Volunteer Retention in the Master Water Stewards Program:

An Overall Communications Framework

Hassan Alsaeed
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of St. Thomas
alsa6661@stthomas.edu

Willie Faust
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of St. Thomas
faus5612@stthomas.edu

Erin Franklin
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of St. Thomas
fran0250@stthomas.edu

Meghan Meints
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of St. Thomas
mein9517@stthomas.edu

Laura Raymond
Department of Communication and Journalism
University of St. Thomas
raym7542@stthomas.edu

Introduction

Volunteers are a huge value to non-profit organizations. Not only do volunteers help to save money, but also sometimes they can provide better service to clients, increase contact with the greater community, make available better expertise and reduce costs of services. The truth is that non-profit organizations would struggle and/or not exist if not for volunteers. They are the backbones that support nonprofit organizations. Statistics would be good here.

Freshwater Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving, restoring and protecting all freshwater resources and their surrounding watersheds (Freshwater Society). The organization began by focusing on the Minneapolis neighborhoods surrounding Minnehaha Creek and the Chain of Lakes. But in later years, the program began expanding to the rest of the watershed district and the rest of the metropolitan area. While there are many people who are employed at Freshwater Society, a branch from the Master Water Stewards program, the organization has a large volunteer-base. During this past semester, we studied the communication between the organization and the volunteers. By becoming familiar with the organization, meeting and talking to the employees and interviewing various volunteers, we were able to discover some ways to help improve the program.

Literature Review

Acknowledging that volunteers have a crucial role in these organizations, organizations must understand the factors that affect job satisfaction and intention to maintain involvement. Many studies have shown that job satisfaction correlates to the turnover intention. Therefore, the more effective the organization can maintain volunteers' job satisfaction, the lower rate of the turnover rate of volunteers. In the literature, several factors have been identified to be associated with volunteers' job satisfactions, namely the volunteers' motivations and demographics,

organization description and position training, as well as the social environment of the organization.

Volunteers' Motivation

Not all individuals are equally motivated to engage in volunteering activities. The main factor that has been identified to influence volunteers' motivation are volunteers' motivation is age. Research found that older volunteers often perceive time to be more limited than younger volunteers. Older volunteers focus less on preparing for the future, while young adults use volunteer work to advance in their careers and network by developing business contacts and leads (Bang 2015).

Bang says to almost expect young adults to be temporary volunteers, as they are looking for ways to build their careers and unpaid work is not going to be efficient for them in the long run (Bang 2015). However, Bang also discusses that younger volunteers tend to rely on employer relationships. The better their relationship with their superior, the more inclined they might be to stay as a volunteer.

When looking at demographics, age is at the top of the list of importance. There are many different things that people are looking for when they volunteer and a lot of it depends on their age and where they are in their lifetime. To build a long-standing volunteer base for a non-profit organization, it seems as though older volunteers will be the most consistent and are, generally, the people that can be relied on to stay longer.

Job Description and Training

Volunteers are critical to the mission and success of nonprofit organizations. Volunteer management takes an investment of time and energy and requires processes to ensure volunteers are well supervised and used strategically. To ensure volunteers' job satisfaction, organizations

should have clear expectations for the volunteers and provide necessary task-related training (p. 46).

Having clear expectations and roles will help volunteers feel empowered and to become more actively involved (p.12). These are tactics that organizations can use to ensure a positive experience for volunteers. Mitchel and Yates suggest that organizations should determine the motivations of potential and current volunteers, which will help with creating the expectations of the volunteers because they will ensure the volunteer needs are met as well as the organizations (12). Shin and Kleiner state that organizations should have a written set of policies and procedures because it will keep volunteers accountable with little confusion about specific rules (65). Volunteers are looking to satisfy their own needs and organizations need to make sure those are being met. Kang and Mitchel stated that training volunteers and employees will emphasize the importance of teamwork and make them feel like an important asset to achieving the organization's goal (Page 63). According to *Great Volunteers Management System*, "Position descriptions should be written and shared and should include details such as duration of project, time commitment, necessary skills, training, and other particulars specific to the organization" (Page 9).

Training both employees and volunteers is essential for an organization. Bang who examined the moderating role of age in the relationships between leader-member exchange dimensions concluded suggested: "Administrators may develop relevant and persuasive recruitment messages to younger audiences to focus on learning skills and accomplishing goals, whereas messages to older audiences may focus more on helping and belonging" (Page 12). For example, Mitchel and Yates stated that training is necessary for the employees because they will learn how to supervise and help volunteers as needed (47). Several authors have argued that the

most effective recruiters and marketers for volunteers are the current satisfied volunteers already

with the organization.

Social Environment

Building volunteer relationships is important. They help volunteers feel a part of the

organization even though they are unpaid. The relationships allow for the volunteers to network

and meet new people. Developing social relationships with other volunteers within the

organization will help keep volunteers motivated and they will more likely stay with the

organization and volunteering. According to the article *How to Manage Unpaid Volunteers in*

Organizations, roughly 58% of unpaid volunteers stated that they felt recognized and appreciated

when they received a handwritten thank you note, which made them keep volunteering because

of the social relationship developed with employees of the organization (8). Maintaining the

social relationship with the volunteer will promote future volunteering because volunteers will

feel a part of the organization and are more likely to tell family and friends about the

organization. (Not relevant)

Participative Decision-Making

Mitchel and Yates argue that organizations should be sure that volunteers feel they're a

valued part of the organizational team and their role is important and they will feel recognized

(Page 48). This can be as simple as asking volunteers for suggestions on how to improve the

organization, invite volunteers for lunch, and write thank you notes for taking the time to

volunteer (Page 47). Organizations should utilize participative decision-making. "After

volunteers have completed an assignment, ask them if the project fit their expectations and revise

the position description as needed" (Page 9). Shin and Kleiner state that management should

acknowledge the importance of volunteers and give them the opportunity to voice their own

opinions because it will make them feel appreciated and apart of the team (Page 68).

Organizations should utilize volunteer feedback because then they are able to adjust the program

to better fit the volunteers' wants and needs. The feedback can be administered via survey or

face to face contact such as at a meeting.

Use of Technology

Technology can be very useful when an organization uses it properly. Inside an

organization, emails are often used as a very effective communications tool. But when an

organization wants to communicate with volunteers – both current and potential – there is a wide

variety of potential tactics to reach out to them.

Research done in 2010 has shown that both young adults and older adults have been

using social media more regularly. Madden found that "half (47 percent) of internet users ages

50-64 and one in four (26 percent) users age 65 and older now use social networking sites,"

(page 1). These statistics are up from 25 percent and 13 percent respectively in 2009. In fact, the

growth shown is higher for older users than their younger counterparts. Some reasons for this

change is access to high-speed internet, the social connections provided and support for chronic

diseases (page 1).

Moving forward to 2015, Duggan said Facebook users ages 50-64 have grown to 64

percent, and users 65 and up have grown to 48 percent. These age groups are also using sites

such as Instagram and Twitter more regularly than before (page 1). Lennon, Rentfro and Curran

have also found that females under the age 21, who are single and without children, are the

mostly likely demographic to use social media multiple times per day (p#). For the other

demographics, there was a percentage that fit each category, but older adults were found to get

social media less often than their younger counterparts (3).

Mansfield said that the cause for social media and internet use is described as such: "The social web is more casual in style and tone, and more personal in its ability to connect individuals and nonprofits with similar causes, concerns and passions," (page 46). Mansfield stresses the need for planning and consistency of messages between Uniform Resource Locators. Without organization, Mansfield cautions that "you get out of social media what you put into it," saying that a five-hour project yield fewer results than a 40-hour position (page 54). She also suggested spreading out connections on social media. The author argues that "It's very important that your nonprofit think long-term and diversify its brand across many platforms and communication channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, Foursquare, blogging, e newsletters, groups text messages and others," because it allows the organization to reach a wider range of potential clients, volunteers, etc. (page 69).

Organizational Description

The Freshwater Society is a public nonprofit organization, located in the Midway area of St. Paul that deals with issues pertaining to freshwater. Specifically, the Freshwater Society is dedicated to conserving, restoring, and protecting freshwater resources and their surrounding watersheds. In order to accomplish its goals and carry out projects, the organization enlists the participation and support of individual volunteers, associations, business and industry, institutions, educators, and the government (Freshwater Society).

The Freshwater Society's mission statement reads as such: "Recognizes the vital role of freshwater to all living things and the impending crisis in the quantity and quality of accessible freshwater. Dedicates its experience and resources to activities that lead to the understanding, protection, enhancement, and restoration of freshwater resources. Invites the participation and

support of individuals, associations, business and industry, institutions, educators, and government in these activities" (Freshwater Society).

Today, the Freshwater Society has grown to include eight full-time employees who work out of the organization's office in St. Paul. There is also a large board of directors that includes volunteers from across the Twin Cities. The board is broken up into several different categories, each with at least several members. The overall Freshwater Society board includes 13 members. There are also six Freshwater Foundation board members, three emeritus directors, and three honorary board members (Freshwater Society).

In recent years, Freshwater Society has asked for volunteers who want to become "super volunteers" by starting the Master Water Stewards program. Through this program, Freshwater Society trains, certifies, and supports volunteers in relation to their local watershed. This program began in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and, in 2016, "the program is expanding to most of the metro area, soon to be statewide" (Freshwater Society). Freshwater society also recently completed the first of three groundwater reports for 2016. The report looks at which portions of the state and metropolitan area currently have long-term water supply issues.

In terms of organization strengths, the Master Water Stewards program has been well structured over all, and we believe it's smart on the company's behalf to train "super-volunteers" to help cover what employees are not able to do. The program has been in use for three years now in the Minnehaha Watershed District, providing a model for the first year of Freshwater Society's affiliation with the Minnesota Watershed Management Organization.

Another strength of the Freshwater Society is its dedication to the Master Water Stewards program. The employees of the organization are truly dedicated to dealing with freshwater

problems in the community and doing whatever it takes to find solutions to these problems. This

dedication is likely one of the reasons the FWS has had some recruiting success in the past,

despite the lack of a communications specialist on staff.

There are also weaknesses that needed to be addressed. Most of Freshwater Society's

full-time employees are scientists, who do not have formal education in communications.

Because of this, they have not been tracking their success nor have they been able to pinpoint

what has and has not been working in recruiting volunteers.

Although Freshwater Society does have a website and Facebook page, Program

Coordinator Deirdre Coleman said there is not an employee assigned to update these

communication avenues. We believe that having up-to-date online information could assist in the

recruitment and retention of volunteers, particularly younger ones. At the very least, it could also

help with event planning.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised:

Research Question 1) What are the current volunteers' level of motivation?

Research Question 2) What are the current volunteers' perceptions of Freshwater Society's

communication efforts in relation to maintaining their job satisfaction and commitment?

Research Question 3) What are the volunteers' perceptions regarding the use of social media by

the organization?

Method

Participants

A total of ten volunteers participated in this study. All nine of the participants that

submitted demographic information were U.S. born, Caucasian and from Minnesota. Of these

nine, six were female and three were male. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 75 years old, with an average age of 54.3 years old. Seven of the nine were between the ages of 56 and 75, with two outliers aged 23 and 26. Two of the participants have Master's degrees, five have Bachelor's degrees and one is still a college student working toward a Bachelor's degree. Four of the participants are currently retired, four are working full-time and one is a college student. The full-time workers are employed in various jobs such as an administrative worker, an activist and consultant, a respiratory therapist and a member of the Green Corps.

Six of the participants were current students with another local organization, while the other three were already certified Master Water Stewards. Among all participants, the average length of time working with the Freshwater Society was 12 months, or one year.

Procedure

Participants were contacted via email and phone. Once contact was established, a time and place to conduct the interview were selected based on the preferences of the interviewee. Prior to each interview, participants signed a consent form to acknowledge their understanding of the research being done and his or her place in that research. Participants were then asked to fill out a brief questionnaire about their demographic background, including age, ethnicity, occupation and other organizational involvement. All interviewees were asked the same questions regardless of which group member did the interviewing. Each interview lasted approximately 20-45 minutes and answers were recorded to ensure the accurate collection of data. The interview questions can be seen below:

1. How did you hear about the Master Water Stewards program and the Freshwater Society?
2. Why did you decide to become a MWS?
3. How much did you know about freshwater issues before you became a part of this program?
4. What has made you want to continue to work with the Master Water Stewards/FWS? (or What made you decide to discontinue your partnership?)

5.   What did you hope to gain from volunteering at FWS as MWS (in addition to spreading knowledge and information about freshwater issues) and did you get what you had hoped? Edit if needed.
6.   How effective is the communication between FWS/watershed district and the MWS?
7.   What are the areas of strength of the MWS program? Especially regarding your communication with FWS (What do you think is working well?)?
8.   In your experience, do you see any areas of improvement with the program? Especially with communication with FWS?
9.   Do you think the FWS utilizes social media effectively?
10.   Have you ever recruited someone to the MWS program? (If yes, how? What was

successful/unsuccessful?)

Results

Demographic Overview

There are a lot of similarities in demographic background shared among the volunteers. The majority of the volunteers are older and college educated. Each participant fell somewhere in the age range of 56-75 years old, except for one male who was 23 and another who was 26.

There are also some differences in terms of the employment status and gender. Of the nine participants, four work full-time, four are retired and one is currently a college student. Gender wise, the group of participants featured more females than males. Six females were interviewed compared with only three males.

Why Volunteers Joined

The majority of participants were intrigued by a prior interest in general water management, storm water management and environmental issues. Eight out of ten participants mentioned that working with the Freshwater Society and Master Water Stewards program seemed like a good way to get practical experience working with these interests while also making a positive impact on the community. Participants also discussed their desire to learn about more ways to make a difference in water quality and the quality of the environment.

"I'm working in the storm water field and the Master Water Stewards is all about storm water." (interviewee one)

"freshwater issues just piqued my interest to what I can do as a citizen to make a positive impact." (interviewee two)

"I also believe in climate change and that we need to change the way we're managing water." (interviewee three)

"I became aware of the issues with storm water in a sense and some of the ways to handle storm water." (interviewee four)

"I really appreciate the environmentalism and this seemed to be nice a nice fit." (interviewee eight)

Why Volunteers Stayed

Participants mentioned several different reasons for their continued commitment to the organization. The most common answers were the extensive project opportunities being a Master Water Steward offers, the ability to continue learning about freshwater issues and the general feeling that being a steward allows one to make a difference in the community.

Several participants also noted that staying with the Freshwater Society as a Master Water Steward opened the door to networking and career opportunities. They mentioned that because of the variety of projects you can get involved with, it looks good on a resume for future career moves or offers the chance to stay on with Freshwater Society long term if the organization turns out to be a good fit. The variety of volunteers from different career backgrounds was noted for its networking possibilities.

"...I interviewed some of the Master Water Stewards and they tend to end up in cool organizations doing cool things." (interviewee one)

"If I'm looking at what I might do after I retire, this is something I would consider continuing for the long term." (interviewee two)

"there is a lot of opportunities and so many projects going on and opportunities to give…" (interviewee seven)

"…by having amazing people go out and do these wonderful things, they make a great impact on the environment." (interviewee eight)

Perceived Strengths

From the participants, Freshwater Society is keen on using experts in different fields to help volunteers build their knowledge base. The experts bring invaluable knowledge and experience to the team. Most of the stewards also have years of experience and excellent qualifications, as the volunteers are predominantly college graduates. The participants also noted that the management of Freshwater Society was adept in maintaining regular communication with all employees and volunteers through email. The entire team is updated on continuing and upcoming programs.

"Deirdre regularly sends out information about what's happening in the community and volunteer hour opportunities."

"I think that it's generally does what it needs to do. They send a lot of emails, which I like. I'm on my computer all day for the most part, so emails are good"

"Yes. The two things that people can access and that have worked are emails from Deirdre and Alex but I have noticed that the FWS webpage has not been updated."
"We do emails – the primary means of communication from the FWS have been emails."

According to participants, many noted a key strength of the organization is the ability to sustain funding from donors. This particular aspect of financing is critical to the sustainability of an organization.
"The vision and the mission and the funding. The funding is totally green light because of the Clean Water Act in 1972, so the states get federal dollars to implement the Clean Water Act"

Perceived Areas of Improvement

The participants noted that the Freshwater Society has problems in the integration of technology in the Master Water Stewards program. They particularly mentioned the "Flip Grid" program as a good innovation, but few people had the ability to use it properly. Implementing formal training to enable all stewards to use the technology correctly ahead of time was

recommended by several participants. The same failure to integrate technology is noted in that

the organization is slow in updating its website and social media pages. Participants mentioned

that the organization should embrace its use of technology and build the capacity of employees

through the use of technology.

> "It was a little frustrating because I wasn't able to use it on my work computer so I had to buy a new one"

> "Flip Grid" has been a challenge for the master water stewards in training. For example, my iPhone is too old to get the app so I can't do it on my iPhone."

> "they don't have a high enough level of technology that is integrated to match up with the FWS system then we can't do it easily."

Attitude Toward Social Media

The responses from participants suggests that the company does not use social media

very regularly, apart from a small presence on Facebook. Most of the stewards and students

expressed little interest in social media accounts such as Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. Some

said that they passively use Facebook to connect with friends and relatives but never to engage in

social activism. Furthermore, since Freshwater Society does not have the resources to maintain

multiple social media accounts, its use is not regarded as very important. Most likely, the

perception of participants toward social media is shaped by their age. The fact that most are older

likely accounts for their lack of enthusiasm and experience in with its use. Some even mentioned

that they had forgotten the login details of their social media accounts.

Quotes to illustrate.

Nevertheless, some of the stewards expressed a belief that social media can be useful in

sensitizing the community on the need to protect freshwater sources. A large portion of

participants also suggested that if management embraces social media, it may help in recruiting

younger volunteers to the program.

"Do I necessarily want them devoting a lot of time to using social media, maybe not, although I'm sure it may help in connecting with younger volunteers to some extent."

"I still get regular communications both by email and I guess we don't use Facebook for communications. I'm Facebook friends with some of my colleagues but I guess mostly the communication is email and I changed my address so that was bad for a while."

"Oh right well I think social media is good too though."

"Well I think it'd be good if we used Facebook and when I was going through."

Discussion

The current study was designed to examine the effectiveness of the current communications framework employed by Freshwater Society through the perceptions of volunteers, based off of interviews with ten volunteers. Based off of these interviews, we found that the volunteers are fairly homogeneous and have shared motivations to join the program, volunteers perceived the communication as generally positive and stated strong intentions to stay in the program, and volunteers have very concrete and specific suggestions for improving Freshwater Society's communication, which shows their involvement with the program.

The data that we collected helped to answer our research questions. Our first research question asked about the volunteers' motivations. The data collected shows that there is a wide variety of motivations, but they are almost always internal factors. Our second question asked what satisfied the volunteers about their job, and through interviews they expressed that they were pleased with the Freshwater Society's current communications framework, but this is not to say there are no improvements to be had. Our third question asked about social media use at the Freshwater Society. The data collected showed that all volunteers use some form of social media, but few use multiple channels, helping to inform our recruitment suggestions for the organization.

Attracting Volunteers

Based on demographic data collected about all participants, the Freshwater Society tends to attract a very specific demographic of volunteers. On average, volunteers tend to be female, college educated, Caucasian and in their 50s. This aligns with the literature review's findings that females tend to volunteer for nonprofits more regularly than men. A number of the interviewees are retirees, trending with the literature's findings that retirees tend to volunteer more as well. This would seem to suggest that the more free time people have, the more likely they are to volunteer with a nonprofit like Freshwater Society. This makes sense given that the Master Water Steward program is a substantial time commitment for those involved.

Prior Interest in Water and Environmental Issues

One of the most important things to consider in the recruitment and keeping of volunteers, based off of the interviewee's responses and the literature reviewed for this study, is that the people who are donating their time are doing so because they already care about the issues being addressed by the organization. For the Freshwater Society, some volunteers are participating in the Master Water Stewards program because it is a resume builder and they're already involved in the water protection field. For others, they're concerned community members. The Freshwater Society is doing a good job at keeping the volunteers they already have, by communicating effectively via email, offering online courses and providing a wide range of topics covered in their Master Water Stewards classes.

Research shows that strong communication between a nonprofit organization and its volunteers is a strong determinant of volunteer job satisfaction. Roesch, Spitzberg and Dwiggins-Beeler argue that motivation may move the volunteer to act, but the climate, fostered by communication, is what sustains a volunteer's participation. The dimensions of support, integration, information, work assignment, participation efficacy, and empowerment were all

noted as important components of the communicative environment. This aligns with the feedback received by participants when asked about their reasons for wanting to continue working with the Freshwater Society. Many participants mentioned that there was effective communication via email between the organization and volunteers, enhancing job satisfaction and creating an environment that makes volunteer retention more likely.

Technology Training and Use

As far as technology is concerned, we noticed that programs such as "flip grid" were difficult for the interviewees to use and pre-training on these educational tools was desired. Training on what technology the Freshwater Society is using with their volunteers in general, i.e. Google Groups, Facebook, etc. was also desired to ensure that technology related problems are kept to a minimum. One interviewee said that he was unaware that the organization even had a Google Group.

Interviewees also noted that the organization is slow to update their website, which is problematic when up-to-date information is desired by the volunteers. The interviewees expressed an appreciation for technology and a desire to learn how to use new technology, which makes sense looking at the demographics of volunteers. Specifically, the predominantly older volunteers did not grow up with social media or technology, but still want to learn in order to keep up with the times.

What our interviewees expressed and what the literature reviewed for this study suggested align in some areas but not all. The literature said that older demographics, specifically people 50-65 and older, are using technology more frequently, which is mirrored in the responses from interviewees about their growing interests in technology and willingness to learn. This is not reflected in their social media use, showing that some volunteers have an ambivalence

toward social media. The interviewees did not regularly use multiple channels of social media; they tended to stick to Facebook and LinkedIn. However, the literature suggested using multiple channels, especially for recruitment. This suggestion can still be utilized if the Freshwater Society wishes to diversify its demographics and recruit younger volunteers.

Practical Implications

Organizations have their own reasons to adopt new recruitment strategies for volunteers. For example, organizations may wish to increase the diversity of their volunteers. Based off the findings and the literature from this study, we have a few recommendations for the Freshwater Society involving communication with their volunteers.

To help make sure that volunteers feel valued and like they're a part of the organizational team, participative decision-making can be a useful tool (Mitchel and Donald). For example, asking volunteers for suggestions on how to improve the organization whether directly or through a survey. The Freshwater Society should utilize participative decision-making to help recognize what they are doing well and what they could improve on as they recruit new volunteers.

Based on the strengths and weaknesses of the Freshwater Society, as communicated through the interviewees, we suggest technology training for current volunteers, whether they're a student or certified. The Freshwater Society is already doing a good job at communicating through email to their volunteers, but by training Master Water Stewards on how to use organization-specific technology like "flip grid," the satisfaction and efficiency of current volunteers should increase.

Based off of the literature, building volunteer relationships is important (Mitchel and Donald). Relationships help volunteers feel like a part of the organization they're helping, even

though they are unpaid. These relationships also allow for the volunteers to network and meet new people. Some interviewees echoed this, mentioning that they and their classmates view the Master Water Stewards as a resume builder. By partnering with other organizations, the Freshwater Society will be able to recruit more volunteers that are early adopters of environmental issues that want to take advantage of the Master Water Stewards as an educational tool. Also, by keeping Freshwater Society's LinkedIn page up-to-date, this could help with the recruitment of volunteers involved with water issues.

To attract volunteers that are not early adopters of environmental concerns, we recommend that the Freshwater Society reach out on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. The literature reviewed for this study suggests that nonprofits incorporate social media into their daily operations to reach a wider range of volunteers who are not necessarily plugged into the work they do (Mansfield). Based off of the interviews, some of the Freshwater Society's volunteers use social media, while others do not. Although this appears to be a discrepancy, it is important to keep in mind that the use of social media is to recruit people who are not already with the organization.

Continuing with the literature reviewed for this study, as well as interviews done with volunteers, the incorporation of social media into the Freshwater Society's communications strategy will not only attract more, younger recruits, helping to keep the organization viable, but should strengthen their connections with their older volunteers. Based off of demographic studies on social media use and age groups, more people in the 50-65+ age range have been using sites like Facebook and LinkedIn more regularly. Sites like Facebook and LinkedIn should be the first added to the Freshwater Society's arsenal. As Mansfield points out, however, the more time put into this endeavor, the better the results, so we would recommend a full-time social media

manager position for optimal recruitment results.

When using social media channels to recruit volunteers, integrating "younger" sites like Instagram and Twitter could be effective. No matter the medium - including the organization's web site - accounts for these sites should be updated multiple times per week so that potential, new and long-standing volunteers can rely on them as a source of up-to-date information.

Limitations

There are a few limitations in our research. The main limitation is our sample size. We were able to interview 10 students and stewards of Freshwater Society, which is only a limited number of people compared to the overall number of students and stewards in the organization. For example, we were not able to get a comprehensive view of the organizations demographics due to interviewee availability. We were able to gather the demographics of the 10 people we interviewed but this is only a limited number of people compared to the overall group.

Since our sample size of interviewees is limited we cannot accurately measure the organization as a whole but we can offer suggestions based on the demographics and answers we received from the 10 people interviewed but these suggestions may not be applicable to everyone in Freshwater Society. Another limitation was contacting the stewards and students of Freshwater Society. We contacted the stewards and students via email and we had to be patient in waiting for a response. Often we had to wait close to a week for a response and sometimes we did not receive a response at all.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study looked at how the Freshwater Society has been recruiting and maintaining volunteers for the Master Water Stewards program and what it has done well. We also looked at what it could improve on to keep volunteers based on interviews. We identified

four themes that the organization can use going forward to create a communications framework. Themes include desire for increased technology use and training, the volunteers being of a homogenous demographic background, and recognizing that volunteers often participate because they have a prior interest in environmental and water issues. We believe that by taking these four themes into consideration, the Freshwater Society will be able to more effectively recruit and keep volunteers through strong communication that caters to the appropriate audience.

Works Cited

Bang, H., Ross, S., & Reio, T.J. (2013). From motivation to organizational commitment of

    volunteers in non-profit sports organizations. *Journal of Management Development,* 32

    (1), 96-112. Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/

Bang, H. (2015). Volunteer age, job satisfaction, and intention to stay: A case of nonprofit sport

    organizations, Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 36(2).161 - 176. DOI:

    10.1108/LODJ-04-2013-0052

Choudhury, E. (2010). Attracting and managing volunteers in local government, Journal of

    Management Development, 29(6), 592 - 603. DOI: 10.1108/02621711011046558

Duggan, Maeve. "The Demographics of Social Media Users." Pew Research Center. Pew

    Research Center, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 10 May 2016.

    <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/08/19/the-demographics-of-social-media-users/>.

Haug, J. C., & Gaskins,J. N. (2012) Recruiting and retaining volunteer EMTs: from motivation

    to practical solutions, International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, 32(3/4), 197 -

    213

Jäger, Urs, Karin Kreutzer, and Timon Beyes. "Balancing Acts: Npo-Leadership And

    Volunteering." *Financial Accountability & Management* 25.1 (2009): 79-97. *Business

    Source Premier*. Web. 11 Mar. 2016.

Kang, Minjeong. "Moderating Effects Of Identification On Volunteer Engagement." *Journal Of

    Communication Management* 20.2 (2016): 102-117. *Communication & Mass Media

    Complete*. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.c

Lennon, Ron, Randall W. Rentfro, and James M. Curran. "Exploring Relationships between

	Demographic Variables and Social Networking Use." Journal of Management and

	Marketing Research: 1-16. Academic and Business Research Institute. Web. 10 May

	2016.

Madden, Mary. "Older Adults and Social Media." Pew Research Center. Pew Research Center,

	27 Aug. 2010. Web. 10 May 2016. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2010/08/27/older-

	adults-and-social-media/>.

Mansfield, Heather. Social Media for Social Good: A How-to Guide for Nonprofits. New York:

	McGraw-Hill, 2012. Print.

Mitchel, Mark A., and Donald Yates. "How to Attract the Best Volunteers." *Nonprofit World*

	14.4 (1996): 47-48. *Business Source Premier*. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.

Paull, Megan, and Maryam Omari. "Dignity and Respect: Important in Volunteer Settings Too!"

	Equal Div and Incl: An Int J 34.3 (2015): 244-55. Web.

Peterson, Dane K. "Benefits of participation in corporate volunteer programs: employees'

	perceptions." *Personnel review* 33.6 (2004): 615-627.

Phillips, Laura C., and Mark H. Phillips. "Volunteer Motivation and Reward Preference: An

	Empirical Study Of Volunteerism In A Large, Not-For-Profit Organization. *"Advanced

	Management Journal (07497075)* 75.4 (2010): 12-39. *Business Source Premier*. Web. 14

	Apr. 2016.

Shin, S., & Kleiner, B. H. (2003). How to manage unpaid volunteers in

	organizations. *Management Research News*, 26 (2/3/4). 63-71. Web. 10 May 2016.

Roesch, Scott, Brian Spitzberg, and Rachel Dwiggins-Beeler. "Vectors of Volunteerism:

Communication Correlates of Volunteer Retention, Recruitment, And Job Satisfaction in

A Nonprofit Organization." *Conference Papers -- International Communication

Association* (2006): 1-37. *Communication & Mass Media Complete*. Web. 11 Mar. 2016.

The Freshwater Society . The Freshwater Society: Educating and inspiring people to value,

conserve and protect water resources, 2016. Web. 23 Feb. 2016.

"The Volunteer Management Report." (n.d.):1-88. *Great Volunteer Management System.* NYC

Service. Web. 10 May 2016.

Young-joo Lee, and Jeffrey L. Brudney. "Rational Volunteering: A benefit-cost Approach."

International Journal of Soc? & Social Policy 29.9 (2009): 512-30. Web.

XUEMENG, SONG, et al. "Volunteerism Tendency Prediction Via Harvesting Multiple Social

Networks." *ACM Transactions On Information Systems*34.2 (2016): 10:1-10:27. *Business

Source Premier*. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.