Volunteer Challenges

Midland City Council PTA

October 2, 2006

Nonprofit Management Center of
the Permian Basin

Volunteer Challenges

- Objectives-

  - Consider volunteer demographics
  - Apply knowledge to volunteer experience
  - Consider best practices
  - Offer resources

Volunteer Challenges

- Attending club meetings- down 58%
- Family dinners- down 33%
- Having friends over- down 45%

From <u>Bowling Alone</u> by Robert D. Putnam

Volunteer Challenges

Veteran Generation - Born in 1944 and before, have strong volunteer passions. Organization, commitment, dedication, obligation are all part of this generation's makeup

Boomers - Born between 1945 and 1965 - Very "me" oriented. Overall, traditional volunteering is not in their makeup; however, they are interested in developing leadership, processes, and meeting face-to-face. Appeal to these people with "you can make a difference."

Gen Xers - Born between 1966 and 1977 - Very results oriented and comfortable with technology. Dislike structure and political process. Enjoy autonomy and like to do things alone. They do not aspire to management positions. These are the first latch-key kids to grow up. Their volunteerism is more personal with the idea "I can do one thing."

Nexters - Born after 1978 - Very civic-minded; almost a throwback to the Veteran Generation. Immediate reinforcement and immediate results are important. They consider themselves equal to elders and more experienced people and are not aware of hierarchy. These people are looking for a cause. Knowing about these generational differences helps leaders and managers in companies tailor their management styles.

Xers, for example, are looking for balance between their work and family. When and where meetings are held cannot cut into their personal time. They are better at ad hoc meetings.

Volunteer Challenges

Robin Hamm-robin@cybersoc.com

My point? If you measure "social capital" using criteria that, let's face it, is outdated and old-fashioned, of course you're going to come up with numbers that make it look like people simply don't engage with each other in meaningful ways anymore. But that's simply not true. Much of the social network activity of old is now mediated electronically. We also have a lot more choice, not just in how we will communicate, but in which communities we will become involved in - geography, whilst important, is far less limiting now than it once was.

The social revolutions of the 60's and 70's happened, in part, as a reaction of the baby boomers who grew up in the '50's against the repression of that era. Yet, if you're going to try to measure social capital in the way Putnam does, you have to view declines in formal membership in religious and social organizations as a bad thing. I disagree. **Parents aren't going to join the PTO and sit through hideously long meetings when they can fling an email to the school head teacher or chat with other parents whilst collecting their children from football practice.**

The world has changed, our way of communicating and building social networks has changed. Local is still more important to must of us than the global but or involvement in "groups" is less formal than ever before. That goes for organized religion and party politics as well. Let's not confuse these changes, many of which can and are viewed by many as positive, with a loss in social capital. People aren't bowling alone, they've just found something more interesting to do with their time.

Volunteer Challenges

- Application

  - Does your PTA foster the idea that you have to be willing to do volunteer work for years and years? If so, you may not be appealing to several generations.

  - Think about reward systems. Receiving an award for years of service may not appeal to several generations.

    » www.energizeinc.com

  - Are younger people comfortable in leading meetings? Is it a skill they even think is valuable?

Volunteer Challenges

- Ideas to attract volunteers
    - Try different approaches- Cattle calls- NO!
    - Be prepared
    - Focus on personal return for volunteers
    - Address "time poverty"
        - Be flexible and innovative
        - Consider short term tasks and shared leadership
        - Create a menu of 30 minute tasks
        - Use technology to build the sense of community

Volunteer Challenges

- Best Practices-

    – Shar McBee- <u>To Lead is to Serve</u>

        » Be welcoming

        » Show appreciation

        » Listen

        » Manage effective and informative meetings

        » Have Fun

Volunteer Challenges

- Books
  - <u>To Lead is to Serve</u> – Shar McBee
  - <u>The Source-*Twelve principles that power exceptional boards*</u>- BoardSource

- Websites
  - www.boardsource.org
  - www.energizeinc.com
  - www.merrillassociates.net