

Strategies to Improve Volunteer Retention at 1040 Initiative

Lydia M. Rivers

Virginia Tech Polytechnical Institute and State University

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Richard J. Rateau, Committee Chair

Karen A. Vines

Alise C. Svihla

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Abstract

Volunteerism has played a major role worldwide, benefiting and helping many across the globe (Connors, 2012). A key component to volunteerism is the importance of volunteer retention. Volunteer retention is an imperative component of nonprofit organizations, because many nonprofits rely on volunteers to provide services (Unkefer, 2016). If the management of volunteers is consistent in their efforts to retain volunteers, organization leaders can begin focusing their efforts elsewhere. Throughout this study a focus was placed on the volunteers of the program in hopes to gain a better understanding of their motives for staying involved in the organization. A program evaluation was conducted to decipher strategies that improve retention within a faith-based non-profit organization, 1040 Initiative (1040i). The search for the most effective strategies to improve the retainment of volunteers requires a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach that is based on a theoretical implication was used to interpret the current strategies of the program to ensure effectiveness. Interviews were conducted to compare current strategies and implement new strategies to improve retention among 1040i volunteers. The interview process allows for greater insight as personal experiences and observations were shared by the volunteers (Rowley, 2012). Emerging themes developed throughout the process providing valuable information that can be used for program growth in the area of volunteer retention.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Volunteerism has played a major role in facing the nation's challenges, as it has benefited and continues to benefit many across the globe (Connors, 2012). An astounding number of approximately 63 million Americans volunteer according to the Corporation for National Community Service (2018); out of the 63 million Americans, a combined effort of 7.9 billion hours of service are committed per year. Additionally, of the 7.9 billion hours, 34 percent of these volunteer efforts are used to help religiously purposed organizations. "The social phenomenon of volunteerism has had enormous positive effects on individuals, their families and communities, and entire cultures for well over two centuries in the United States and for at least half a century in Western Europe and other areas around the globe" (Connors, 2012, p. 48). Volunteering is both beneficial for the helper as well as the helped showing both direct and indirect positive benefits (Grimm & Dietz, 2018). Volunteerism through non-profits have provided many great benefits; however, these programs also face great challenges they must overcome to continue positively impacting their communities.

In order for the non-profit programs to be successful, there is an emphasis on the amount of community support they must gain. The strength of these types of organizations rely heavily on dedicated and passionate workers. Unfortunately, recruiting and retaining these individuals is one of the biggest challenges (Cyr, 2018). Retention amongst volunteers is essential because they are the ones who provide the service the organization requires to continue their efforts (Wilson, 2000). Finding the best strategies to improve retention is key so that these non-profit organizations can expend their efforts in other areas that need improvement. Understanding the

importance of volunteer retention is imperative for program success. Retention is dependent on many different notions, such as volunteer motivation, job experience, and recognition to name a few (Connors, 2012). It takes a village to raise a program to the highest standard; looking into the different strategies of how to sustain involvement is essential (Connors, 2012). This project will dive into many different angles and strategies used to improve retention amongst volunteers participating within the 1040i organization.

1040i is a faith-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing a better future by changing the lives of those in West Africa. The program's mission is focused on providing water, health, and education in select villages in Cote D' Ivoire, Africa. A logic model was created to better comprehend the entirety of the mission program (Appendix A). The organization is based in Oklahoma and services those across the world through the help of many willing volunteers. This particular program is different than your typical non-profit as it is based in the United States but aims to provide the basic necessities in another country.

In order for 1040i to strengthen and grow their program, an evaluation should be conducted. An essential element for any organization's success is evaluation. Program evaluation is a key component for any program to gain insight on how to continue growing and developing in areas that need improvement; It also allows an organization to see what is already working (Gargani & Miller, 2016). Evaluation can look at numerous areas of a program, such as, retention, recruitment, and outcomes (Program Evaluation Guide, 2012). In non-profit organizations, it is especially vital to perform an evaluation for non-profits due to the challenges of funding and time management that

consume many of these businesses (Cyr, 2018). When evaluating a nonprofit, the benefit of the feedback should be detailed, providing guidance on how to enhance efficiency and effectiveness to overcome these obstacles.

The purpose of this project is to conduct a program evaluation to decipher strategies that improve volunteer retention within a faith-based non-profit organization, 1040i. Throughout this evaluation of 1040i, interviews were conducted to gain more insight of the strategies currently implemented to retain volunteers and ways in which they can improve. Interviews were “used in conducting qualitative research, in which the researcher is interested in collecting ‘facts’, or gaining insights” (Rowley, 2012, p. 261). Existing strategies that have been researched to be the most effective within similar organizations were used to compare with responses from the interviews. The significance of this project is that volunteerism creates better lives for people and the only way they can be successful is through retention (Holdsworth, 2010). Understanding this concept is imperative.

Definition of Key Terms

- 1040i: an international humanitarian non-profit organization who focuses on improving health, water, and education in West Africa
- Faith-based non-profit: a nonprofit organization that is developed on religiously purposed intentions
- Non-profit organization: an organization that provides services without government funding utilizing volunteer service

- Organization: A structured group or team of people who are working towards the same goal or purpose.
- Program Evaluation: A method of study that examines how effective a program is and develops ways to improve or inform different strategies.
- Retention: The willingness of an individual to continue participating and offering services for an organization.
- Strategy: A plan to achieve a goal
- Volunteer: An individual who provides their services to a cause
- Volunteerism: the act of voluntarily providing services, skills, and monetary donations

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to conduct a program evaluation to decipher strategies that improve retention within a faith-based non-profit organization, 1040i. Finding strategies to improve retention amongst the volunteers of 1040i will enhance the program and allow them to focus their effort in other areas of the organization, such as recruitment, program planning, activities, etc. This evaluation included six semi-structured interviews that provided great insight into the program from a volunteer experience which will assist in aligning current strategies. The program evaluation objective was:

- Describe the strategies to improve volunteer retention within 1040i.

Limitations of Project

There are a few limitations of this project. First, as the interviewer, I participated with half of the participants on the volunteer mission trip in 2018, bias may have been

created. Because I had a previous relationship with some of the volunteers, they may have felt that their anonymity was not being upheld. For this reason, bias towards positive and negative answers could have been an issue.

The second limitation may have also created bias during the interview process. I had such a positive experience on the trip and currently maintain many positive relationships with the organization's leaders and volunteers involved. For this reason, many of the responses were favorable possibly, because I brought a perspective that influenced the participants.

The last limitation is the little experience I have interviewing participants. Conducting the interviews was a learning process as this was the first time I have done so. Half of the volunteers, however, were familiar; all of the volunteers were very eager to participate which made the interview process smooth.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To answer the research objective, it is important to understand these four key areas:

- What is program evaluation?
- What is volunteer retention?
- Why is volunteer retention so critical for the organization?
- Existing Strategies

These four key areas are important for laying down the foundation to support the research topic, providing evidence and making connections between sources (Cisco, 2014).

What is Program Evaluation?

Program evaluation is a great tool for many organizations to improve the quality of their programs. Program evaluation is “the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future program development” (<https://www.cdc.gov/eval/guide/introduction/index.htm>). There are many different types of program evaluations; for the sake of this project, a process evaluation was conducted. Process evaluations are critical in understanding contextual factors that impact intervention implementation (Limbani, Goudge, Joshi, & Maar, 2019). There is a great need for program evaluations amongst many organizations and programs. So many models and frameworks have been introduced and implemented within organizations which makes evaluation so important.

There is a common fear among many program leaders to conduct an evaluation; however, it is essential that it occurs to address concerns that could be preventing

growth within the organization (Metz, 2007). Evaluation is not always picking out what is not working but learning from what is working and sharing that knowledge with other organizations. This knowledge assists in deciding what strategies and techniques to use to improve program effectiveness. Value is a deciding concept when evaluation of a volunteer program is being conducted. The needs of the stakeholders can help interpret the purpose which is a good measuring tool for measuring the value of a volunteer (Connors, 2012). Gaining a little more knowledge of the stakeholders' intentions allows the evaluator to comprehend motivating factors that are a primary cause of retention.

When conducting evaluations for recruitment and retention, there are seven critical factors for success (Dolence, 1991, p.18).

1. The first factor is "the evaluation must be guided by a succinct charge stating the intent, scope, and methodology to be used in the process" (Dolence, 1991)." The word succinct in this first step means a focused or "to-the-point" effort. Retention of volunteers is the focal point of this particular evaluation.
2. The second key is "the evaluation must consider the key academic policies, procedures, and issues relating to recruitment and retention if it is to be helpful in decision making" (Dolence, 1991). It is important throughout this evaluation that an extra emphasis on the policies, procedures, and issues relating to retention must be taken into account. When dealing with a qualitative methodology these particular factors have great influence. "The research questions and data used must relate directly to the intent and scope of the evaluation to be performed" (Dolence, 1991).

3. This third critical factor states that the research question has to reflect directly to the topic of interest and must make sense in providing direction throughout the process. There is plenty of research discussing how to form a question/objective that provides clarity.
4. The fourth factor is “the people involved must be given an opportunity to participate in the evaluation, review findings, and offer responses” (Dolence, 1991). Direct interviews with the volunteers involved were implemented. Insightful information is gained when the people involved have the opportunity to provide their experiences. That first-hand information will provide a different perspective.
5. The fifth factor in conducting evaluations is “the information technology support systems must be maintained to provide appropriate, accurate, and available data, as well as tools for analysis” (Dolence, 1991). Accuracy of the information provided through surveys and research is imperative. Incorrect information can skew the results and outcomes of the evaluation.
6. “The evaluation should be initiated as part of ongoing strategic planning” (Dolence, 1991). This sixth key is evident in the fact that the evaluation is needed for growth. The evaluation allows for the director to gain insight on what is working, what is not working, and be able to make changes to improve.
7. The last of the seven factors is to make sure the “results of evaluation must be shared and acted on appropriately” (Dolence, 1991). As mentioned previously, the purpose of an evaluation is for the bettering of a program. Therefore, delivery of the information found should be presented in an appropriate manner.

What is Volunteer Retention?

Volunteer retention is defined as when a volunteer remains committed and involved in an organization from when they first start their service (Ellis & Jackson, 2015). Because volunteers do not get a paycheck and are voluntarily providing services, there must be different ways to gain their commitment (Garner & Garner, 2010). It is an important factor for nonprofit organizations to not ignore this challenge (Mutawa, 2015). Retention is imperative for a program to reach its highest level of achievement. Maintaining a high retention rate allows for more room to grow as an organization. The more experience a volunteer or employee gains, the more valuable they are to the organization. This experience allows for the volunteers to perform better on specific tasks as well as help newcomers become more acclimated to the program.

When considering volunteer retention, a major key is knowing what volunteers to retain (Ellis & Jackson, 2015). For example, a college student may use volunteerism as a means for career advancement through interning; whereas, a senior citizen chooses to participate in that same program for socialization. There are numerous reasons explaining volunteer motives and trends between generational cohorts the dive deeper into this explanation. Understanding why a volunteer chooses to participate during the recruitment process, allows the leader to interpret ways to sustain involvement.

The term of empowerment has been shown to increase retention. Empowerment is defined as the power, right, or authority given to someone to do something (Merriam-Webster, n.d). A study has shown that empowerment has been linked to have increased feelings of personal commitment and loyalty to the volunteer program by participants which resulted in greater retention and effectiveness (Connors, 2012). Additionally, the

author continues with this sense of empowerment states stronger connections to an organization from the volunteer that enhances their participation. Clearly communicated details of the organization's procedures and requirements can enhance volunteer retention (Cyr, 2018). And, retention is a useful measure of volunteer satisfaction (Ellis and Jackson, 2015). Volunteer satisfaction is based on multitude of factors - from communication, value, motives, and more (Garner & Garner, 2010). There are numerous studies of different strategies to increase volunteer retention, but an evident gap in the focus of volunteer retention in African missions. There are also limitations in a single explanation of why people continue to volunteer based of the differences in policies and practice (Locke, Ellis, & Smith, 2003).

Why is volunteer retention so critical for the organization?

Retention is a key component for many reasons among programs across the nation. Because many nonprofit organizations rely heavily on volunteers to provide their services- whether it is through offering their skills, fundraising, or sharing time and offering support- volunteer retention is critical (Unkefer, 2016). Funding for nonprofits is one of the biggest challenges and if the management of volunteers is consistent and effective, they can spend money elsewhere. There is a common tendency to focus time on recruitment and lack attending to retention.

Building relationships have been linked to positively influencing retention (Reamon, 2016). This connection provides a greater sense of purpose, which is what influences the volunteer to continue their efforts (Connors, 2012). Regardless of generational cohorts, when volunteers feel value, they are more likely to dedicate their services more. Each volunteer offers a unique set of skills and experience that can help

push towards growth within an organization (Connors, 2012). Retention is crucial as experienced volunteers can help newcomers become more accustomed to the program. Another reason retention is so important is so is the experience gained by the volunteers involved can assist in program effectiveness. Searching for the motives of the volunteers can make a difference in the retention rates.

Existing Strategies

Retention for non-profit organization is becoming more critical than recruitment because of the fluctuation in volunteer involvement in recent years (Reamon, 2016). There has been a significant decline in the percentage of Americans who volunteer and give annually, despite the record high total in volunteer hours and charitable dollars (Grimm & Dietz, 2018). For this reason, retention is essential to ensure current volunteers are satisfied and their philanthropic goals are being fulfilled.

A huge key to figuring out how to retain volunteers is to understand the volunteer motivations and trends (Connors, 2012). Researching who the volunteers are and what drives them is imperative for volunteer sustainability (Connors, 2012). Research has shown numerous reasons behind the motives of volunteers to continue participating from values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective (Turner, 2016). Deciphering these volunteer motives has a direct correlation with the generational cohorts. Every person is not the same, but trends are relevant among each of these generations; therefore, understanding their experiences is important in noting their motive and values (Howard, 2016).

Another strategic method is volunteer engagement. Volunteer engagement has been studied to be one of the most important strategies for volunteer retention (Vecina,

Chacon, Sueiro, & Barron, 2011). Engagement is a positive concept that strengthens both areas of volunteer recruitment and retention. Engagement develops connection which is a necessity for many volunteers. If volunteer engagement is executed, there is a likely increase in satisfaction and organizational commitment (Vecina et al., 2011). Engagement assists in building lasting relationships, creating collaboration opportunities, and implementing strategies to help keep the volunteers interested and involved in the cause (Burger, 2018). Part of keeping the volunteer engaged means simplifying sign-up and registrations and keep schedules flexible (Burger, 2018). Another essential existing component for engagement according to research is providing volunteers with the opportunities to use their skills and assets (VolunteerHub, 2017).

Another key existing strategy is communication (Burger, 2018). Keeping communication channels open and flowing both ways allows for feedback which can provide valuable information for the program. Communicating the volunteer's impact allows for them to feel appreciated and needed (Kirwan, 2013). Keeping the volunteers aware of their impact provides them with a sense of purpose. Purposeful volunteering is empowering (Horoszowski, 2017). Empowerment is key for retainment and recruitment. If volunteers are able to connect their passions and purpose of giving and volunteer actions, they will be more likely to consistently stay involved. This sense of connection between the volunteer and the organization is vital concerning retention.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

When evaluating the strategies to improve retention within 1040i, the grounded theory design is the most effective approach. This particular design is the most

appropriate for this qualitative research as an explanation is supported through an interactive process that can provide a general understanding of the strategies implemented (Plano Clark, Creswell, Hanson, & Morales, 2007). The orientation of grounded theory design has a purpose to reach an “end point” that is used to explain the project’s theoretical foundation. Based on the participants’ response and the overall observation of the nonprofit program, a “pattern theory” is what was concluded. These types of theories represent interconnected thoughts or parts linked to a whole (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Generally, a good program is based on a sound theoretical model (Royse, Thyer, & Padget, 2010). The current strategies used by 1040i to retain volunteers is represented and directly correlated to a pattern that employs a certain two-factor theory by Herzberg (Alshmemri, Shahwan-Akl, & Maude, 2017). Additionally, the Herzberg’s two-factor theory can be implemented as a foundation to finding the best strategies in retaining volunteers within the organization. The theory applies directly to the interviewees responses as they provide evidence that supports the strategies that are currently implemented and will be a guide in the search for improvements.

The theoretical framework of the current strategies of retention of 1040i are supported by Herzberg’s two-factor theory. This theory illustrates the motivations of volunteers by observing factors that cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Mutawa, 2015). Within this theory there are two factors that are compared: motivation factors (intrinsic) and hygiene factors (extrinsic) (Damij, Levnajic, Rejec Skrt, & Sulkan, 2015). “Motivation factors include achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement and the possibility for growth” (Alshmemri, et al., 2017, p. 12). Throughout the interview process, questions directed towards the volunteers focused on many of

their personal motivational factors. Some of which include the intent of their motive for volunteering, the benefits and rewards, the value placed on the work done, and their expectations of growth within the organization. On the contrary are the hygiene factors. “Hygiene factors include company policies and administration, relationship with supervisors, interpersonal relations, working conditions and salary” (Alshmemri, et al., 2017, p.12).

It is important to note that motivation and hygiene factors do not overlap. Herzberg concluded that satisfaction is not the opposite of dissatisfaction- the absence of dissatisfaction does not mean satisfaction and vice versa (Damij, et al., 2015). The author also states when hygienic needs are met it will decrease dissatisfaction, but not cannot motivate employees. And the author continues with, meeting the needs of the motivation factors are more crucial to programs as they have been proven to lead more to job satisfaction due to individual needs being fulfilled. Figure 1-1 illustrates the two-factor theory in a manner that expresses these principles.



Figure 1-1. Hertzberg's Two-Factor Principles. Note. From <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/wmintrobusiness/chapter/reading-two-factor-theory/>

This theory is primarily built on paying jobs, therefore, some of the significant content of the hygiene factors may not apply to the nonprofit organizations (Alshmemri, et al., 2017). However, because of the similarities of previous studies using this theory for their organizations, this theory is highly applicable to the 1040i organization. The current strategies in place cater more towards the motivational side of the theory with less emphasis on the hygiene-focused factors. The volunteers are forced to grow accustomed to the working conditions in a third-world country, there is no pay, and coworker relations fluctuate from year to year due to new faces of volunteers. Because of the feedback provided through interviews, a deduction of the strategy plan over the years was led by motivational factors such as personal growth, recognition, responsibility, and the work itself. Many of the interviewees expressed these motivation factors in their responses which has led to their satisfaction of being involved with 1040i.

Additionally, much of the research found of retention strategies for volunteer programs connect to the motivation factors of this theory. As the organization has grown in West Africa through the modernization of the environment, hygiene factors began to make more of an impact. 1040i is based in the U.S, but services parts of West Africa. The working conditions are vastly different in a third-world country than many of the volunteers recruited are used to. However, as the two-factor theory predicts, this was not a facet influencing volunteer satisfaction. Because 1040i has grown so much, more buildings were established, clean water became more prevalent within the village, preparation before the trip was organized properly which have all minimized dissatisfaction amongst volunteers, As the organization continues to grow and improve, volunteer retention will follow. This theory provides a framework for improvement of new strategies to implement within the program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Success was measured by the quality of the organization through a series of evaluation questions focused in a grounded theory design (Plano Clark, et al., 2007). This particular design was the most appropriate for this qualitative research as an explanation was supported through an interactive process; this process provides a general understanding of the strategies that will derive from this program evaluation (Plano Clark, et al., 2007). Qualitative documents were collected that will provide us with a greater understanding of the organization's strategies for volunteer retention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Generally, when conducting qualitative research, interviews were the best form for gathering information. Interviews provide a foundation for the knowledge of facts, gaining insights, and understanding opinions, attitudes, processes, etc. (Rowley, 2012).

Designing and planning Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview allows for open-ended responses for more in-depth information (Rowley, 2012). The interview was directed to define the core phenomenon which was comprised of 10 open-ended questions with the goal of eliciting views and opinions. The interview questions were designed to answer the research objective and developed on the basis of the logic model (Appendix A). The use of probes was applied when necessary. A compilation of two to three warm-up questions were used to build rapport with each participant. Through this inductive research, comparing this research topic with previous research allows for a clear claim about what is new in the findings (Rowley, 2012). With that being said, the 10 interview questions were adapted to the original research objective.

Prompt questions were written and added in as a guide to ensure the interview stayed on topic and the interviewee stayed engaged (Rowley, 2012). A 15-minute window was issued for each participant for the interview process. Before the interviews began, the questions were re-examined to prevent jargon (Rowley, 2012). A pilot interview was conducted with a fellow peer to eliminate and remodel any questions that may have caused confusion. Pilot interviews can provide valuable insights by identifying potential problems the interviewee might run into, which will increase the likelihood of success (Kim, 2010). After changes were made, the interviews began (Appendix B).

Choosing Participants

The Co-President of the 1040i organization provided a list of volunteers who were willing to participate in the interview process. She was responsible for sending out and obtaining the information volunteers received in preparation for the interviews. She provided great insight of the program and their need concerning volunteer retention due to her position within the program. A list was provided of volunteers that have been involved from a wide range of years of experience. Stratified sampling was the method of choice. From the stratified sample, purposive sampling occurred to ensure that there was an even number of participants with great and little experience. Six volunteers were chosen for interviews; four who have volunteered for more than two years and two who have volunteered for two years or less. This sampling method provided the best representation of the overall population of volunteers by ensuring each subgroup was represented.

Conducting Interviews

An email (Appendix C) was sent out to the participants indicating who the researcher was and a brief overview of the purpose behind the evaluation. This email also was used to obtain consent which assured confidentiality. After the participant agreed to participate, a second email (Appendix C) was provided to schedule a 15-minute appointment for the interview protocol to be administered to the volunteer via phone call. The information was audio-recorded and transcribed with rich notes during the interview process. Immediately after the interview concluded, the researcher listened to the recording again in order to transcribe interviews into further detail to analyze and organize into a Microsoft Word database. The interviewer listened to the voices and emotions for transcriptions.

Making Sense of Interview Data

Coding the interviews through *Tesch's Eight Steps in the Coding Process* was the next step of the data analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Two of the interviews were transcribed verbatim in discrete detail until it reached saturation and the remaining interviews were listened to in minute detail (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam Burroughs, & Jinks, 2018) and rich notes taken. Saturation is reached when no new data is being discovered, rather repetitive information is attained (Saunders, et al., 2018). Many of the participants' responses began to sound similar. The information inducted from the interviews were analyzed and coded. The grounded theory approach found emerging themes that assisted in deciphering the best strategies for volunteer retention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview allowed a dissection of motives, which aided in condensing the best strategies for retention. A paradigm and

model presented itself allowing a greater comprehension of whether or not the current strategies to retain volunteers was effective.

This project was submitted to Virginia Tech IRB (Appendix D) and determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations. The subjects who willingly participated in the project were provided a consent form establishing the protection of their Human rights. Participation was completely voluntary and could have been withdrawn at any point throughout the process.

Reflexivity Statement

Evaluating this program has been a great joy for me as I have participated in their June mission to Cote D'Ivoire, Africa in 2018. I developed a passion for mission work through this two-week endeavor. Being able to experience first-hand a third-world country has changed my perspective of life, which has sparked an interest in pursuing non-profit work.

Since my youth, helping my mom at the local soup kitchen, to now volunteering with many organizations in college, I have always enjoyed lending a helping hand when I could. I know the importance of giving back and helping those who are less fortunate. As a student-athlete, managing your schedule to volunteer can be difficult, but it is very important and rewarding. The impact that volunteerism has on a person's life is powerful and something that should be experienced by all. As an aspiring coach, teaching my athletes that there is more to life than sport is a lesson that I want to instill. Participating in two basketball programs where one prioritized volunteering, while the other did not, I

saw a huge difference in the players' genuine appreciation of the scholarships we have been afforded. For this reason, I think it is imperative to schedule in volunteer hours as a leader of my future teams.

Exploring this topic has allowed me to help a program that I am very passionate about in comparing the best retention strategies. Conducting this program evaluation has also allowed me to understand a few key elements of non-profit organizations, so that I can better lay down a foundation. Understanding the entirety of what goes into a program brings me a new outlook on how each element is important and cannot be overlooked for a successful program.

Chapter 4: Findings & Conclusions

Based on the grounded theory approach, four emerging themes were found and organized to provide answers to the research objective:

- Describe strategies to improve volunteer retention within 1040i.

This section contains results from six interviews with 1040i volunteers of different demographics. Of the six participants, two were male and four were female, each varying anywhere between two years of experience to fifteen years. The generational cohort consisted of Gen X, Y, and Z. Underlying themes from the findings included the following:

- Belief in the organization's mission
- Communication between the organization leadership and volunteers is critical
- Volunteer engagement that illustrates its impact
- Enrichment of personal life

These four overarching themes emerged from the six interviews yielded through the participants' comments and emotions behind their responses. All six participants were very eager to talk about the organization. Many were very enthusiastic about participating in this interview. Quotes from the interview participants are numerically labeled as V# to protect confidentiality of the participant.

Belief in the Organization's Mission

The first theme that emerged was a sense of belief that the organization's mission is being carried out. For example, one participant claimed:

1040i has taught me that there's no such thing as 'the middle of nowhere'.

Everybody is from somewhere, and they matter. It may seem like the bush of Africa

is the middle of nowhere, but it's not... they are all 'somebodies' and they matter.

(V5)

While another believed in the mission as:

I have every confidence in the world in Mike (President). His heart. His mission.

His vision. I think he has illustrated that with longevity. And the things he has

been able to accomplish always matched his goal that he has set in the

beginning: to make a difference in that country. (V2)

Another participant said:

I think the organization is extremely impactful to the people because it meets the needs where they live. It touches in the areas that otherwise they wouldn't have

the opportunity to have that touch. The medical expertise that Mike brings over

there every year is not found in that country normally. And the ability for clean

water in the area where we go and bring the filters is not available. And the

education, the civil war that's happened in the middle of where we were going.

One of the things they did was tear down all the schools because they

represented the government. So, Mike has had a part in rebuilding many, many

schools and making sure the kids have a place to get education. And also,

provide materials for them to get the education. And I think that is one of the keys

to Mike's ministry: education for the future of that country. Educate the children in

the right way, with the right moral upbringing, I think is going to make a huge

change in that country and the next generation. (V1)

Communication between the Organization Leadership and Volunteers is Critical

The second theme revealed was communication between the organization leadership and volunteers is critical. For example, one volunteer shared in response to how prepared they feel before making the trip:

Yeah, I believe they do a great job. Sabrina (Co-President) is very in touch through uhm, being able to meet and things like that. And she always sends out a cultural awareness email, you know? To make people aware of what to do and what not to do there. And then, from going every year I've learned what to expect. I feel like that was the biggest preparation for me: was actually being there seeing. (V2)

While another participant exclaimed with much enthusiasm:

Very prepared! Because I found that each year I know what to take, I have my list on my phone. Each year we add something that we think we might need that we see could help them more. Overall they do a great job letting us know the goals of each trip. (V1)

In contrast to those responses another participant who is fairly new with two years of experience expressed a different perspective as this participant desired better communication saying:

Without Sabrina (Co-President), the communication was lacking. And some of it was the Pandemic here and not knowing. In my opinion, Mike (President) does need somebody else that does do the communication for him. I think it is very imperative going forward that they always have that person in charge of

communication to your volunteers. I did not realize how much communication she (Sabrina) gave, until it wasn't there. (V3)

Volunteer engagement that illustrates their impact

Volunteer engagement illustrates the volunteers' impact is the third theme that emerged from the interviews. In response to sharing their impacts and their added value to the mission, one participant mentioned:

Because we go back to the same area and same region, we do really get to see that there has been positive change. My impact is helping with the medical team. I mean every single year that I know of, there has been at least one patient who has come back to say hello, from the medical treatment that they've received. And when I say, "At least one," sometimes there's ten. They know, they hear that we're coming, and they make their way to come and greet us and thank us. And just update us on their progress, on their health. And it's amazing to see the people that you've helped come back and thank you and explain how it changed their life. (V5)

A second participant spoke of their impact by sharing:

We saw such joy in the midst of such great poverty, you know? And how the impact that we could have, in both sharing help and clean water. And education went hand in hand with uhm reaching out like the hands of Jesus, you know? And just making a difference in somebody's life. (V6)

While another participant expressed:

Umm, well I actually value working in the pharmacy. There is a little bitty hospital there in the bush of Africa the missionary built over 50 years ago and so I...we,

take all of our medications and I set up a pharmacy there. And so, I love it because I also collect gifts and take them, so I give everybody prescription and a gift. It makes them feel better physically and then also emotionally when they get a gift. (V1)

While many volunteers directly impact the Ivorians with their services, another participant saw the importance of their impact indirectly stating:

I think I have an impact on the program. It's important to keep the team healthy and working and fed. And to always have clean water, and things for them. It's not the same kind of impact that would be made in the pharmacy or doctors would have in the operation or construction guys putting a new roof on a school or something like that. It is a part of it that if they don't eat right then they can't get out and do what they are supposed to do. (V2)

Enriching Personal Life

Enriching personal life was the last theme that developed from the interviews. Many participants shared how 1040i has impacted and benefited their lives. For example, one of the newer participants said:

I fell in love with missionary work and I felt called and that was my passion. A couple of years ago when I had the opportunity to do a project for Girl Scouts. Everything just fell together, like, 1040i was what I felt like I needed to be joining and doing my project with. It actually is also the reason I decided to major in Nursing in college. (V4)

While a seasoned participant shared:

It has changed my view of people. Of poverty. It's actually... May (wife) and I have downsized, because what we have seen there. We look at what we have, and what we waste, and what we accumulate and think of what is wanted. The people in the Ivory Coast do so much with so little that it has enabled us to not be so much consumer-driven. It has also changed us in how we see people, and how we treat people. All of this chaos right now with prejudice and racism and things like that would be so impacted by everyone seeing what real poverty and what real joy is like. I don't know, I think it has changed our view of people in many circumstances. (V2)

Another volunteer expressed the value of relationship stating:

You know, I of course I love helping all the people there in the Ivory Coast when we go, but it is really awesome to be able to reconnect with the same locals, the same Ivorians year after year: Teachers at the local villages, the pastors at the local villages, the other Ivorians that volunteer on the trip also. You know, to get to see them every year is... you're just kind of building on the legacy. It's not just a splash in the pan, it's not just one shot. It's year after year going back and investing in that area of the world. (V5)

Another volunteer explained and summed up what many others agreed upon "Being able to help others and besides yourself and experiencing the different cultures and truly making an impact to make other people's lives better. The more you help others, the more you help yourself." (V3)

The last participant concluded a life lesson that was learned:

1040i has taught me that there's no such thing as 'the middle of nowhere'.

Everybody is from somewhere, and they matter. It may seem like the bush of Africa is the middle of nowhere, but it's not... they are all 'somebodies' and they matter. (V6)

Discussion

The interviewees were extremely helpful in providing feedback and their willingness to participate was remarkable. Many of the participants responded quickly and were very excited to share their personal experiences and opinions towards the 1040i organization. Their excitement made the interview process, which was new to me, very smooth and easy to conduct. Half of the participants volunteered on the same mission trip that I embarked on which made building rapport instant; however, it could have possibly skewed the data as they may have provided bias answers-positively and negatively.

Throughout the interviews there were four themes that have been established:

1. Belief in the organization's mission
2. Communication between the organization leadership and volunteers is critical
3. Volunteer engagement that illustrates its impact
4. Enrichment of personal life

These four emerging themes were not surprising as they aligned appropriately with Herzberg's two-factor theory (Alshmemri, et al., 2017), specifically the motivation factors for job satisfaction. One of the things I was surprised to learn was the assumption that the working conditions would affect the volunteers' motives to continue working.

However, this was inaccurate, as working conditions were rarely mentioned. Many of

the themes that emerged connected to existing retention strategies that have been researched to be some of the most effective.

Belief in the mission of the program was a common theme coded in the findings. Being able to see the long-term impact the organization was important for the volunteers to desire staying engaged. "Sustainability" is a term that was mentioned in one of the interviews (V5) that was a key to the growth of the program. Because of passion exuded from the president of 1040i, the contagion of his will to develop and help these communities has influenced the volunteers' desire to be a part. Many of the volunteers who have been on the trip are able to see the both the tangible and non-tangible benefits of the community, which contributes to their belief in the mission. Many of the volunteers that were interviewed were extremely passionate about the program which has led them to also inspire others to join the mission in the U.S as they advocate across the country.

The second theme was communication between the organizational leaders and the volunteer is critical. Five out of six of the participants that were interviewed felt very prepared and were extremely satisfied with how communication lines were open. Equipping volunteers with the resources, training, and communication to be successful has been studied to assist in retaining individuals (Burger, 2018). With a trip that involves countless hours of preparation, it can be difficult to organize and ensure that every volunteer is accounted for and have their needs met. As previously mentioned, five out of six of the volunteers were satisfied with communication; however, one of the volunteers was not. The co-president is the one who has been the bridge between the president and the volunteers in previous years. She was mentioned as a strength of the

program by one of the volunteers. This year was the first year that she was not in charge of preparation due to personal obligations. With that being said, there was a realization of how much the co-president did for the program in her absence. Another factor that may have caused this miscommunication is the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic prevented the organization from embarking on their July mission. This caused a bit of chaos as the preparation for this mission was planned six months in advance.

The third theme was volunteer engagement that illustrates their impact. A sense of purpose is empowering for many people that volunteer (Horoszowski, 2017). Engagement is imperative for volunteers as it relates to how connected and committed the volunteer feels. When the interviewees were able to confidently communicate their impact and how they were involved, a sense of empowerment was expressed in their voices. There was an obvious sense of feeling appreciated and needed which is due to engagement. Many of the volunteers were able to share their impact- whether big or small- as an important part of reaching the long-term goal of the organization.

The fourth theme involved enrichment of personal life. Research has shown numerous reasons behind the motives of volunteers to continue participating from values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective (Turner, 2016). From the responses, 1040i has enriched many of the volunteers' personal lives. One of the younger and newer participants has chosen a career path to study in college because of how much the trip impacted her, "It actually is also the reason I decided to major in Nursing in college." Another common benefit from the trip that was mentioned by half of the participants was the relationships that were built. The social aspect of the mission seemed to be of significant value. Many of the volunteers who have been

involved for more than five years mentioned the amazing relationships they have because of 1040i:

You know, of course I love helping all the people there in the Ivory Coast when we go, but it is really awesome to be able to reconnect with the same locals, the same Ivorians year after year: Teachers at the local villages, the pastors at the local villages, the other Ivorians that volunteer on the trip also.

Every participant talked about a change of perspective taken away from the trip.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the entirety of the project, concludes with four key strategies that are needed for successful volunteer retention within 1040i: open communication between the leaders and volunteers, belief in the mission, volunteer engagement that illustrates their impact, and enrichment of personal life. These four strategies align symmetrically with the existing strategies of communication, volunteer engagement, and understanding the motivations and trends. The four emerging themes also line up with the motivation factors of Herzberg's two-factor theory which is predicted to lead to volunteer satisfaction (Alshmemri, et al., 2017).

Communication between the organization leaders and volunteers is the one strategy that needed improvement. Communication is key for any good program to be successful, and when there is a lack in this area, problems arise. When communication channels are kept open, there is room for feedback. Communication is key, so making sure there is a consistent "bridge" person to close the gap between the organization leader and volunteers is necessary.

Acknowledgement of the volunteers' work and inclusion of each assists in volunteer engagement efforts. 1040i should continue to make volunteer engagement a priority as well as partnering with many people across the nation to diversify their efforts in improving the quality of life for the people of the Ivory Coast. Allowing the volunteers to use their skills and profession increases engagement and develops this sense of purpose. Every volunteer mentioned some sort of relation they appreciated for staying involved in the organization. One of the many great benefits from staying involved with 1040i, according to the interviewees, is the development of relationships with every individual involved. This enrichment of personal life is just one of the many great benefits that were expressed. 1040i should continue empowering their volunteers through the motivation factors- personal growth, work itself, achievement, responsibility, recognition, and advancement- of Herzberg's two-factor theory (Alshmemri, et al., 2017).

Overall, if the volunteers are satisfied, then retainment is increased, which directly affects the organization long term goal. Early turnover within volunteers can negatively impact 1040i, which is why it is so important to increase efforts in retaining volunteers. 1040i is doing a tremendous job retaining volunteers within the program, however, there is always room to grow. A volunteer mentioned with passion how amazing she thinks the program is and how much more they could do with more help. Keeping people that are so passionate and that devote so much time towards the mission is imperative. A continued effort to exude passion from the leader to the volunteers is important to gain the support needed to expand the mission.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

Future program evaluations similar to this project should consider focusing more on the generational cohort by asking participants their age. When researching the topic of retention rates, there is a significant difference in the numbers of volunteer participation between each generation. One suggestion for restoring retention involved understanding the motive, offering them balance, and recognizing their goals which are all different depending on each generation. The motivations and expectations are important to understand, in order to engage across cohorts (Howard, 2016).

Apprehension of the generations would allow for program leaders to grasp what strategies work best for retainment. Generation X is defined as those born between 1965-1980, which means their age ranges from 40-55 years of age (Dimock, 2019). Generation X is of the largest group who volunteers (Patterson, 2019). Millennials and Generation Z are the future of the face of volunteerism, therefore a need to strategize how to recruit and retain them is crucial (Howard, 2016).

Throughout the study of 1040i volunteer retention, noted were some elements of generational differences within the responses. Many of the participants ranged from Generation X and early Millennial ages and there was one participant from the Generation Z cohort. The Generation Z participant expressed that her devotion to the program sparked future career goals. On the contrary many of the Gen X participants mentioned relational benefits as a means to staying involved. This is a prime example of why it is so important in understanding volunteer motives and trends by generation. There are many other factors that could affect volunteer retainment such as program policies and flexibility of program schedules.

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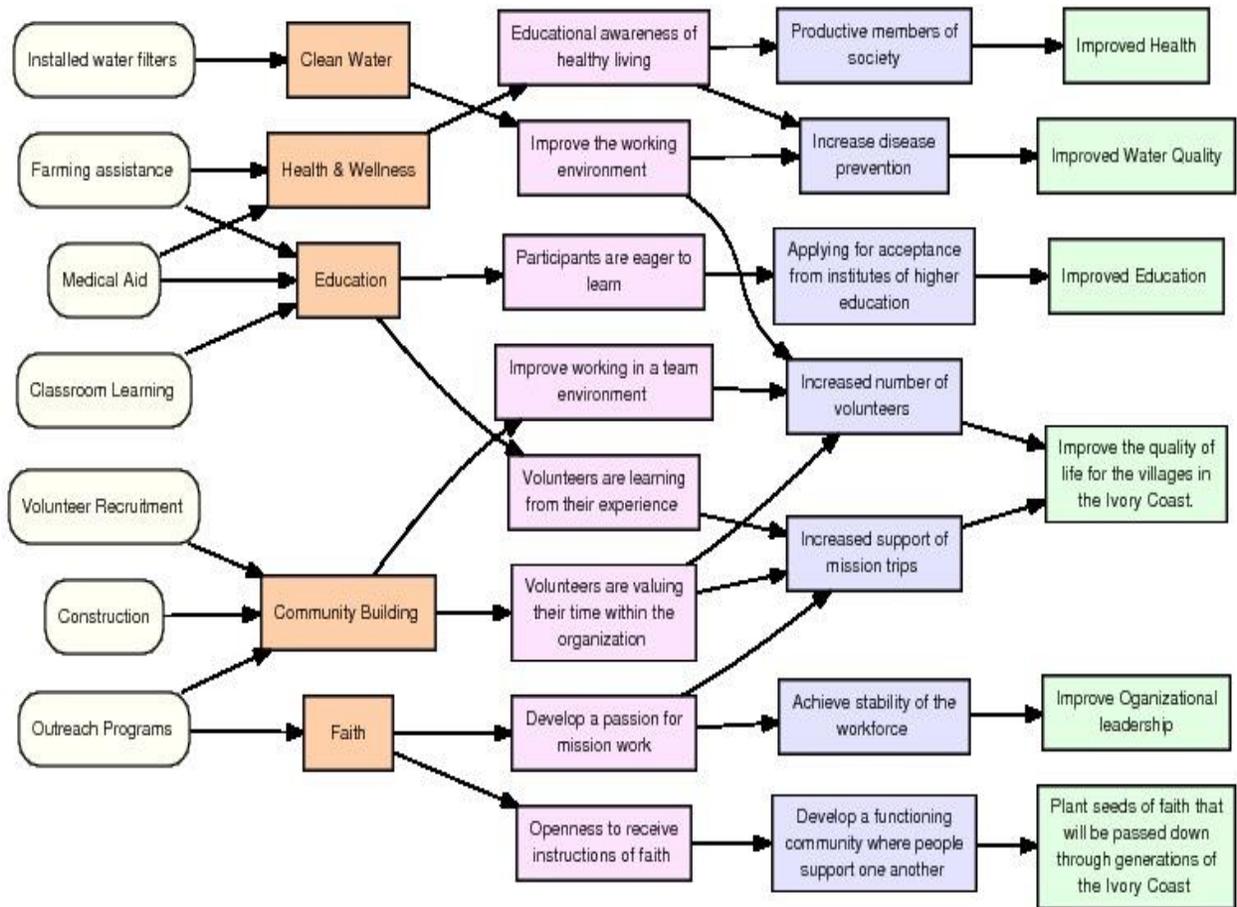
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Appendices

Appendix A- 1040i Pathways Logic Model



Appendix B- Interview Protocol

Program Evaluation of Volunteer Retention within 1040i
Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Protocol

The Interviewer will follow a standard protocol for each interview session that includes:

- Greeting
- Interview Guidelines
- Questions and Answers
- Last-Minute Remarks

Greeting

Hello! Thank you for consenting to be a part of my project as we continue the interview process. My name is Lydia Rivers and I am a Leadership Master's Degree Candidate. As a part of my Virginia Tech Master's Degree project I will be conducting interviews. My graduate project is a program evaluation searching for strategies to improve volunteer retention amongst 1040i. These interviews will provide feedback that will not only guide my project but will also allow for the 1040i organization to enhance its retention methods. Based on your personal experience, please answer the following question below to the best of your abilities.

Interview Guidelines

The entire interview will be recorded and transcribed for data collection and analysis. Your response will remain anonymous. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability. Do you have any questions about your participation in the interview? I will now continue to turn on the recording device.

Interview Questions

Warm-up Questions

1. How did you first find out about 1040i?
2. What drove you to participate?
3. How many years have you participated with 1040i?

Structured Questions

- What experiences do you, as a volunteer of mission work, value the most?
 - What is your motive for working with this particular mission?
- How prepared do you feel before making the trip to do the work?
 - Are you educated properly on what to expect? Are you aware of the working conditions?
- How successful do the volunteers feel the program is on the community?
 - Are you able to see the long-term benefits of the program? If so, do you feel like the work is beneficial to the recipients of the mission?
- How can you tangibly measure the benefits to this community?
- When considering "strength in numbers", how important is it for the program to grow the number of volunteers?

- Is having more volunteers beneficial to the program or is it better to have a small number with experience?
- How confident are you in knowing the long-term goal of the program?
 - What is your take on the program's mission?
- To what extent do you understand the importance of your impact on the program?
- To what extent is the amount of time you give affect the amount of impact you have on the program?
- How satisfied are you with the way the program is being run?
 - What are the strengths of the program and some areas that could grow?
- To what extent is the program benefiting you?
 - What are some of the ways the program has impacted you?

Last Minute Remarks

I greatly appreciate you taking the time to participate in this interview. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share?

***Key:

- Structured Questions
 - Probe Questions

Appendix C- Recruitment Emails

1040i Project Consent



Lydia Rivers <livers1@v... Tue, Jun 23, 12:53 PM (3 days ago)



to Jenny.rhae.schmidt ▾

Hello,

My name is Lydia Rivers, I am currently working towards the completion of my degree by conducting a program evaluation on the retention of volunteers within a nonprofit organization called 1040i. I participated in this program in the summer of 2018 and developed a passion for mission work. I desired to find a way that I could incorporate this program into my final project and have chosen to do so through the evaluation of volunteer retention. Part of this project includes multiple, semi-structured phone interviews with a selection of volunteers from this program. For this study we are engaging in Action Research, seeking to enhance the retainment of volunteers within the organization.

If you have actively volunteered within this program, would you like to help me by participating and being a part of a recorded phone interview? The interview will be conducted by myself and is completely voluntary. It should take no longer than 10-15 minutes.

Sincerely,

Lydia Rivers
livers1@vt.edu

1040i Project Interview Scheduling



Lydia Rivers <livers1@vt.... Tue, Jun 23, 1:07 PM (3 days ago)



to Jenny.rhae.schmidt ▾

Thank you for choosing to participate in my project. As I mentioned in the previous email, I will be conducting a 10-15 minute recorded phone interview. Please let me know the best time to contact you between Wednesday, June 24th and Tuesday, June 30th.

To provide you with a general idea of the questions that will be asked, here are a few:

- What experiences do you, as a volunteer of mission work, value the most?
- What is your motive for working with this particular mission?
- How prepared do you feel before making the trip to do the work?
- Do you feel like you have been educated properly on what to expect?

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

Lydia Rivers
livers1@vt.edu

Appendix D- Human Research Exemption Approval Letter



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
 Research Compliance
 Institutional Review Board
 North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
 300 Turner Street NW
 Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
 540/231-3732
 irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 22, 2020
TO: Richard James Rateau
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 29, 2024)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Strategies to Improve Retention within 1040i
IRB NUMBER: 20-453

Based on the submitted project description and items listed in the Special Instructions section found on Page 2, the Virginia Tech IRB has determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations.

Further review and approval by the Virginia Tech HRPP is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in the submitted project description and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately submit an Amendment to the HRPP for a new determination. Your amendment must include a description of the changes and you must upload all revised documents. At that time, the HRPP will review the submission activities to confirm the original "Not Research" decision or to advise if a new application must be made.

If there are additional undisclosed components that you feel merit a change in this initial determination, please contact our office for a consultation.

Please be aware that receiving a "Not Research" Determination is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. You are NOT to use IRB consent forms or templates for these activities. If you have any questions, please contact the Virginia Tech HRPP office at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu.

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Not Research**
 Protocol Determination Date: **May 22, 2020**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
 An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution