

Associations Evolve:

2022 & BEYOND

Answers

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP ARTICLES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

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Opening the Door to Volunteers

Volunteer burn-out is real and for many associations, we saw that with increasing clarity in the past 18-months.

Interestingly, in one of our smaller associations, we initiated a robust diversity, equity and inclusion committee and program and increased the number of volunteers engaged in our programs. Several global associations reported similar results.

What's the difference between associations struggling and those succeeding?

The difference is these associations responded to the changing volunteer workforce – pre-pandemic – while others are still wedded to the traditional, term-based volunteering.

The difference can be seen in three critical areas: the work we are asking to be done, the time we are requiring and benefit giving that time.

The work: the secret is connecting members to an **issue to rally around** such as addressing diversity and inclusion or in the case of the industrial hygienist's association creating up-to-minute briefings that helped members safely open workplaces.

The time: creating **short-term, impactful volunteer opportunities** like work groups, one-time jobs, and ad hoc advisory councils.

The benefit: **tapping into the immediate needs of members** as they require gaining key technical skills, sharpening leadership skills, or gaining knowledge.

The cracks were already in our volunteer systems pre-pandemic. The 2017 Mutually Beneficial Volunteerism study shared the framework for a strong volunteer program and the ASAE Foresights Volunteering Driver gave us a road map in 2019.

The driver identified two important opportunities available to associations when we reimagine our volunteer programs:

1. Modernizing association volunteering systems to offer more flexible project focused models will provide opportunities that attract younger volunteers.

Such a purpose-oriented approach will be more attractive to incoming generations and career-changers seeking more clearly defined and time-constrained opportunities for meaningful engagement with the association.

2. One of the hot buttons that came out of ForesightWorks is a call to accelerate decision-making. We understand that the digitization and the increasing rate of change is bringing a greater complexity and uncertainty to many of our organizations. Meanwhile, the traditional volunteer board and committees inherently slow down decision-making processes.

So if we want to in essence bring in the next generation, embrace the new technologies and be able to assure that our organizations have what it takes to make the critical decisions in the moment of need, we should take a hard look at the volunteering driver and ask ourselves "How can we take our volunteer game to the next level?".

So, if we want to in essence bring in the next generation, embrace the new technologies and be able to assure that our organisations have what it takes to make the critical decisions in the moment of need, we should take a hard look at the volunteering driver and ask ourselves "How can we take our volunteer game to the next level?".

Volunteers are the heart of our non-profits and changing with their needs supports our needs.



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By Peggy Hoffman, FASAE, CAE.

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