



A Qualitative Study of the Volunteer Mind-Set

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Abstract

Wellington South Community Patrol (WSCP) is an affiliate of the Community Patrols New Zealand (CPNZ) and fits into the safety, security and not-for-profit sectors or industries. Wellington South Community Patrol is registered as a charitable trust, as are most community patrol groups, and they get support in terms of training and funding from CPNZ.

The intention of this study is to understand the reasons individuals volunteer their time and skills for free. The findings will help to recruit, manage and retain volunteers.

The key findings were:

- Volunteers are not in it for the money
- People can be motivated by recognition and rewards
- Volunteer mind-sets can be developed later in life. Many volunteers grow up in families where volunteering is the norm
- The appealing factors of volunteering are belongingness, safety, sense of achievement, satisfaction, increased knowledge and career benefits.

Keywords: Volunteer; Motivation; Community Mindedness; Rewards; Psychological Contract.

Introduction

New Zealand depends on volunteers to operate and maintain many critical services including fire services and the St. Johns Ambulance service. There are also several other groups supporting the New Zealand Police Force; one of them being the Community Patrols New Zealand (CPNZ). The study hopes to find out what motivates people to volunteer for agencies such as the CPNZ. Understanding this phenomena will help with recruitment and long term management of volunteer organisations. The other question raised is that if individuals can be motivated to work in unpaid roles; can this knowledge be transferred and used to help motivate people in paid work?

Like all other volunteers agencies, the Community Patrol groups in Wellington are struggling with volunteer recruiting and retention. In order to look at recruitment, the organisation needs to take into consideration the Strategic Management aspect of their operation. This would include processes, procedures, and management theories in order to reach the overall goal of the organisation.

The Safety / Security and Not-for-Profit Industries

Wellington South Community Patrol or Community Patrols in general in New Zealand, fit in to two different industries: Safety / Security and Not-for-Profit. Community Patrols, when on duty, are tasked with patrolling designated areas and screening for suspicious activities, suspicious individuals or other emergencies. When

suspicious activities, individuals or emergencies are identified, the volunteers will inform the relevant authorities; police, ambulance, fire or local councils. Essentially this is the safety/security aspect of the industry. Community Patrols are generally not-for-profit organisations. Their focus is not on profits but on the safety / security aspect of the community.

Background of the Organisation

Community Patrols New Zealand started in 2003 with the following aims: to deter crime; to encourage New Zealand communities to be more resilient; to help equip and train volunteer patrollers; and to help make the communities in New Zealand safer. In their first year, CPNZ patrolled a total of 24, 629.7 hours and the hours continued to grow as many more community patrols were established (CPNZ, 2003). The Wellington South Community Patrol, which this study is based on, was established in 2011.

Wellington South Community Patrol Trust is a charitable trust that is affiliated with Community Patrols New Zealand and as such, Wellington South Community Patrol is a not-for-profit organisation. Their first patrol was on 1st April 2011 and has since, mounted its 600th patrol. Within that Community Patrol, there are currently a total of 24 community patrollers with six of them assisting with the administrative tasks. Four of the six patrollers hold official positions within the team. The Patrol team have monthly meetings in which they discuss previous patrols and work on the roster for the following month. The patrollers choose the dates/shifts they want. At the meetings topics discussed include equipment requirement/operation, training, health and safety, finance and membership. Wellington South Community Patrol operate on Fridays and Saturdays, with the occasional Wednesday or Thursday and holiday nights.

In 2011 the patrol received the Safer City award. They acquired a patrol vehicle in 2013. The Patrol has an excellent relationship with the Newtown business community (which is their designated area) and as such have obtained financial sponsorship from businesses which help with the vehicle and equipment maintenance. The patrols have been successful and effective in that the number of incidents have been greatly reduced.

Literature Review

Volunteer Mind-set

What is a volunteer mind-set? According to Wright & Kitay (2004) it is described as volunteers and employees having jobs and/or tasks that they find fulfilling and satisfying. They also argue that because of that fulfillment and satisfaction, one is able to willingly work and co-operate with management to achieve a common goal. Where this written, the subjects just so happen to be about employees.

Stone (n.d.) suggests that although there is suggested criteria for the 'volunteer mind-set', it does not actually relate to the world of volunteers and that it focuses on employees and their willingness for teamwork. This criteria, according to Stone includes such notions as serving time to be on committees and boards, without feeling forced or coerced. Basically, volunteer mind-set does not only apply to volunteers, but also those in paid employment. Some individual, do not mind doing that extra bit for the common good of the organisations and others. It is this phenomenon that needs to be studied and understood.

According to Tuchinsky & Hughes (2015), those with a volunteer mind-set want 'the experience', to demonstrate passion for the job or task at hand. They want to be able to establish great relationships and to be appreciated and thanked for the job that they do in their free time, and they also want their voluntary achievements recognised by their peers and superiors.

Psychological Contracts

Starnes (2007), E. Morrison and S. Robinson (1997) define psychological contracts as perceptions that are created by the organisation focusing on what might be received in exchange for the contributions to the organisation. These perceptions are individualised for each paid and unpaid employee. There has to be evidence of an established relationship between the employee and the organisation before such a contract can exist. That individual also needs to have an idea of what to expect from the organisation as well (Starnes, 2007). De Voss, Buyens and Schalk (2003) define a psychological contract as the belief which the individual holds in regards to the rules and regulations of the shared agreement between the organisation and themselves. These writers believe that the contract is generally viewed as a concept that explains the employee's attitudes and behaviours. Examples of these behaviours and attitudes are things like commitment, dedication, turnover, etc. Although this article focuses on paid employees and employers, some aspects of it can be applied to volunteers.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model seems to fit in terms of motivational context that one assumes a volunteer has. The three lower order needs, which are physiological, safety, and belongingness, take a higher priority than the esteem and self-actualisation tiers (Hagerty, n.d.). If we look after the lower order needs first, the other two should be easier to achieve. If we look at this model, starting from the bottom of the pyramid, the following points are a summary of what Daft and Pirola-Merlo (2009, p.235) says about the model:

- We have physiological needs where the basic needs of everyone is the set focus (food, water, shelter) (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009).
- The next layer of the pyramid, focuses safety and security; be it at work or at home. Everyone feels the need for safety and security; both emotionally and physically in the environment that they live in. If at work, it may include job security, the need to feel protected and health and safety aspects (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009). According to Spencer (2006), this need is not very likely for volunteering organisations, however Reinklou & Rosen (2013) disagrees. They say that it depends on the situation as to whether this need is a factor or not.
- The next tier of the pyramid is the sense of belonging to those around us, be that co-workers, friends, family and other loved ones. If people have the feeling of being accepted amongst their peers, they will be more willing to cooperate and work as a team to reach common goals.
- The fourth layer is esteem, where people have desires for positive attention and self-imagery, and recognition and appreciation from others. This includes an increase in responsibility or somewhat of a promotion or accreditation when it is due, to those who deserve it.
- The last tier is Self-Appreciation where a person develops their full potential, and helps the person recognise the need for personal development and fulfilment.

So, how does this model fit into volunteerism? According to Spencer (2006), the levels that fit within volunteering is the levels or tiers that include belongingness, esteem and self-actualisation and not necessarily the physical and safety needs. According to Reinklou & Rosen (2013), it can depend on the situation that the individual is facing as to whether or not the psychological/ survival and safety needs can be met or not. There is a general consensus that once an individual has achieved the sense of belongingness, they start to feel the need to be important which is where the esteem tier comes in. Kempton (1980) mentions though that one cannot move up to the next tier of the Needs model, without achieving the tier below or the current tier. This model is based on the satisfaction-progression principle, where one level must be largely achieved before moving to the next higher level.

Herzberg's Two Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two Factor model is similar to Maslow's pyramid theory, except where Maslow's theory has 5 levels, the Two Factor theory has been divided into two different dimensions. (Daft & Pirola-Merlo, 2009; pg 236) These two dimensions are to do with Satisfaction (Motivators) and Dissatisfaction (Hygiene factors) areas while at work. The Hygiene factors are mainly job/work related and include factors such as working conditions, company policy and administration, job security, salary, personal life, interpersonal relationships, etc. Motivators are factors such as achievement, recognition, increase of responsibility and personal growth. One cannot experience Motivators without facing the Hygiene factors.

The more that people focus on motivators in this model, the higher the satisfactory rate seems to be for that person. It is the same for the hygiene factors. The more that those factors are worked on, the slower the dissatisfactory rate increases (It actual can start to decrease). If the motivators are employed, there will be a stronger sense of commitment in terms of increasing performances, as well as the satisfaction and motivation levels (Engage Education Foundation, n.d.). Kempton (1980) says that volunteerism can include all motivators in Hertzberg's Two-Factor theory. These motivators include achievement, recognition, the tasks, responsibility increase and growth and development. These attributes in this Theory closely relate to the higher tiers in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model/ theory (Kempton, 1980).

Methodology

This study was conducted on patrollers who were volunteers with the community patrol. There were a total of 15 participants involved and they were all interviewed individually using the semi-structured method. There are a total of 25 questions asked. Interviews lasted for approximately one hour each. Semi-structured interviews were appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to probe deeper if a particular response sounded significant (Bloch, 2004).

Each interview was audio recorded with the permission of the participants and subsequently transcribed. The transcribed data was then analysed and patterns or themes were identified. Responses following a particular theme or pattern would be considered important because it meant that several individuals were saying the same or similar things even though they were interviewed separately.

Once patterns are identified, the researcher interprets the meaning and documents it using the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is a constructivist approach which means that a story is being developed or built (Mertens, 2005). Interpretivism allows for the researcher to be a part of the study; observing and probing appropriately (Walliman, 2006). Interpretivism is forgiving and flexible. It allows the researcher to analyse and document the findings according to how they see it (Williams, 2003).

All data collected (audio and print) is being stored by the researcher on a password protected USB (Universal Serial Bus) flash drive which is always kept behind locked doors.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Introduction

Patterns identified when analysing the data state that volunteers:

- were community minded
- wanted or were having adventure/action
- showed a caring nature towards the community enjoyed the social aspect of a voluntary role
- received satisfaction when they volunteered in their chosen areas appreciated the skillset and knowledge acquired
- understood the positive impact of volunteering on their careers

This section also discusses the unappealing factors of community patrolling.

Community Mindedness

According to McMillian and Chavis (1996), the sense of community scale is a theory, created by Doolittle and MacDonald to look into behaviours and attitudes which lie at the level of the community and neighbourhood. The purpose of this theory is to differentiate neighbourhoods from low to high, based on factors such as safety, neighbour and community interactions, localism, and neighbouring preferences and pro-urbanism in terms of privacy and anonymity.

Results of Doolittle and MacDonald's research, according to McMillian and Chavis (1996), show that there are three generalised areas concerning the sense of community scale. The first one is that there needs to be a relationship between the privacy and anonymity factor and neighbourhood interaction preferences. Secondly, a relationship must exist between safety and neighbourhood interaction preferences. Lastly, as the privacy factor decreases, the safety factor increases (McMillian & Chavis, 1996). Essentially these generalisations have an effect as they seem to rely on each other. Volunteers of any organisation show these characteristics in ways that, although may be different, make them a valuable part of the community.

Volunteers are people that have the wellbeing of the community at heart. That is essentially what being community-minded is. When a person takes an interest in helping out the wider community, that's community mindedness. Stallwitz (2012) says that the concept of community mindedness is one that allows society or community an approach that helps one to prevent and counteract the future growth and development of drug-use and related phenomena. It can be said the same for the safety industry and community, in terms of crime prevention. One can gain a volunteer mind-set later in life but to a large percentage of community patrollers or volunteers in general, it comes around naturally, as a lot of them have been volunteering for years. The idea of volunteerism embedded in their minds from as early as their secondary school days and some even younger. All the patrollers find that a benefit or what they value in volunteering at all is to make the community a better place or to help make a difference in society. A participant commented on why they volunteered:

Because it seemed a practical way to help the community. (P2)

Along with being community-minded, volunteers enjoyed the the social aspect of meeting and befriending like-minded people. One gets to meet all sorts of different people: be it in their own patrol, other patrols, police or the general public. With joining the community patrol, patrollers feel a sense of comradery as they are part of a group that is working towards a specific commendable goal which is to help make the community and

neighbourhood a safer place to live. All of this equals to a sense of belongingness.

Adventure/Action Vs Caring Nature

While it may be argued that women, more than men, would be more caring, the findings in this study show that all participant irrespective of their gender are caring and care for the community they live in. They also indicated that they loved the action and adventure that came with the role. Research suggests that women tend to do more volunteer work due to their caring nature and the need for belongingness. Men, on the other hand, are more work orientated (Wymer, n.d.). Out of 15 subjects interviewed, four of them were women, and the other 11 were male.

There are volunteers in this line of work that like to join the potential action that one can get involved in. They get that adrenaline rush, patrollers sometimes get when something unexpected happens. Once they experience it, they want more.

"I knew that patrols primarily operate at night time, quite late... having that knowledge was helpful and I guess, living in Wellington, I felt that there's something interesting happening in the suburbs, after midnight and that's what also motivated me." (P2)

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a reward in itself. Volunteers thrive on this. By knowing that you have positively contributed to the lives of others is very rewarding. Another aspect of the satisfaction factor is the sense of authority that one gets when they are out on patrol. The general public tends to look to the volunteers for assistance and protection. They are like quasi-police.

"I know that people seeing us rolling around, feeling that I've improved safety so I think, that goes along with "Prevention First". I know, anecdotally, that the bad guys don't like us rolling around, and they have another thought about whether or not, they do the crime." (P13)

Skillset, Knowledge and Careers.

When it comes to volunteering in any area or work, one learns new skills or improves on existing skills. Patrolling also makes one aware of the community they live in. Participants have intimated that since joining the patrol, they have learnt a lot about their surroundings, and gained some useful new skills.

"Again, more self-knowledge about things I may want to pursue; things that I may not want to pursue; getting to know the neighbourhood better" (P1)

"I learn as we drive about. I learn something different – you need to be a little Road Smart on what's going on around you" (P6)

20% of the participants were students at the time of data collection and the balance 80% were full-time workers, volunteering their time above and beyond a 40 hour work week. This shows that the community patrollers and volunteers in general, are not necessarily motivated by money. They are willing to work those extra hours for free.

Occasionally, there are volunteers who join community patrols because they are keen on eventually joining the police force and they see community patrols as a stepping stone.

"I have applied to the Police to be a Police Officer so, it looks better." (P8) "You get to see the Police in operation and there are C.V. benefits as well" [P2]

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

The sample size was too small to generalise the findings. It would also have been better if we had a more equal gender balance. Also we could have included community patrols from other parts of the country. These would be some identified areas for future research.

Conclusion

While this case study focused on community patrols, the findings could apply to any other volunteer group in that the volunteer mind-set must exist before individuals are willing to volunteer. The motivations behind volunteering are universal. Only certain individuals are willing to volunteer. The question that needs to be answered is how the volunteer mind-set and motivation can be transferred into the paid workforce. How can managers motivate their staff to go the extra mile?

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