

The New Alchemy

How volunteering turns donations of time and talent into human gold

Part 2 – Trends in volunteering over the last decade

Part 3 – Harnessing volunteer motivations

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Introduction – the rise and fall of the selfish volunteer

General introduction¹

Our last major report on volunteering in 2005 ended with the conclusion that, considering the seismic shifts in socio-demographic trends and the expectations of 21st century life, it was no longer enough to rely on the older lady helping out in the charity shop five days a week.

Volunteers of all ages needed greater flexibility, more meaningful experiences and more creative recruitment and management to help unleash their potential; it was, we argued, the age of the 'selfish volunteer'.

"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."

The 21st Century Volunteer (2005)

This insight still holds true in 2014 and to an extent, this revised report builds on the concept of unleashing the 'selfish volunteer'. Indeed, for a time, it was our working title. However, during the course of our research, it became clear that while many things have changed in volunteering, there is a great deal that stays constant. We could talk about the myriad of reasons that prompt people to give their time. We could talk about how volunteering is under-resourced compared to fundraising, its testosterone-charged big sibling. We could talk about the spectrum of quality of volunteers and management.

However, what has really struck us this time is that volunteering, at its core, remains transformational. It transforms both the giver and the receiver. It transforms the organisation's ability to deliver to beneficiaries cost-effectively. Put simply, volunteering can bring out the very best in people.

The process of volunteering is therefore a kind of alchemy. Volunteering takes up that most universal of human resources - time. It takes that universal resource, so often squandered, and uses it to transform people's lives. It takes a universal base asset and turns it into the human gold of changed lives.

¹ You can skip this intro if you have read Part 1 as it's the same!

It is all too easy for researchers like us to stay distant from our work, to be 'dispassionate' about our subject matter. In the case of volunteering, we have been sucked into the universality, the power and the passion when volunteering works at its best; when donations of time and talent are turned into the equivalent of human gold.

Introduction to parts two and three²

These next two parts of The New Alchemy deal with two specific issues: volunteering demographics and trends, and volunteering motivations.

Part 2 looks at volunteering trends and demographics. nfpSynergy has been tracking volunteering patterns for well over a decade. This record, combined with surveys run by the government (Community Life and its predecessors), allows us to paint a fairly good picture of who currently volunteers and how volunteering demographics have changed over the last decade

Part 3 looks at volunteering motivations and how they are affected by the changing nature of volunteering. Specifically, the report looks at the increasing numbers of young people giving their time and those people wanting to gain more skills and employability from their volunteering experiences.

The last page of this report describes how this one is parts **two** and **three** of seven. Parts four and five, hopefully published in September, will look at the mechanics of volunteering and how to get the young, the old and families to volunteer.

² This intro is the new bit, hand-crafted for parts 2 and 3

Part 2 – Trends in volunteering over the last decade

Having outlined the social, economic and political changes of the last decade in Part 1, we're left with several important questions:

- 🌀 Where does this leave us in terms of who volunteers, when and how?
- 🌀 What do we know about the motivations and expectations of volunteers and how they are evolving in light of the changing volunteering landscape and external constraints?
- 🌀 What shifts have there been in the motivations for volunteering in the last decade?

1. Who, how often and how much?

As Part 1 suggested, encouraging and increasing volunteering has remained a central political thread in the Coalition government era. 'Big Society' rhetoric, coverage around the 2012 Olympics and coping strategies to save local services threatened by funding cuts have all appeared to herald a boost in the number and visibility of volunteers in the UK.

There have always been challenges in interpreting volunteer trends. Foremost among these is the impact of differing definitions on the one hand, and the fact that bald statistics tell us too little of the underlying reality which would make their interpretation meaningful on the other.

In the first instance, we have distinctions between 'formal' and 'informal' volunteering, the frequency and nature of time given and the different socio-economic and cultural contexts that shape how likely a respondent is to view their activities as 'volunteering' (as opposed to calling it helping their church/being neighbourly/pooling childcare and so on). It is also complicated by discontinuities in studies tracking this kind of information. Among the most important sector-wide surveys, for example, was the Home Office's Citizenship Survey. It ran from 2001, but for cost-cutting reasons was replaced in 2012 with the new Community Life Survey, which utilises a different sample composition and scope of topics.

In the second instance, it has always been clear that for measuring this type of communal good in particular, the most illuminating data is often necessarily qualitative and therefore harder to collate on a large systematic scale. What is the cause and effect when figures on frequency or the average time given rise or fall? How do we account for the cultural differences that inform how people identify

their volunteering? What do any of these numbers tell us about the real value of volunteering at any given point, both for volunteers themselves and the causes they are aiding?

Trends in giving

The past six years have been financially tough. Many charities have had to contend with both reductions in statutory income and changes to their voluntary income as government and individuals altered their spending to deal with harsh economic realities. Yet nfpSynergy's Charity Awareness Monitor (surveying a nationally representative sample of the British public several times a year) has nonetheless registered a remarkable resilience in the number of us who give to charity. Three-quarters of the public consistently say they have given in the previous three months and, on mean score at least, even the amount given remains fairly constant.³

Where we have seen more impact, unsurprisingly, is on trends regarding the *ways* in which we give. Ad hoc methods, such as cash collections, event sponsorship and, most notably, charity shop donations, have been in the ascendancy and more reliable, regular giving has faltered. This is perhaps driven by people's falling optimism for their ability to be able to give in the future.

2014 is the first time since the financial crisis that our research has seen the proportion of people expecting their giving to increase in the year ahead exceed that of people expecting it to decline, suggesting news of green shoots may tentatively be beginning to resonate. This suggests that while our overall willingness to engage with charities has remained healthy even in crisis, the ways in which we participate have had to evolve to fit our straightened circumstances. We are still receptive and keen to do our part, but we – and the charities who hope to benefit from our support – need to be more flexible and creative.

Looking into the figures themselves, the 2012-2013 Community Life Survey found that the number of people volunteering at least once a year, both formally and informally, has increased since 2010⁴. Although annual volunteer rates remain lower than those observed in 2001 or 2005, this increase in volunteering since 2010 represents a break from the decline that was observed from 2005 onwards.

However, it is important to note that while the main dip observed fell between 2008/9 and the more optimistic uplift seen in 2012/13, the latter represents the first data provided by the new survey. We must therefore exercise caution when

³ Charity Awareness Monitor 2014, nfpSynergy (<https://nfpSynergy.net/nfpSynergy-monitors/charity-awareness-monitor>).

⁴ Cabinet Office (2013) *Giving of time and money: Findings from the 2012-13 Community Life Survey*.

viewing it as trend data directly comparable with its predecessor, the Citizenship Survey.

When looking at formal and informal volunteering separately, different trends emerge. Formal volunteering (volunteering with official groups, clubs or organisations at least once in the last year) increased from 39% in 2010-2011 to 44% in 2012-2013 (putting it at the same level as 2005). Similarly, informal volunteering (providing unpaid help, usually to friends or neighbours, at least once in the last year) has increased by 7% to 62% in the same timeframe (and it was 68% in 2005). This suggests the welcome news that volunteering figures are now in recovery and back up to pre-recession levels, albeit not at some record high.

However, it is worth exercising caution due to both the methodological change between the 2010/11 and 2012/13 figures and because trend data since 2001 reveals intermittent fluctuation in both formal and informal measures. This would suggest the latter in particular tends to have some volatility. While the Coalition Government has claimed the rise is a direct result of the Big Society agenda⁵, others argue that volunteers stepping into the gap left by austerity measures may have contributed. It may also be noteworthy that the first waves of the Community Life Survey were carried out in the wake of the London Olympics.

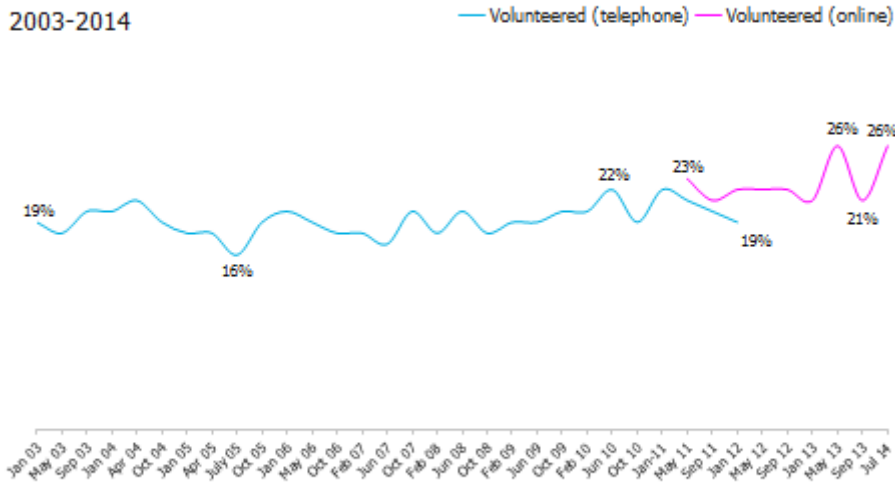
nfpSynergy's Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM) uses a different methodology⁶ and paints a slightly different picture of volunteering, asking whether respondents have given time to a charity or other organisation in their local community in the last three months. In the chart below, we can see that although there are fluctuations, volunteering levels have generally remained relatively consistent over the last ten years at around one fifth of the British population (figure 5 - numbering continued from Part 1).

⁵ Mason, Tania (12 February 2014) 'Rise in Volunteering Vindicates Big Society, Say Ministers' Governance.

⁶ The Charity Awareness Monitor (CAM) is run on behalf of a syndicate of UK charities and uses a nationally representative British sample (incl. Scotland and Wales) of 1000 per wave, conducted online between four and six times per year. Community Life primarily uses a face-to-face methodology of c.6915 participants interviewed on a rolling quarterly basis and focuses solely on England.

Figure 5: Proportion of people who have volunteered in the last three months

2003-2014



"Have you given time as a volunteer in the last three months, to a charity or other organisation, or in your local community?" Yes (Telephone and online surveys)

Base: 1,000 adults 16+, Britain

Source: Charity Awareness Monitor, 2003-2014, nfpSynergy

The nfpSynergy research in July 2014 found that 26% of people had volunteered in the last quarter (this probably equates to Community Life's definition of formal volunteering). This is not so far from Community Life's finding that 29% of people report having volunteered at least once in the last month (the same level as in 2005).

There may also be other potential explanations that inform the gap. These might include whether there is an English bias towards volunteering (CAM is Britain-wide), or whether the greater specialism of the Community Life survey encourages more careful consideration of community engagement. A third explanation might be whether face-to-face interviewing introduces social desirability bias when reporting one's own philanthropic behaviours.

However, more relevant than precise figures may be the lack of stark, conclusive changes in trends over the last decade. This interpretation is endorsed by Staetsky and Mohan, who reviewed and compared a range of volunteer survey methodologies for the Third Sector Research Centre in 2011⁷ and highlighted the broad consistencies in findings from different ones. Pertinent to the broader themes of this report, they note the difficulties of collecting reliable volunteering data and suggest that "the absence of well-understood and widely-agreed concepts of voluntarism in the public mind introduces uncertainty in people's

⁷ Staetsky, L and Mohan, J (2011) *Individual voluntary participation in the United Kingdom: an overview of survey information* (Third Sector Research Centre)

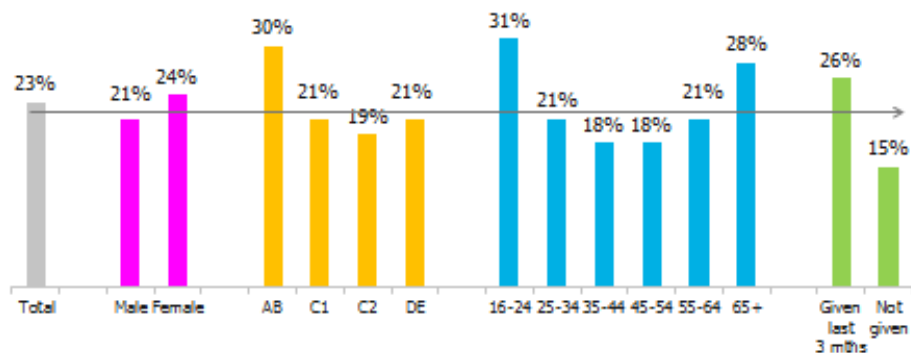
responses. Their conclusion was that volunteer levels had remained relatively stable over time and were unlikely to drop substantially.

Who is the 21st century volunteer?

The Charity Awareness Monitor data on volunteering can also be broken down by key demographics to get a snapshot of those who participate in volunteering. The chart below shows data collated from 7,000 respondents over the period 2011-14:

Figure 6: Proportion who have given time as a volunteer in the last three months, 2011-2014

By age, social grade age and charity donor



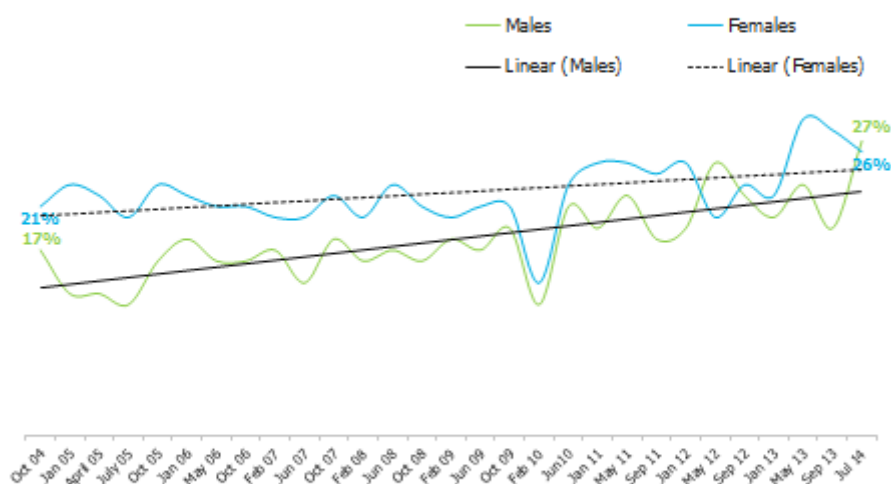
"Have you given time as a volunteer in the last three months, to a charity or other organisation, or in your local community?" Yes

Base: All respondents from 7 waves @ 1,000 adults 16+ each, Britain
Source: Charity Awareness Monitor, Sep 2011 - Jul 2014, nfpSynergy

Women and men now nearly equally likely to volunteer – a marked contrast from 10 years ago

Figure 7 (below) shows that when averaged out over a three year period (2011-14), the levels of men and women who volunteered in the last three months are much closer than past data has suggested. To be specific, 23% of women said they had volunteered in the last three months in Jan 2005, compared to just 13% of men. By July 2014, the figures were 26% for women and 27% for men. The current lack of clear gender bias is corroborated by the Community Life Survey, which finds no significant differences in its 2012/13 data. Figure 7 shows nfpSynergy's CAM data on this issue.

Figure 7: Volunteering over time by gender



"Have you given time as a volunteer in the last three months, to a charity or other organisation, or in your local community?" Yes (Telephone and online surveys)

Base: 1,000 adults 16+, Britain

Source: Charity Awareness Monitor, 2003-2014, nfpSynergy

Affluence still linked to volunteering

Rates of volunteering also vary by socio-economic class, with more affluent people still more likely to volunteer. This correlates with recent research from TimeBank, which found that "people classified as being at risk of social exclusion (defined here as having a long-term limiting illness or disability, having no formal qualifications, or being from an ethnic minority group) were less likely to regularly participate in volunteering."⁸ This is echoed by the Community Life Survey, which found that 36% of people who live in the least deprived areas regularly volunteer, in contrast to 19% of people living in deprived areas.⁹ This is likely to be impacted by a range of factors, from the time available for economically unproductive activity to the education which may socialise us into volunteering behaviours.

However, it is also important to note that as all data is self-reported, it may also relate to how we define time spent caring for others and contributing to our community, as well as how much responsibility we feel to participate in such activity. It may be, for example, that higher social grades are more likely to categorise their activity as 'volunteering' and to feel the weight of expectation.

⁸ Time Bank (2013) Key facts <http://timebank.org.uk/key-facts> Accessed: April 30th 2014.

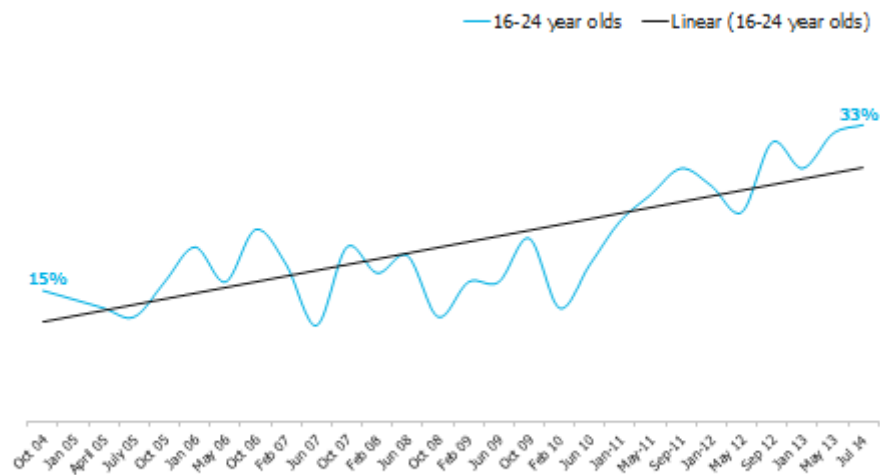
⁹ Cabinet Office (2013) *Giving of time and money: Findings from the 2012-13 Community Life Survey*.

A concave age trend; youth and retirement

The two age groups most likely to volunteer are young people and retirees, making a concave trend that hollows out in the intervening years of work and raising a family (look back at Figure 6 for a snapshot).

Since 2005, CAM data has seen volunteering double amongst young people, as shown in Figure 8. Between 2003 and 2005, only 14% of 16-24 year olds had volunteered in the last three months. By 2014, that figure had risen to 34%. Youth volunteering has also grown on a global scale. A 2013 report by the Charities Aid Foundation, which explores global giving trends, found that young people (15-24 years old) are propelling a rise in global volunteering.¹⁰

Figure 8: Volunteering over time – by age 16-24



"Have you given time as a volunteer in the last three months, to a charity or other organisation, or in your local community?" Yes (Telephone and online surveys)

Base: 1,000 adults 16+, Britain

Source: Charity Awareness Monitor, 2003-2014, nfpSynergy

In the same time period, CAM data suggests volunteering among 25-64 year olds remained around 10% lower than the levels of those aged 16-24. This all changes when people reach retirement age, with figures shooting back up to 28% among the over 65s. The implications of this are clear. It is the youngest and oldest of us with the most free time and indeed both groups have strong reasons for wanting to gain or freshen up skills, as well as meet like-minded people. However, there are broader issues at stake in how the motivations and pressures on these groups are changing, and how the sector must adapt in response.

¹⁰ Low, J (2013) *World Giving Index 2013: A global view of giving trends*.

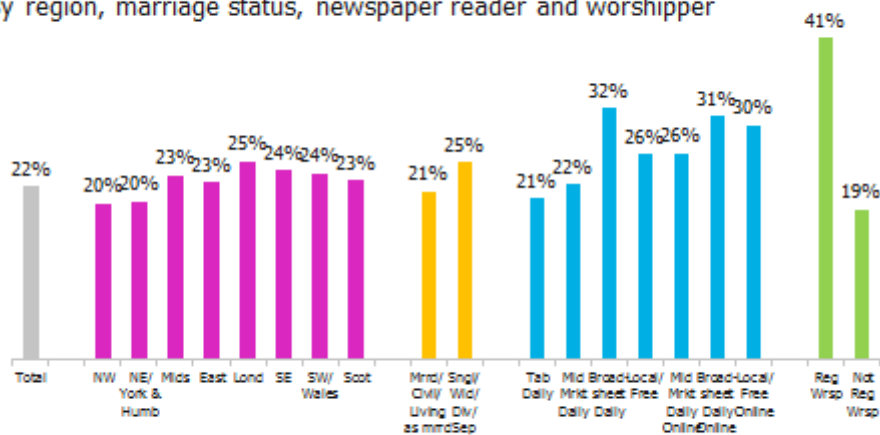
Singletons and regular worshippers

As Figure 9 shows, volunteering remains relatively consistent across most regions of the UK, but we do see slightly lower levels in the North West and North East of England (20% and 20% respectfully, compared to 22% overall). Volunteers are also now more likely to be single (in contrast with data in our last report, which put married couples slightly ahead).

Most significantly - and in keeping with all other research we have done on faith and charitable engagement - regular worshippers are the likeliest of all groups to volunteer (41%, compared to 19% for non-worshippers). Meanwhile, broadsheet readers are the likeliest media demographic to say they volunteer, further emphasising the points made about regarding affluence and levels of education.

Figure 9: Proportion who have given time as a volunteer in the last three months, 2011-2014

By region, marriage status, newspaper reader and worshipper



"Have you given time as a volunteer in the last three months, to a charity or other organisation, or in your local community?" **Yes**

Base: 7 waves @ 1,000 adults 16+ each, Britain
Source: Charity Awareness Monitor, Sep 2011 - Jul 2014, nfpSynergy

The connection between volunteering and charitable giving

Figure 6 showed that those who do not donate to charity are also less likely to volunteer. Only 15% of those who did not give in the last three months had volunteered, while a quarter of those who gave money also gave time. In many ways this is an obvious link, showing that different forms of engagement with charities or community life are likely to co-exist, whether because of means or personal inclination.

The Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy has further investigated the relationship between these two forms of giving by reviewing a number of different

data sources. When carrying out bivariate analysis of data on volunteering and charitable giving, the report found evidence of a positive relationship between the two variables¹¹. However, this form of analysis does not explain the nature of this relationship. Upon further multivariate investigation, the study found mixed evidence about whether the relationship between volunteering and charitable giving was causal, correlative or associational. With this in mind, the positive relationship is indeed concluded to be the result of shared determinants/propensity, rather than a causal relationship between volunteering and charitable giving.

The development of philanthropy that combines both volunteering and charitable donations offers a vehicle for both forms of giving to coincide. Giving circles are an example of this. Here, people pool their financial resources and then give time as volunteers to collectively choose a cause which will receive their donation. In some cases, the selected cause also receives additional volunteer time from participants.

¹¹ Hill, M (2012) *CGAP Working Paper: The relationship between volunteering and charitable giving: review of evidence.*

Section 3: Harnessing volunteer motivations

So we know volunteers are still out there, active and similarly constituted, if now slightly younger with a more balanced gender split. But what are they all doing? In a word: everything. During 2014's Volunteers Week, The Guardian's Voluntary Sector Network even reported on some of the sector's more eccentric outposts, with advertised roles ranging from mascot surgeon to chicken knitter!¹²

Volunteers support a vast array of organisations in different sectors, spanning countless roles and levels of commitment. The Community Life Survey found that the sectors most popular amongst volunteers were sports and exercise (52%), hobbies, recreation, arts and social clubs (42%), religion (36%) and children's education and schools (34%). When asked which activities were carried out while volunteering, around half of those who formally volunteer on a regular basis said they help run activities and events, raise or handle money or take part in sponsored events.

The benefits of researching and understanding motivation

To effectively engage with this eclectic group of volunteers, it is essential to understand their motivations for giving time. This is the case both at a general level – all the contextual and socio-economic factors discussed in Part 1 – and at a personal level. What brings people to your organisation in particular and what will deepen their engagement or encourage them to stay?

This section discusses some of the main benefits of understanding motivation and emphasises the need to maintain an ongoing conversation with your volunteers throughout their time with you. Organisations that regularly ask their volunteers why they are here, what they value in their roles, what's missing and what their expectations are will build up a detailed and bespoke body of knowledge about their volunteer profile. This will secure the following key benefits:

¹² The Guardian (2014), *'Wanted: musical sea eagle. The five weirdest volunteer roles'*, 3 June. http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/jun/03/volunteering-roles-charity-weird-top-five?CMP=twl_gu

Understanding and managing expectations

When we understand what is feasible or necessary, we're better equipped to weigh up whether something is right for us and less likely to become disillusioned. There will always be a balance between what you need as an organisation and the ideal role for a new recruit. If what you desperately need right now is door-stepping for donations, envelope stuffing or events clean-up, make sure this is clear. Also ensure you know where this fits into the bigger picture for your work and which other opportunities will be available for those volunteers in a few months' time. Talk to your volunteers and be clear about roles; if you never manage expectations, you'll have no idea why new and apparently enthusiastic recruits disappear within a month.

Encourage ownership and innovation

How often have you heard someone say: "I find it easier to learn when I'm interested in what's being taught"? We like things we are good at (and often become good at the things we like). If volunteers are given scope to choose their projects and help shape the volunteer programme, they will be much more invested in and fulfilled by their work. Meanwhile, you reap the benefits of the ideas and energy they bring to your organisation. By understanding skills and drive, volunteer managers can better match volunteers to roles, and by allowing flexibility and co-creation, they encourage ownership and excellence.

Manage volunteer satisfaction and reward

The very act of asking what volunteers want, what they enjoy and what could be improved shows that you care, that their contribution matters and that the relationship is a two-way street. By encouraging volunteers to think about why they are with you, you help to reinforce their commitment (e.g. 'to make a difference', 'to learn new skills', 'to help someone else with a situation my family experienced'). By asking about what you could do differently, you build in an early warning system for when things aren't going well. These tactics mean value is reinforced and you have a mechanism to understand and respond to both satisfaction and concerns, both of which better equip you to continue engaging volunteers both current and new.

Recruit volunteers effectively and continuously

By regularly documenting current volunteers' motivations, your organisation builds up case studies, quotes and data that will help target future volunteers more effectively and maintain an ongoing relationship with current ones. You are empowered to better understand which people are drawn to your organisation and their communication preferences, but also to identify gaps. For example, if it turns out that you see very few volunteers interested in increasing their skill base, perhaps it's time to reconsider the options for more skilled volunteer roles (research, office work, mentoring) and your offer to those who might be

interested. If you know your cause appeals to women 45-54 for instance, could you be targeting mums re-entering the workforce?

A typology of volunteer motivations

So we know understanding motivation is critical, but it's important to remember it is also one of the most nebulous areas to grasp and varies tremendously by individual, charity and era. As one interviewee noted:

"Motivation is one of the most over-researched topics [but] none of the research really gives a practitioner anything valuable because everyone's different."

However, despite their complexity and variability, a grounding in types of motive and the way these play out *for your organisation in particular* is invaluable for the volunteer manager. The True Volunteer Foundation summarised volunteer motivations into these three categories: **altruistic** motives, **instrumental** motives and **obligatory** motives¹³. If, like us, you were a bit bewildered by what these all meant, here are the explanations:

Altruistic motivations are fuelled by the hope to 'give something back.' For example, the giving of skills or expertise to a cause or area where it is most needed. However, even for apparently selfless motives, volunteering is generally a symbiotic relationship between the organisation and volunteer. Very few volunteers do something they hate because they are altruistic. Moreover, a volunteer is almost always likely to receive some form of benefit from volunteering, be it maintaining skills, combating isolation or the peace and well-being that comes from offering help to those in a difficult situation.

Instrumental motivations are more clearly underpinned by an element of self-interest. This type of volunteering is considered and undertaken as a form of self-development. For example, the developing of new skillsets, developing one's career trajectory or volunteering for networking purposes. Among the most critical of these in today's context, employability, is discussed further below.

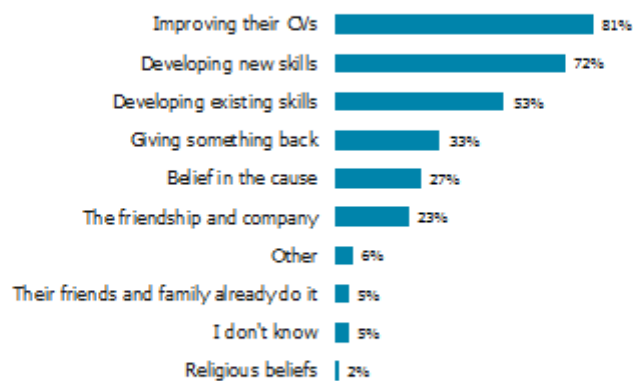
Finally, **obligatory** motives include people who feel obliged to volunteer due to moral or religious duty. These types of volunteers are less common today than instrumental volunteers, but as shown in figure 9, the link between faith and volunteering is still firm. Furthermore, even where the moral element may be less relevant, in some environments there may still be a strong aspect of social conformity or one-upmanship at play.

¹³ Krutkowski, S (2014) *True Volunteer Foundation: Understanding volunteer expectations and motive fulfilment.*

Whichever family of motivations is the strongest in your own volunteer profile, it is vital that managers plan volunteer strategy, recruitment and management in a tailored way. For volunteers who are primarily motivated by a belief in the cause and a desire to make a difference, it may be that they are flexible and likely to remain engaged whatever their role (no matter how mundane), so long as it is clear how this work contributes to the greater good.

Where the primary motivation is more linked to acquiring specific skills however, it will be more crucial to ensure suitable training and role design to ensure needs are met. For most of us, it will be a mix of many factors, as suggested by figure 10. It shows volunteer managers' perceptions of which motives have become more important over the last five years.

Figure 10: Motivations to volunteer that have increased over the last five years



"Do you think any of these have become more important to volunteers over the last five years? Please select all that apply"

Base: 516 Respondents
Source: Managing Volunteers Survey 2013, nfpSynergy

Below is a summary of some of the most common motivations volunteer managers should keep in mind when designing volunteer roles, divided up by soft, hard and altruistic motives.

Table 1: The spectrum of potential volunteer motivations

Soft (less tangible) motivations	Hard (more tangible) motivations	Altruistic motivations
Ability to work with others	Skills (organisational, leadership, management)	Contribute skills, knowledge, 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		

It is also useful to consider that, regardless of motivation, 47% of the volunteers asked in our research 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 would be 'being asked'. It sometimes is that simple. Volunteers rarely stop out of sudden disengagement with a cause. Instead, they 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.⁴ To paraphrase, volunteers will often start through inspiration and leave through exasperation.

Finally, for many of us the barriers remain predictable, if exacerbated, in the current era. As the Community Life survey identified, work commitments (58%), looking after children or the home (31%) and people having other things to do with their spare time (24%) are the key barriers cited by those who are not regular formal volunteers.¹⁴

Employability is the new black in volunteer motivations

When thinking about volunteer motivation, one central theme arises from the circumstances discussed in Part 1 and requires more specific attention; the 21st century significance of voluntary experience for employability. It is likely that the

¹⁴ Cabinet Office (2013) *Giving of time and money: Findings from the 2012-13 Community Life Survey*.

'instrumental' use of volunteering to achieve professional goals has always played a part, whether in gaining skills in the first place or keeping them fresh later in life. However, there is little doubt that the current age of austerity, together with more long-standing changes in access to higher education and the competitiveness and composition of the job market, has pushed the salience of employability to the fore.

As many have noted, volunteering for this reason is especially common amongst students or recent university graduates hoping to enhance their employment prospects.¹⁵ Many schools, colleges and universities are encouraging volunteering to enhance CVs, develop new skills, help studies, gain experience of working life and create a network. Increasing employability is regularly cited as one of the reasons why youth volunteering has increased so dramatically and respondents to our volunteer management survey also noted an increase.

Volunteering in a role which provides career-enhancing experience is particularly desirable for young people hoping to work in the third sector, not least because, as with many other industries, the rise of unpaid internships has tended to reduce its number of entry level positions.¹⁶ For employers in the private and public sectors, the voluntary sector provides a pool of creative talent worth recruiting. When asked if volunteering had a positive effect on career development amongst young people aged 16-25, 87% of employers agreed.¹⁷ However, 30% of employers also agreed that when considering a job application, it was irrelevant whether or not a young person had volunteered, suggesting the employability effect is far from guaranteed.

High levels of unemployment are only compounding the need for extra-curricular experience and this means the need is not restricted to those new to the job market. Many graduates several years out of higher education remain willing to take unpaid internships given the scarcity of graduate-level jobs, with the former becoming increasingly competitive. At the other end of the scale, many older people may volunteer in order to diversify their work lives, like considering a career change or seeking professional development for example. In this context, volunteering can offer a great way for people to pursue other goals and interests that may not be met by their primary paid employment. For retirees meanwhile, volunteering offers a chance to revive aspects of their career that they enjoyed.

More disturbingly, unpaid work has also been introduced as a requirement to obtain Jobseeker's allowance. Those claiming the allowance will be obliged to

¹⁵ Thorne, R (2013) *The virtues of volunteering* <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/student-life/the-virtues-of-volunteering-8774013.html> Accessed April 30th 2014

¹⁶ Intern Aware and Unite the Union (2013) *Interns in the Voluntary Sector: Time to end exploitation*

¹⁷ vInformed (2008) *Youth volunteering: Attitudes and perspectives.*

carry out a six month unpaid work placement or risk losing it.¹⁸ Such work may be taken in a number of industries and the government is encouraging charities to take part in the scheme. However, critics argue that there is no evidence that such schemes will encourage employability and that they will instead reduce the number of paid jobs. Many in the third sector argue more specifically against charities utilising this type of resource, not only out of ethical discomfort, but also for the detrimental impact it may have on the ethos of volunteering more broadly.¹⁹

Overall – and despite the common belief that volunteering can help enhance employment options – research conducted by the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC) has found that the connection between volunteering and employment is more complicated than first assumed.²⁰ Although there was some evidence that volunteering improved employability for some people, this was highly dependent on who the individual was and how often they volunteered. When looking at age, the TSRC found that 45-60 year olds received the most positive affect on employment, while there was no such positive correlation between volunteering and employment for young people and students.

The increasingly complex and intense nature of job market competition thereby introduces new challenges to the volunteering landscape. While skills and career development always played a role in volunteer motivation, for young people and the under/unemployed there is an increasing level of perceived necessity to source unpaid work that promises CV-enhancing experiences.

It is therefore more vital than ever that volunteer managers understand and empathise with the pressures that bring prospective volunteers to their door. They must ensure that they design roles that will attract motivated candidates and create win-win situations for both charity and job-seeker. Any individual or charity that thinks it's 'all about them' will be creating a recipe for disappointment. The ideal volunteering opportunity makes sure that both the individual and the charity get what they want from the partnership.

¹⁸ Information Daily (2014) 'Government 'Workfare' scheme is 'forced unpaid labour'
<http://www.theinformationdaily.com/2014/04/28/government-workfare-scheme-is-forced-unpaid-labour>
Accessed (30th April 2014)

¹⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/oct/14/george-osborne-volunteering-not-free>; <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/oct/15/volunteering-distinction-help-to-work>

²⁰ Third Sector Research Centre (2013), 'Link between volunteering and employment 'complicated' says new research'

A report of many parts

This is our second major report on volunteering. We published the 21st Century Volunteer in 2005. It was our most popular free report for many years, but over time many things in the world of volunteering, charities and the wider economic, social and politics climate have changed.

In the summer of 2013 we decided to update the report and produce a new edition. Perhaps inevitably the more we looked at the data, the more people we talked to, and the more we looked at the trends an entirely new report emerged. In doing so we had enough data and ideas to create a longer report than we normally write. Inspired by Dickens we decided to serialise the new report into several parts. These are:

- Part 1 – the political and social landscape for volunteering (published early August 2014)
- **Part 2 – volunteering trends over the last decade**
- **Part 3 – Harnessing volunteer motivations**
- Part 4 – the changing mechanics of volunteering
- Part 5 – Engaging the young, the old and the family to volunteer
- Part 6 – How do we manage the 21st Century Volunteer
- Part 7 – Conclusions and recommendations

At the end of the process we will publish the report as a single document, having ironed out any kinks and gremlins that might have emerged during the process.

A report like this comes about because of the work of many people apart from the authors. Particular thanks go to Rachel Egan and Thea Mueller, Kate Cranston-Turner and Bijal Rama. We also are hugely appreciative of all the people who filled in our volunteer manager survey, and even more so of those who took the time to be interviewed. Contact joe.saxton@nfpSynergy.net if you have any queries, congratulations or complaints!

About nfpSynergy

nfpSynergy is a research consultancy dedicated to the not-for-profit sector. Our aim is to provide the ideas, the insights and the information to help non-profits thrive. We run syndicated tracking surveys and carry out bespoke projects. We are widely recognised as one of the leaders in non-profit market research.

We survey a range of audiences, including the general public, journalists, MPs and Lords, young people and regional audiences in the UK and Ireland. Each year we also deliver around 50 projects for non-profit clients. We carry out focus groups, conduct face-to-face and telephone depth interviews, run workshops and perform small and large-scale desk research projects.