserve to have their voices heard” (Dohrman, 2009, p. 15). Millennials are exposed to branding and consumerism and they often “identify with brands of products or services, particularly when the goods are marketed as emblematic of a way of

life...” (Greene 2003, Dohrman 2009, p. 15). Therefore, branding organizations as products is a way that nonprofit organizations may choose to attract and retain members of Millennial Generation. Partly because of the limited resources, nonprofit organizations should consider promoting their organizations using social networks such as: Facebook, MySpace, etc. Social networks serve as opportunity and a source to communicate information about nonprofit organizations, their missions, struggles, future goals.

In the next section of this paper, I will talk about how communication is the vehicle to attract Millennials.

### Communication and Attracting Millennials

According to Bortre (2010) “In 2006, over 61 million individuals ages 16 and older volunteered their time to nonprofit organizations in the United States, with the number of volunteers increasing 200% from 1989 to 2004, to 15.5 million” (p. 4). This fact suggests that creating a positive relationship with communities, and communicating positive experiences to the public causes increase in volunteers’ motivation.

Empowerment and encouragement cannot occur without open communication. Communication and motivation are closely related because they help serve each other purpose which is to let volunteers understand that their work matters to nonprofit organization. Nonprofit leaders should consider the unique needs of young people as they communicate and develop relationships. Positive reinforcement plays significant role in motivational process of nonprofit organizations. Skinner (1953) defined positive reinforcement as a “...stimulus which, when added to a situation, strengthens the probability of an operant response” (p. 73). A large part of building positive

reinforcement and the feeling of empowerment is making volunteers understand that their inputs matter to the leaders and to the organization. Positive reinforcement comes from effectively communicating and praising the work of volunteers in nonprofit organizations. Positive reinforcement that results from recognition "...increases a volunteer's level of satisfaction and gets an organization more of what it needs, sustained commitment" (Caracciolo, 2009, p. 10). Recognition is a powerful and influential act that has the potential to "...inspire other to serve and can be an effective tool for recruitment and retention" (Caracciolo, 2009, p. 10). An expression of recognition and appreciation does not have to be costly but they should convey meaning, credibility, and value. One way nonprofit organizations can express appreciation is by simple "Thank you," official letter of recognition to a family, or public acknowledgment (Caracciolo, 2009).

Ruggle (2001) believed that "By building volunteers' confidence in their own skills, nonprofit groups are helping increase the intrinsic motivation that their volunteers feel" (p. 26). To encourage this positive growth of confidence and positive reinforcement, volunteer managers should "...encourage communication by opening up ideas and suggestions from workers, and empower volunteers by allowing them to implement their own projects" (p. 26).

Nonprofit leaders send messages that help with intrinsic motivation which Deci (1971) described as a state that occurs when individual is engaged in an activity that they find appealing or satisfying. Through positive and rewarding interaction organizational leaders can build strong relationships that allow them to influence and motivate volunteers effectively.



Volunteers want to be recognized and considered as an asset to the nonprofit organization and to know that by donating their effort they are making a difference in people's lives and in the mission of the nonprofit organization. Keith (2000) pointed out that volunteers who are not aware of their achievements are most likely to end their volunteer experience. The volunteers who feel that they give more than they receive feel disappointment that their efforts are unappreciated and ineffectual to the organization's cause (p. 377). Thus, nonprofit organizations need to communicate positive achievements to volunteers. Also, leaders of these organizations need to show connection between positive achievements and the volunteers' efforts in order to let the volunteers know they are valued and appreciated.

#### Factors of Importance

The literature review provided rich information and indicated the need for further research on the volunteerism topic. The most important aspects of research relevant to my purpose were concentrating on the attraction, motivation, and retention of Millennial volunteers in nonprofit organizations. Harvey and McCrohin (1988) recognized that none of the studies offered a unified conceptualization of what causes people to give of their time and effort without receiving compensation. All findings showed that social approval and socialization encourages and motivates people to volunteer. Literature review indicated that nonprofit organizations use positive reinforcement to influence specifically Generation Y or Millennials to volunteer. Additionally, Johnson (1998) suggested that volunteerism can be the basis for adolescents' learning about the work environment. Volunteer experience "strengthened intrinsic work values and the anticipated importance of community but decreased the anticipated importance of career" (p. 325). Several studies focused on the volunteers' personal traits in order to understand why they

volunteer. The understanding of Millennial Generation traits helped scholars to describe an organizational identification model which helps to explain why young people volunteer.

Furthermore, it was found that branding organizations as products is another way that nonprofit organizations may attract and retain members of Millennial Generation.

The literature review also helped explore various trends of motivational systems which can be grouped with the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. The Hierarchical Pyramid consists of five levels, which starting from the bottom are: Physiological Needs, Safety Needs, Social Needs, Personal Needs, and finally Self-Actualization Needs. I argued previously in the paper that volunteers need to reach at least the first two levels of needs in order to move to a higher levels in which volunteering takes place. For example, volunteers can not achieve self-actualization needs unless they first meet their physiological needs and safety needs first.

Also, there are different types of motivational systems which correlate with various human needs. I have developed a model that visually explains how this process works through grouping motivational types into Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Appendix A). For example, I argue that Intrinsic and Own Motivations fit into the Self-Actualization Needs category. In this stage people are concerned with self-fulfillment and improvement. During the self-actualization stage motivation comes from inside the person's beliefs, attitudes, etc. Then extrinsic motivation (which is concerned with financial benefits, promotions) relates to Personal Needs. Personal Needs are concerned with self-gaining elements such as: status, respect, and prestige. Finally, altruistic and interpersonal and group member motivations relate to Social Needs which seek

friendship, sense of belonging, love, etc. This grouping and matching of various types of motivation with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can help us better understand volunteers' behavioral attitudes towards nonprofit organizations.

The literature review further suggests strategies to nonprofit organizations regarding how to attract and retain volunteers. First, branding nonprofit organizations as products will help create identities which would serve to enhance the 'self', granting volunteers status and prestige. Second, nonprofit organizations which strive to retain volunteers for longer periods of time should first consider communicating positive achievements to volunteers and should use positive and rewarding interaction. Third, nonprofits should empower and encourage volunteers in their volunteering work. Fourth, leaders of nonprofits should use recognition as a powerful act of inspiration and retention. Finally, creating a website where nonprofit organizations could foster their identification and could create various identification targets is a beneficial and effective strategy that would attract volunteers to consider donating their time and efforts to the nonprofit organization.

I would speculate that suggested strategies for attracting and retaining volunteers can be applied to other cultures where there are nonprofits that are struggling with attraction and retention of volunteers.

The trends that I have learned from literature review have shown that Millennial volunteers are most likely to volunteer when they want to self-improve (professionally, academically), learn new skills, help disadvantaged, develop identity through association with nonprofit organization, socialize, meet new friends, and establish social network.

Finally, Millennials are most likely to volunteer when they can relate their values, interests, hobbies, etc. to the mission/purpose of a nonprofit organization.

#### Discussion and Future Direction

This paper contributes to the nonprofit organizations whose goal is to motivate, attract, and retain the younger generation, specifically Millennial volunteers, to donate their time. Furthermore, the paper serves as a framework for future investigations on the topic of motivation, attraction and retention of Millennial Generation in nonprofit organizations. This project gathered useful information about the characteristics of Millennial generation, its different motivational forces, volunteers' attraction, communication, and positive reinforcement but did not focus on further exploration of retention techniques of younger volunteers. It would be beneficial to consider the following questions in future research: What is the difference between service learning (for school, college) and other volunteering? Does gender affect volunteering rates or who volunteers more: females or males? Do nonprofit organizations need to consider using different motivational techniques for females and males volunteers? Why do some Millennial generation students volunteer and others do not? Future research may also consider conducting a comparison studies with another generational group such as: Baby Boomers, Generation X, etc.

Personally, I have gained a broader understanding about the nature and dynamics of nonprofit sector, volunteerism including relevant motivation, attraction, and retention. The investigated information will be useful in my future applied research. This information will serve as starting point in working with college students and the nonprofit sector. I will apply my knowledge in my career field of organizational communication.

## Conclusion

Attracting and motivating volunteers, especially younger generation volunteers, is a critical but not easy task for leaders in nonprofit sector. By conducting more research on this subject, this task can be more readily achievable. Overall, this paper revealed valuable information about the Millennial generation and its motivational characteristics affecting their voluntarism in nonprofit organizations.

First, this paper examined the role of nonprofit organizations and volunteerism and revealed its importance and vitality in a democratic society and community. Second, the paper explored the motivational factors of volunteerism and concluded that motivation triggers people to act in order to satisfy a need; either a selfish need to develop new skills or gain experience, or a selfless need to help others. Finally, literature review findings revealed that nonprofit organizations should use social networks and media to effectively communicate a message to appeal to the Millennial generation.

By gaining a deeper understanding of what motivates the Millennial generation to volunteer and what motivating factors will be found most rewarding, nonprofits can create a better communication and promotional campaigns that would appeal to Millennials. Moreover, by having a better understanding of the Millennial Generation, nonprofits can better match individuals to specific voluntary positions. Then volunteers can be more accurately and appropriately placed in the best suitable positions to satisfy both volunteers' and organizations' needs. The Millennial generation is a unique volunteer workforce that brings new perspectives to the nonprofit sector. Therefore, closely assessing Millennials' motivation to volunteerism is necessary for nonprofit organization future sustainability and involvement.

Finally, understanding of the Millennials trends and motivational forces can also bring numerous benefits for American nonprofit sector, human resource management, and organizational communication educators and scholars.

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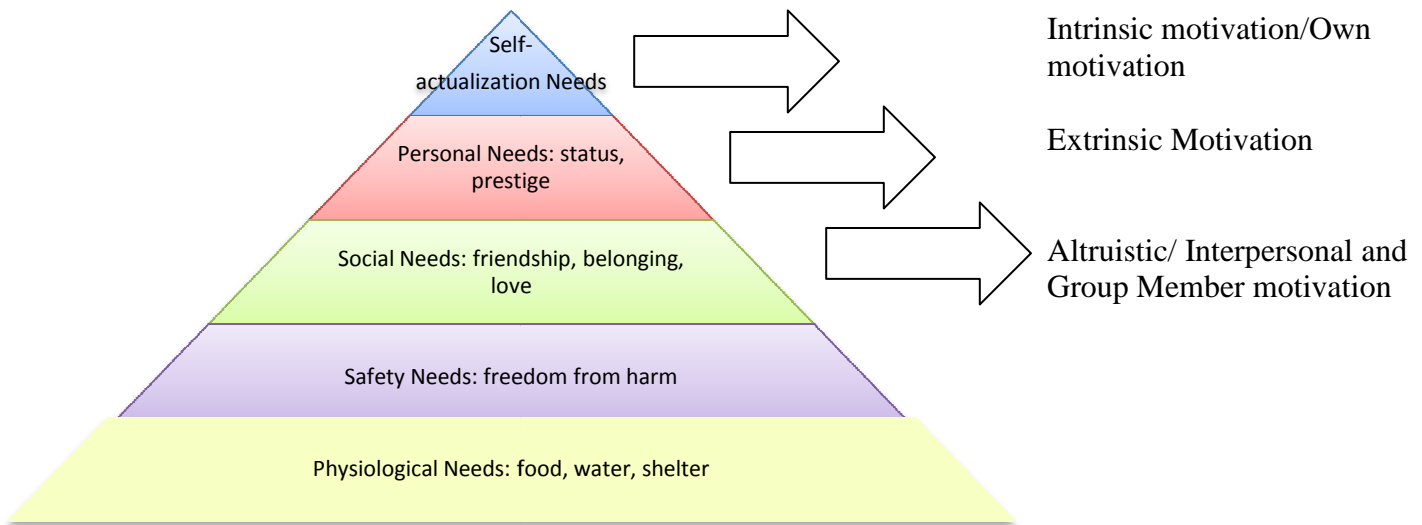


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## Appendix A: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and Various Types of Motivation:



### Self-actualization Needs:

- Intrinsic Motivation***- seeks social approval or recognition
- Own Motivation***- comes from inside the self

### Personal Needs:

- Extrinsic Motivation*** - financial incentives, promotions, benefits

### Social Needs:

- Altruistic motivation***- “selfless desire to meet the needs of others” (Roesch, Spitzberg, Dwiggin-Beeler, 2006, p. 5).
- Interpersonal and Group Member motivation***- socialization and networking

### Suggested Strategies for Attracting/Retaining Millennial Generation:

Branding nonprofit organizations as products help create identities which serve to enhance the ‘self’, granting volunteers status and prestige

Nonprofits should:

1. communicate positive achievements to volunteers
2. empower and encourage volunteers
3. use recognition as a powerful act of inspiration and retention
4. use positive and rewarding interaction
5. create a website where nonprofit organizations could foster their identification and could create various identification targets

