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# Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management

Le journal canadien de gestion  
des bénévoles

2009

Volume 17.3



BOOMER VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT

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ISSN 1192-1676

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## EDITORIAL

Baby Boomers! As we come to the end of the first decade of the 21st century, we feel that it is time to devote an issue of the Journal to that cohort that has dominated our culture over the past 60 years. Befitting this weighty demographic group, we have produced a weighty issue for you. While boomers may think of themselves as being highly individualistic and unpredictable, you will discover as you read through the following articles, that their motivation and behaviour is in fact highly predictable. Start with a laugh! “Boom”, a poem by Greg Frankson is a succinct and entertaining descriptive of this prototype. Enjoy!

The articles we received for this issue all have a similar thrust: engaging baby boomers by rethinking recruitment, management and retention practices. As you read you will discover how much thinking and research has already been done to prepare for this unique generation. Each article builds and contributes to a greater understanding that I know you will find helpful as you focus on your own organization’s plan.

Don Lapierre, from Volunteer Canada, takes us through the steps of “re-thinking the way we do business” while bringing us up to date on the practical resource material currently available. Findings from Erin Spink’s research project broaden and deepen what we think we mean when we use the words “volunteer engagement”. Is it time to create our own language and quit using concepts that apply to paid employees?

Suzanne Cook and Marisa Gelfusa wonder whether boomers want to use their existing skills when they volunteer or do they want to develop new ones and what is the best way to manage these goals? Karen Franco tells us how Volunteer Calgary has come up with the answer for maximizing job satisfaction by implementing an “integrated human resource strategy” that includes both volunteer and paid staff.

Kim Evans paints a picture of these new retirees by detailing five key expectations. David Newman tells us about a pilot project with some very interesting findings on why some boomers are not volunteering and what they really want. Take time to look at Christine Martin’s book review. She strongly advises that this is a “must-read” book.

Part of our objective in publishing the Journal is “to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteer resources” and “to provide a professional development tool”. To that end, we are always pleased when we can let you our readers see what your peers are doing. While space did not permit us to reprint Angie Boehm’s CAVR certification paper in its entirety, we are pleased to have included a summary.

Voluntary activities are things we choose to do, want to do, do willingly and are undertaken by free choice. Even the baby boomers will not alter the true essence of why we volunteer, but what is clear is that when boomers move en masse into the nonprofit sector, change will occur and it will be exciting.

Chris Jarvis  
Editorial Team

At the 2009 PAVR-O conference, artist Greg Frankson observed Donna Lockhart's workshop on recruiting and retaining baby boomer volunteers. A very short time later, he wowed delegates with the following spoken word poem, based on the challenges and opportunities presented during Donna's session. While we cannot replicate Greg's passionate performance here, we hope you will find inspiration in his reflections and his challenge to managers of volunteer resources.

## **BOOM**

by Ritallin

if it's true we get better with age  
then by 2031 we'll be the best country around  
that is, if we're not already  
more Canadians are entering their golden age  
so will it be a golden time for voluntarism?  
or will we take a sip on our double-doubles  
on our back porches and just chill?  
and now the refrain goes like this –  
“we've raised the kids and I don't need to coach  
and I've done what I can to make my community better  
been breaking my back for decades and the best years  
of my life are ahead of me, not behind  
it's time to get mine  
now that I got some time  
I'll double-dip and work half time  
or just kick up my heels and recline  
I've earned it and I don't take kind  
to people trying to save dollars  
by leaving me feeling nicked and dimed”  
swallow hard because that bulge in your  
throat will be tough to choke down  
boomers moving through will move out  
whether they retire, get laid off or bought out  
pursue goals on their own terms  
and asking “what benefit is this to me?”  
so let's see  
if you find the right hook for mutual victory  
and the right place for the people to be  
we can exchange and communicate reciprocally  
gain the benefits for them, for you and for me  
if we engage them in their interests meaningfully  
so they can navigate their mid-life years gracefully

and ignite their passions in ways that aid them properly  
to nurture and support their desires specifically  
then success in gaining people to fuel all that you do  
whether they are twenty or thirty or forty or sixty two  
is both possible and doable should you learn where to find  
where they live and they hide and spark their pride  
in doing well and giving back to the causes they support  
so now the challenge is out there – the ball's in your court.

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*Greg Frankson, also known as Ritallin, is an arts educator, spoken word artist and creative services consultant based in Ottawa. He is also Poet Laureate of the International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL). Through his company Cytopoetics, Greg works in schools, businesses and with community organizations as a presenter, facilitator, speaker and diversity/anti-discrimination consultant. Find Greg online at [www.ritallin.com](http://www.ritallin.com).*

## **ENGAGING “50+” VOLUNTEERS**

by Don Lapierre

There are over 12 million volunteers in Canada. While that number may seem quite high, only a small percentage of them are carrying most of the load...and many of them are already in their seventies. As they step down and retire from their volunteer careers, we will begin to see an enormous gap in volunteer contributions. A whole new generation of volunteers will be needed to fill their places.

Enter the baby boomers. Eleven million individuals in their forties, fifties and sixties. As they approach retirement from the full-time labour force, the baby boomers will be seeking new ways to connect to others and contribute to their communities. Voluntary sector leaders and thinkers are watching this group. Organizational structure, programming and services will experience a dynamic shift, causing many of us in the sector to re-think the way we do business.

According to Volunteer Canada:

“When baby boomers volunteer, they want mission-linked, productive, satisfying work that allows them to use their skills and experience. They want short-term work, flexible schedules at convenient locations – including opportunities to volunteer online. To effectively engage baby boomers as volunteers, organizations must think about volunteer roles and responsibilities differently and adapt to meet their needs while meeting the needs of the organization.” <sup>1</sup>

“Strategic volunteer management in the competitive new millennium means making changes in all aspects of your organization and requires the participation of everyone - from front line staff to the CEO - and even buy-in from your Board of Directors”.<sup>2</sup> Engaging the next generation will require an exploration of different approaches and a commitment to undertaking structural adjustments.

*Keeping Baby Boomers Volunteering: A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention and Turnover* focuses on volunteer retention – an area of research that has received less attention than that of recruitment. They suggest that individuals who leave the workforce also leave behind the contacts that engage them in the community, which can lead to less volunteering. This suggests that creating opportunities for flexible work arrangements could benefit nonprofits both in retaining paid workers and in recruiting volunteers. Many of these principles are supported by research by Frederick Herzberg, a behavioural scientist, which distinguishes between what he called the maintenance and the motivational factors that affect job satisfaction (Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory).<sup>3</sup>

Job design theory was developed from such psychological and social science foundational research. This is a theory used widely in the for-profit sector, and can also clearly be an effective approach for non-profit organizations. It involves all the creative human resource strategies including job-sharing, flex time, telecommuting, job rotation and part-time work – all options that will appeal to baby boomers. Since the concepts presented in job design theory originated in the private sector there was a natural tendency to adopt the term “job design”. One might argue that the term “opportunity design” would work best when applying this theory in the voluntary sector. For further reading on this issue, see the Volunteer Canada resource, *A Matter of Design – Job Design Theory and Application to the Voluntary Sector*.

The following is a list of other helpful hints drawn from Volunteer Canada’s latest web resource, *Baby Boomers – Your New Volunteers* which focuses on recruiting, managing and retaining this new cohort of volunteers:

#### *A Few Helpful Hints*

This online workbook is targeted at “50+” volunteers to assist them in determining the best fit as they consider the many volunteer opportunities out there based on their skill set, experience, interests and availability. A separate section is also available for people who manage and work with volunteers in Canada’s 161,000 nonprofit community organizations, charities, service clubs, foundations and aid agencies. It includes strategies and information about restructuring and re-thinking approaches to volunteerism in order to successfully recruit and retain this potential cohort. It also includes a selection of exercises to encourage organizational reflection on tapping into the energy

and vast array of expertise of baby boomer volunteers.

#### **Connect to baby boomers**

Reach out and connect to baby boomers through key influencers in their lives. Research shows that word-of-mouth promotion by peers is one of the best ways to recruit volunteers. Evidence-based research findings or testimonials from experts or high-profile members of the community are also influential. Many of Canada’s baby boomers are still in the workforce – either full-time or part-time – so workplaces are important places to connect with them. Target workplaces that match the volunteer needs of your organization. Also consider organizing activities and services that families can do together and offer opportunities for intergenerational volunteering. And last but not least, a growing trend for this demographic is to investigate online information tools such as social networking sites.

#### **Create key messages**

When you have a sense of where to connect with potential baby boomer volunteers, you will need to create key messages that build on what we know about baby boomers and what motivates them. For instance, if it is known that the main motivation for a potential volunteer is commitment to a cause and making a difference, clearly link the volunteer position directly to the mission of your organization. If the potential volunteer is motivated by personal development, either mental or spiritual, link the volunteer position to finding a new purpose. For more information, visit Volunteer Canada’s website [www.volunteer50plus.ca](http://www.volunteer50plus.ca).

#### **Customize for different baby boomer audiences**

Baby boomers are a huge group with wide ranging ages, interests and backgrounds so you will need to segment your audience and recruit accordingly. They are a racially and ethnically diverse population. For example, baby boomers that were born in South Asia may not relate to boomer pop culture references from North America. Similarly, baby boomers that were born in the 1960s have different priorities than older boomers.

*Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement* is a substantive and commonly cited document based on a conference sponsored by the Harvard School of Public Health – a MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement in 2003. It states “volunteerism will be more informal, unstructured, and focused on the extended family than has previously been the case. The community focus of most volunteering, coupled with the diversity of communities in terms of both the incidence of boomers and the capacity to support volunteerism, will be a factor as well.”<sup>4</sup> With our expanding diversity, in the years since 2003, this has been shown to be increasingly true in Canada.

#### **Communicate widely with high quality materials**

Baby boomers respond to professional high quality packaging so keep that in mind when creating and assembling recruitment materials (like annual reports, mission statements, position descriptions, etc.). Ensure that online and print communication materials have the same high quality standards. Publicize through use of local

media at every opportunity and appeal to experienced, seasoned members of the community directly.

*The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement* is designed to set the stage for organizations to discuss how their volunteers are engaged and supported. It is structured to initiate thought and discussions about the role volunteers can play in helping the voluntary organization achieve its purpose or mission.”<sup>5</sup> While this article does not attempt to align all 12 organizational standards for volunteer involvement when considering 50+ volunteers, reference to the Code as a resource will provide an excellent starting point for addressing a paradigm shift in modern volunteer resource management.

Because of their sheer numbers, baby boomers influence and re-define every stage of their lives. Volunteering will be no different. “Baby boomers have the potential to become a social resource of unprecedented proportions.”<sup>6</sup>

With these few helpful hints, and adoption of organizational values, guiding principles and standards for volunteer involvement such as those outlined in the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement, Canada’s voluntary sector organizations can explore volunteering in different ways. Resilient communities will thrive and everyone involved will experience the wide range of benefits of volunteering.

#### Endnotes:

- 1 Baby Boomers: Your New Volunteers, page 4
- 2 Baby Boomers: Your New Volunteers, page 1
- 3 [www.accel-team.com/human\\_relations/hrels\\_05\\_herzberg.html](http://www.accel-team.com/human_relations/hrels_05_herzberg.html)
- 4 Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement, p.86
- 5 <http://volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/CodeEng.pdf> p.3
- 6 Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement, p. 3

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*Baby Boomers – Your New Volunteers*. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2009.

Foster-Bey, J., Grimm, R., Jr., & Dietz, N. *Keeping Baby Boomers Volunteering: A Research Brief on Volunteer Retention and Turnover*. Washington, DC: Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007.

*Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement*. Boston: Harvard School of Public Health, 2004.

*The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement*. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2006.

*Don Lapierre is Senior Manager, Programs and Voluntary Sector Relations for Volunteer Canada.*

## VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT: AUTHORING OUR OWN LANGUAGE

by Erin Spink

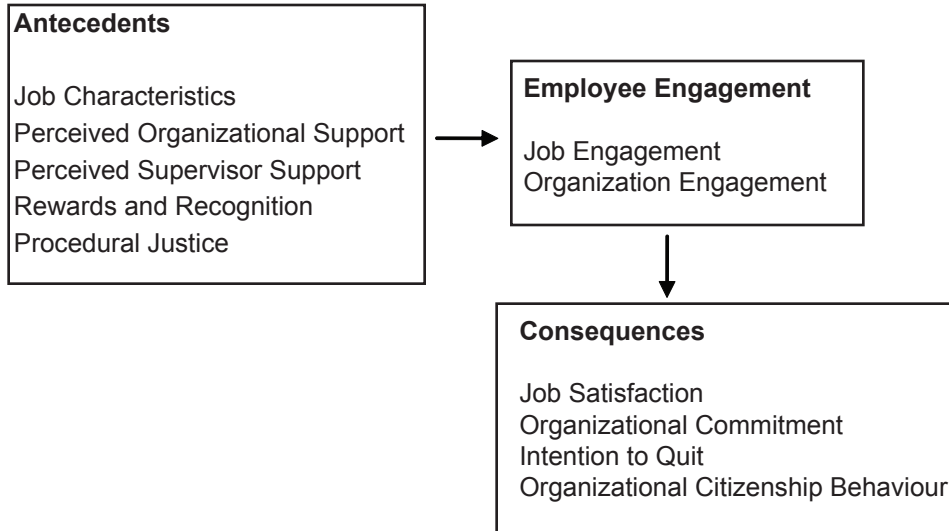
Boomers and volunteer engagement are very popular current topics. Although they twinkle with the promise of shaping the future of the social profit sector for decades to come, we know little for certain about how they fit together. Both are equally large, complex subjects that are unlikely to hold simple truths. Currently more questions than answers exist; this article attempts to highlight those unanswered questions by examining recent research completed on volunteer engagement and applying it to the boomer generation.

In modern times, the first place to look for answers is existing literature and surfing the net offers literally millions of items to wade through. However, conspicuous in its absence is a definition or operationalization of what engagement means for volunteers - boomers or otherwise. It is concerning that a term as frequently used as “volunteer engagement” has not been quantified and the fallout is that anything written about it will not be based on an informed, shared understanding between the audience and the author.

Dialogues can only truly happen when parties are talking about the same thing. So what is volunteer engagement? Well, employee engagement is considered distinguishable from other more well known concepts such as organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour and job involvement. One of the aspects employee engagement theorists feel makes it unique is that it is two-way, meaning organizations must work to involve an individual who then chooses whether or not to offer their engaged self and to what degree.

Given engagement’s beginning as a concept for employees, if it is to be used in association with volunteers, it cannot remain static and so the outcomes seen with employees cannot be presumed to apply to volunteers without proof. While a few research studies have documented the parallels between employees and volunteers, the fact remains that their function and psychology have fundamental differences that make it impossible for engagement to manifest in a completely similar fashion. Rigorous and legitimate investigation is required.

Last year I completed a graduate research project that investigated the antecedents and consequences of a leader’s impact on volunteer engagement. This was done by taking a validated tool used to investigate employee engagement and applying it to a population of volunteers. The model was created by Canadian researcher Dr. Alan Saks (University of Toronto) and in it engagement is understood to be a mix of satisfaction, commitment, retention and effort.



For my research, approximately 400 volunteers from Ontario completed a survey, which had some minor terminology changes to apply more specifically to a volunteer context. Some basic role specific information was also collected including the length of time in the role and the frequency of activity. One of the main goals of my research was to determine whether a model of employee engagement would in fact correspond to a population of volunteers and where any gaps as well as strong parallels existed. I tested the majority of the hypotheses from Saks' original employee research to see exactly where those might be. The model was shown to be a statistically viable fit for volunteers, but with several important and significant differences in results. In Saks' original study, he found that employees who are engaged with both their job and their organization have a negative (reverse) intention to quit versus those employees who are not engaged. Simply put, the more engaged you are, the less your intention to quit. But something very different was shown to be true of engaged volunteers. My research indicated that there was no relation between engagement and intention to quit, meaning that even volunteers who are engaged with their role and the organization may still choose to leave.

Further, my research found that the factors that most robustly explained engagement in volunteers were role satisfaction, organizational commitment and the frequency of an individual's volunteer experience. Perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support and role characteristics are also factors, but to a lesser degree. The strongest engagement relationship was found to be between organization engagement and organizational commitment.

It makes sense that the more committed one is to an organization, the more engaged one will be with it. Although in this model role satisfaction was also found to be significant, it did not explain as much variance as organizational commitment. This could indicate that a strong commitment to the purpose, people and vision of an organization plays a stronger role than satisfaction with one's role within it. Seen in a volunteer context, with the knowledge that many individuals volunteer for organizations that hold personal relevance to them, this affirms that finding.

These findings have application to a discussion of boomer engagement specifically as this demographic group has more doors open to them as they retire than any previous generation. With better health, increased wealth, predicted labour shortages and current economic and retirement savings repercussions, baby boomers may very likely have multiple reasons to either leave their volunteer work, if they are already volunteering, or put off starting it if they are not.

To not deeply reflect upon or ask hard questions about a concept we have placed so much stock into, as we have with volunteer engagement, is to fail as a profession. Hence the importance of critically examining our own and others' assumptions and working towards building further empirical knowledge of volunteers and volunteerism.

Success in the future will require us collectively to stop appropriating terminology from other sectors and businesses and applying them to volunteers without serious consideration first. As a profession we must begin to author our own language. As the other articles in this edition will demonstrate, we have the passion, intelligence and ability to do just that.

Reference:

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*Erin Spink has spent the past nine years working in volunteer management. She teaches with the Conestoga College Volunteer Program Management Certificate in Kitchener, Ontario and is currently the Director, Strategic Partnerships for PAVR-O. Visit Erin at <http://blog.spinktank.ca/> for more resources and writings.*

## **BOOMER VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT: TARGETED STRATEGIES**

by Suzanne L. Cook and Marisa Gelfusa

With increases in life expectancy, older people can expect to spend as much as 25 to 30 years in retirement.<sup>1</sup> As the baby boomers age, gaining a better understanding of those who volunteer with nonprofit organizations is important because we can better engage them and provide meaningful opportunities in the community. Thirty-two percent of people ages 65 and older volunteer, with older adults contributing the most number of volunteer hours.<sup>2</sup> Connecting with the baby boomer generation prior to or at retirement and providing them with rewarding experiences is critical to keeping them in the volunteer workforce.

A survey of recent Canadian retirees looks at motivations to volunteer from a new perspective, with the aim of enhancing volunteer engagement. This research examines whether volunteering during retirement represents an extension of one's career in the paid workforce. Is this a motivating factor for baby boomers that want to volunteer? Or, do these volunteers desire new learning experiences? In this study, the boomer volunteers contributed many hours to nonprofits; survey respondents volunteered three hours or more per week on average. The findings point to recent retirees using their paid work skills and abilities in their volunteer activities. These retirees also had learning goals that they wanted to achieve. These findings have implications for nonprofit organizations and their engagement of baby boomers.

### **Promotion and Recruitment**

In the promotion of volunteerism, managers of volunteers should highlight the ability to use one's skills, abilities and specialized knowledge. Managers of volunteers should also create a wish list of projects for the organization to aid in finding the right volunteers with the right skill sets to make the wish list a reality. Your recruitment message should help the individual identify and name the skills they want to continue using. It should also help them identify the skills they could develop while volunteering at your agency.

One way to promote the opportunities available at your agency is through the media that is geared to Boomers and reaches a Canadian market. Some examples include "Active Adult Magazine" ([www.activeadultmag.com](http://www.activeadultmag.com)), "Zoomer Magazine" or sites for "wired seniors" such as [www.ageofreason.com](http://www.ageofreason.com). The websites often have bulletin boards where you can post information about your agency. Professional associations are also a good place to reach boomers with specific skill sets, as they often continue receiving information from these groups

after retirement. A list of professional associations in Canada can be found at [www.charityvillage.com](http://www.charityvillage.com).

To enhance boomer recruitment, nonprofit managers of volunteers should actively seek out individuals with skill sets, not just by paying attention to what they list on their volunteer application, but perhaps by connecting with older employees in industries that likely have the desired skill sets. Here the target might be the employer so that you can connect with potential volunteers and let them know about volunteer opportunities. This involves going beyond the corporate volunteering trend towards more active recruitment via employers. Corporate Social Responsibility staff at corporations may help you to arrange for a lunchtime presentation, kiosk or community event where you can target the older staff members. Human Resource departments organize retirement seminars. These often include presentations on volunteering. It is important to present opportunities that vary in length and degree of commitment. This can be accomplished by breaking down certain position descriptions to be able to offer shorter commitments. Hesitant volunteers may be more interested if they can "test" the fit first.

Roughly 40% of the boomers in this survey indicated that they volunteered after they were asked directly by someone in their circle. "Bring a friend" events, open houses and other social activities are other means of recruitment. These types of activities also support a continuation of the social interaction in the work environment, often a prized aspect of one's working life that is missed in retirement.

### **Retention**

To enhance boomer volunteer retention, managers of volunteers can go beyond rewards and recognition programs to provide volunteer training and opportunities for lifelong learning. Through regular formal and informal check-ins and evaluations, they can assist boomer volunteers to reach their current learning goals and address frustrations among retirees who are not using their skills, abilities and knowledge as they had hoped. Agencies can offer tasks that require autonomy but that also have built-in opportunities to provide support, supervision and feedback. The volunteer will be able to "own" the task and you can ensure that the volunteer is on the right track. Flexibility is important. People in the sandwich generation may need to temporarily alter the type of commitment they can offer. This flexibility will be appreciated and can accommodate changing circumstances.

Regular and appropriate recognition, as for all volunteers, is key. Learning

and developing skills through courses and workshops is a common motivation for boomer volunteering. Providing opportunities for learning task-related skills as well as other common interest courses are popular.

Engaging baby boomers and determining how to best meet their needs is critical as this generation enters retirement. Following the above suggestions can help managers of volunteers make the volunteer experience a positive and successful one.

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2. Stone, L. (Ed.) (2006). *New frontiers of research about retirement and other later-life transitions*. Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada. Retrieved January 14, 2007 from <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/Statcan/75-511-X/0010675-511-XIE.pdf>

*Suzanne L. Cook is a Doctoral Candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (scook@oise.utoronto.ca). Her research focuses on recent retirees who volunteer with nonprofit organizations and this paper presents some findings from her doctoral thesis. She received a Graduate Student Thesis Scholarship from the Social Economy Centre at the University of Toronto and the 2009-2010 Graduate Student Researcher Award from the Institute of Nonprofit Studies of Mount Royal College in support of her research.*

*Marisa Gelfusa is currently with Training Services at Volunteer Toronto (mgelfusa@volunteertoronto.ca). She has been actively involved in the nonprofit community as a trainer and consultant, in Ontario and Quebec, for over 15 years.*

## ENGAGING BOOMERS TO VOLUNTEER

by Kim Evans

With 3.7 million baby boomers in Canada, it is impossible for organizations to ignore the changing needs of our older adult volunteers. As managers of volunteers we have probably all noticed some significant changes in the expectations of incoming volunteers. We now have actively taken notice of this trend and its impact on our organization, our members and our staff.

### #1 Baby boomers want to make an impact at a high level

While we have volunteer positions to suit all levels, we need to recreate some of our positions so that baby boomers are more engaged. They want to go beyond traditional roles and share skills from their career and life experiences.

According to a report written by the Corporation for National & Community Service in 2007, "To attract baby boomers, experts agree that organizations must boldly re-think the types of opportunities they offer. To re-imagine roles that cater to their skills and desire to make their mark in their own way." Consequently, we need to focus not only on our needs but also focus on what is in it for them. Therefore, we have to have clear policies and procedures in place to prevent the line between staff and volunteer roles from blurring.

### #2 Senior volunteers are becoming more active

Seniors do not want to just be advisors; they want to be implementers too. This may mean that volunteers will take on several roles rather than just one. They may become trainers who supervise and train other volunteers. Again, clarity and communication are crucial in these circumstances. It is great to have such competent leaders, but we need to ensure that we get input from a variety of people and make sure that if a volunteer leaves, the program or event will not suffer.

### #3 They view retirement as the second half of life

The newly retired are very busy people and may be volunteering actively with more than one organization. Marketing the value of volunteering with your organization is key. Scheduling has become very important to them, so stay organized! In addition, we need to ensure planning and committee meetings start on time and are effective and efficient or volunteers will find something else to do.

### #4 Senior volunteers are not just looking for something to do – they want to make an important contribution

Baby boomers know all about recognition from their previous careers and are very motivated by it. They like to be recognized and want to see the impact of their work. This affects our recruitment strategies. Our marketing messages need to be less about the task role of a volunteer and more about the volunteer's influence through their role. In addition, we need to make sure the community knows how our volunteers are making a difference.

### #5 They want to be seen as healthy, active individuals - not frail

Volunteer marketing images must continue to change. Volunteers should be shown in more active situations – engaging clients and leading groups versus the more sedentary or staged pictures of the past.



The wave of baby boomer retirements represents an exciting time for organizations. The agencies and groups that benefit the most will be the ones who work to understand the needs and motivations of this group, engage their passions and make adaptations to meet the challenge.

*Kim Evans has been the Administrator for the Whitby office of Community Care Durham for the past five years and has over fifteen years experience in the volunteer and community development sector. Community Care Durham is a charitable organization that provides Home Support, Respite and COPE Mental Health services to more than 6000 adults and their caregivers who have needs related to physical disability, aging and/or mental health.*

## **IT'S BOOMER OR BUST FOR THE VOLUNTEER SECTOR**

by Karen Franco

We all know that the boomer generation represents one of the largest and most significant population demographics of our time, so it is logical to assume that it will continue to have a significant impact as the group ages. Foot and Stoffman (1997) in their book "Boom, Bust & Echo" predict that the nonprofit sector will soon see a surge in volunteering as this activity tends to increase with age. They go on to suggest that although the huge boomer generation will follow that trend, that is where the similarity to previous generations is expected to end.

Nonprofit organizations which rely on volunteers to achieve their goals and objectives must be prepared for the fact that the boomer generation may not be content to sit back and plan bake sales, stuff envelopes or knit blankets. Baby boomers are achievement-oriented, dedicated and career-focused. They welcome exciting, challenging projects and strive to make a difference. They will be far more receptive to redesigning your IT department, enhancing your communications strategies or mentoring your department heads.

In 2005, Volunteer Calgary completed a year-long study that took a hard look at the potential impact of changing demographics on the voluntary sector. In doing so it became clear that very few local organizations had the capacity to fully engage these individuals and capitalize on the talents they had to offer.

Following up on these findings, Volunteer Calgary commissioned a second research study, in 2007, examining how to most effectively utilize high skills volunteers. Tremendous opportunity exists to use specific professional skills of volunteers in an integrated human resource strategy to assist voluntary

organizations in achieving their mission. From what we know of the boomer generation, we expect this type of strategy would be successful in engaging more of these individuals as volunteers.

An integrated human resource strategy is a strategically planned approach to identifying the work functions that need to be accomplished in organizations and involving people, whether paid or unpaid, to perform the work needed to achieve the organization's mission. This strategy assumes that "highly skilled" or "professionally skilled" individuals can be engaged in organizations by offering their skills and knowledge in both a paid and volunteer capacity. An integrated human resource strategy is not only viable, but will increasingly become a necessity for voluntary organizations to be sustainable. Organizations will have to attract and retain both paid and unpaid staff (volunteers) and further create a reputation for offering a workplace where people can gain satisfaction from their work regardless of whether they are paid or not.

### **Implications from the Research Findings**

#### *1. Essential Strategic Leadership*

In order for an integrated human resource strategy approach to be successful in an organization, the Executive Director must champion a culture and organizational structure that supports the full integration of high skills volunteers. The Executive Director, in their role as an agent of change, is critical. Organizations in the pilot project which had the support of their Executive Directors had more success at applying the learning and at developing practices that began to support an integrated human resource strategy approach.

#### *2. Role and Place of the Manager of Volunteers*

The need for a manager of volunteers as a member of the paid staff complement and as a member of the senior management team is required to effectively and strategically involve volunteers into all aspects of the organization. Managers of volunteers need to have a direct link or working relationship with the Executive Director and the financial resources to perform their work.

#### *3. Professionally Managed Volunteer Programs*

A professionally managed volunteer program with systems, policies and processes needs to be in place for an integrated human resource strategy to be implemented. The systems, policies and processes for paid and unpaid staff need to be directly aligned.

#### *4. Valuing Volunteers*

Volunteers and staff need to understand the "value" that volunteers contribute to the organization. An integrated human resource strategy may be instrumental in overcoming the outdated perceptions of "I am/you are just a volunteer" and improving the way in which organizations value every one of their human resources.

### 5. Readiness for an Integrated Human Resource Strategy Approach

It became evident in the research that an integrated human resource strategy needed to fit into the larger organizational strategic plan for its operational activities and functions. The success of the organizations participating in the pilot project was limited by the degree to which strategic management capacity already existed in their organizations.

If this sounds like a lot of work and something that your organization just does not have the manpower to address, consider for a moment that North American labour statistics indicate that nearly 80 million baby boomers will exit the workplace in the next decade, retiring at the rate of 8,000 per day or more than 300 per hour. Now just imagine how much your organization will lose if you fail to engage this group of highly skilled volunteers.

Volunteering can give boomers a way to stay in the game and to be movers and shakers in a new way. They bring with them an enormous level of skill and expertise. This is the generation that grew up in an era of reform; they still believe they can change the world and they have the passion and commitment to back that up if your organization is ready to engage them!

*Karen Franco is the Communications Director for Volunteer Calgary. She has spent 15 years engaged in communications, marketing and public relations, working in both the private and nonprofit sectors.*

## REAL WORLD SECOND LIFE - ENGAGING BOOMERS IN VOLUNTEERING

by David Newman

Canadian baby boomers, those who are 50 to 65, are apparently elusive, choosy and demanding when it comes to volunteering in the community. Among many other things, that is what Renaissance 50+ (R50+) found out. R50+ is a Catholic Immigration Centre pilot project in Ottawa, supported by Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. It concluded in January 2008 and can be found on the web at [www.renaissance50plus.ca](http://www.renaissance50plus.ca). The project came up with some very interesting findings on engaging boomers, Canada's dominant demographic, over 10 million strong and nearly a third of the country's population.<sup>1</sup> Boomers are one of the most socially conscious, educated and activist generations, or at least we have been. At the same time, we are hard to get to and even harder to motivate.

The project was extensive. R50+ did research and literature searches,

networked and partnered with other organizations, tried coffee klatch match-ups, worked events and brainstormed. The project also produced two extensive and information-packed Resource Guides, one for volunteer agencies and one for boomer volunteers. The guides, toolkits, lessons learned and activities undertaken during the 18-month pilot project can be found on the website. One thing they found was that change is needed in non profit volunteer practices. Dan Dubeau, R50+ project coordinator, tells us "boomers are just leading the way for the rest, just as they have always done. What we have found is not simply for the 50+; rather much of it is about a better way to do things. If agencies want a good volunteer, they need to be ready to adapt their recruitment and retention practices."

So why are boomers not volunteering? Many are working part-time or plan to retire later. They may never completely retire. Their formula of living may well include self-employment, volunteering and leisure (which includes "snowbird travelling") and the flexibility to mix all three can be increasingly important. A modest paid professional contract may well attract the interest and volunteer efforts of a valuable older expert or professional, getting back much more in turn. Other boomers are looking after aging parents or children who do not seem to ever leave home. Still others have worked hard all their lives and now want to travel, play golf or spend time on hobbies. CharityChannel, an online resource for non profits, found in their survey that out of those boomers who do not volunteer:

- 51 percent have a problem with the time commitment,
- 38 percent find the work is not meaningful,
- 38 percent do not want to restrict their ability to travel,
- 27 percent do not find volunteering challenging enough,
- 24 percent find it is an intrusion in their lives,
- 23 percent find a lack of information.

Other reasons were confusion over their role, complex regulations, lack of emotional commitment, personal health or the cost of volunteering.

The other side of that coin, what boomers are looking for, is equally revealing. Based on the research, discussions and activities of the project, it is clear that boomers want variety, flexibility and different levels of time commitment, as well as an opportunity to use skills not used at the workplace and to discover hidden skills.<sup>2</sup> That means organizations looking for volunteers might want to provide opportunities to "try before you buy", while at the same time making expectations clear regarding time, tasks and training.

Boomers look to volunteering for the same things they enjoyed about working: camaraderie, intellectual stimulation and the satisfaction of achieving a goal. They want to be involved in decision-making and goal setting. They do not simply want to be told what to do and most want to have fun while working on a

worthwhile project that actually accomplishes something they can point to. And the old adage “find a busy person” still applies. The few do much.

There are also a few new ideas and dynamics in volunteering coming out of the R50+ program. Virtual volunteering does not only mean working with computers or the Internet, it can be anyone making an impact from a different location, such as their own home. Increasingly, volunteering is incorporating flexibility and independence for volunteers. It is now easier to volunteer in one’s own time, at one’s own pace and in a place of one’s choosing. This could include teaching literacy over the phone or videoconferencing or planning and strategizing by e-mail.

Dan Dubeau is even talking about something he calls “TAG Teams (Tactical Accountable Gifted Teams)”, small diverse teams of boomer volunteers who accomplish specific tasks for an organization and then move on. Organizations get established skill sets, experience and the no-hassle help they need. The volunteer team gets a sense of camaraderie that they may be missing from the workplace, social opportunities, variety and flexibility with a specific challenge and defined timelines. And they might even get the chance to involve their family or workplace colleagues.

We may even see “volunteer malls”, comfortable gathering places where organizations that need volunteer help and volunteers, both committed and casual, can meet, greet and get on their feet. These might range from social gathering locations for chess, Sudoku, chat or coffee, to awareness building and learning centres, to bee hives for busy work. These places could provide secure, accessible spaces for clients and volunteers to meet. Or they might be places where people can drop by to do something worthwhile when they have a couple of hours to spare. Such initiatives could recapture the “community” in community centres.

Simply put, organizations that want volunteers in the future can no longer take them for granted. Volunteers will increasingly be able to truly enjoy their experiences, grow from them and actually see results. At the foundation, there must be better management, more knowledge about volunteers and the organizations and clients they serve and value added for everyone involved in the volunteering experience. Sound challenging? Find a boomer volunteer and make it happen!

1 Statistics Canada – 2006 Census: Portrait of the Canadian Population in 2006, by age and Sex: National portrait.

2 <http://nonprofit.about.com/od/volunteers/a/boomervolunteer.htm>

*David Newman is an Ottawa-based writer, communications consultant and community volunteer, who also edits Total Access magazine and businessknowledgechannel.com.*

## **STRATEGIES FOR ATTRACTING THE HIGHLY SKILLED BABY BOOMER VOLUNTEER**

by Angie Boehm

The baby boomer demographic has played a significant role in Canadian society for a very long time and, over the years, our society has been very adept in adjusting to accommodate this group. However, some administrators of volunteers are just now starting to wrap their programs around the accommodation idea. How can volunteer organizations make the accommodations required to encourage this significant and very busy group to donate their time, talent and energy? How will we become their volunteer “organization of choice”?

This demographic grew up after the Second World War ended, many in a culture of affluence. They are very used to having their material needs met. Moreover, this group has lived in what has become a very disposable society. As such, if the volunteer program does not fit for them they may simply walk away or find another organization where the fit is better. Expectations for a solid use of their time and talents are high. They want to know what the problem is and they want to be part of the solution.

### **The Motivators**

<b>Motivator</b> <sup>1</sup>	45 – 54 years old	55 – 64 years old	65+ years old
Belief in the cause	97%	98%	97%
To share skills	76%	75%	71%
Personally affected	70%	70%	66%
Explore own strengths	50%	46%	37%
Religious obligations	32%	40%	49%
Friends volunteer	20%	25%	31%
To improve job skill	12%	9%	3%

Research tells us that the top three reasons/motivators for this group to volunteer are a belief in the cause, a willingness to share skills and experience and because they may have been personally affected. How do organizations encourage community engagement and social responsibility among this group?

### **The Challenges**

Our challenge is to develop volunteer opportunities that offer incentives, tangible and intangible, to motivate baby boomers. They are better educated, willing to share their voice for a cause and have higher skill levels. Retiring into the computer age, their technological skills are very good. The possibilities are boundless.

### **Time is Money**

Baby boomers lead busy and hectic lives. Sometimes called the “Sandwich Generation” often this group has extended family responsibilities. They may have some responsibility for providing care for older parents, as well as their own children or grandchildren. In these cases, short term or episodic volunteer assignments may accommodate very busy schedules. Often these volunteers look for assignments in an organization that touches them personally yet allows them to spend time with their families. Family volunteering may be another viable option for this group. It is definitely time to think outside the box.

### **Snowbirds and Cottagers**

Many baby boomers have permanent seasonal travel plans. Snowbirds are away in the winter and at home and available to volunteer in the summer. The cottage country group are away at the cottage in the summer and at home and available to volunteer in the winter. These volunteers need flexibility to accommodate their schedules.

### **Meaningful Rewards**

A significant portion of this group is viewed as highly skilled. This group is interested in meaningful, outcomes-based assignments. They want to share in the celebration of reaching a stated goal. Is it time for our employees to re-claim their routine filing, faxing and photocopying tasks and allow the volunteer to use their creativity to provide solutions to everyday challenges? We must look at the skills the volunteers may bring to each position. Further, managers of volunteers must give thought to the recognition piece. This is more involved than providing pins and plaques for hourly milestones achieved. This means we must tell volunteers how their efforts benefit the organization (“Because of your volunteer work, the organization was able to...”).

### **The Competition**

As baby boomers continue their mass exodus from the workforce, employers are proactively developing new ways to keep them working longer. “Baby boomers have hit the tail end of the working-age population,” said Rosemary Bender, the

Director General of Social and Demographic Statistics at Statistics Canada. “They’re in the pre-retirement age so there’s an awful lot of interest in terms of ... the need for knowledge transfer or potential skills shortages.” As such, employers have been advised to make the necessary adjustments to allow older employees to continue working. This may include developing flexible work plans and redesigning benefit packages. Some potential retirees choose to continue working in order to top up their retirement plans. Unfortunately, market uncertainty has forced some to continue working to recoup stock market investment losses. We have to figure out how to make it attractive for these sought-after individuals to walk into volunteer assignments with our organizations.

### **Conclusion**

The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement tells us that administrators of volunteer programs must use many creative strategies to continually update and improve the involvement of volunteers. If you are unsure which strategy might work to attract boomers in your community, you may want to consider conducting a needs assessment. The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement Audit Tool will help you formulate the steps for this process and gather key information about the boomers you are seeking to recruit.

Whether we find ways to offer some “benefits” that go beyond the free parking and coffee, or we offer other tangible benefits, the window for attracting this group is open now. If we wait too long, we may find the window will slam shut quite unceremoniously. One thing is certain, this group has been very adept at finding ways to get their needs met. “Society has always adjusted itself to the boomers,” said Bill Gleberzon of the Canadian Association of Retired Professionals (CARP), Canada’s Association for the 50 Plus. “It looks like we are about to adjust again.”<sup>3</sup>

### **References:**

- 1 Volunteering ... A Booming Trend. *Volunteer Canada and the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, 2000.* [http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/booming\\_trend.pdf](http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/pdf/booming_trend.pdf)
- 2 <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/07/17/census-canada.html?ref=rss>
- 3 <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/07/17/census-canada.html?ref=rss>

### **Other Sources**

Canadian Code for Volunteering. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2006.  
The Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement: An Audit Tool. Ottawa: Volunteer Canada, 2006.

*Angie Boehm is the Volunteer Services Administrator at Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre. She is a member of the Manitoba Association for Volunteer Administration and the Canadian Administrators of Volunteer Resources (CAVR). This article was adapted from Angie’s recent CAVR certification paper.*

## BOOK REVIEW

by Christine Martin

*Boomer Volunteer Engagement, Collaborate Today, Thrive Tomorrow*, by Jill Friedman Fixler and Sandie Eichberg, with Gail Lorenz. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2008.

We have all been hearing for a while about the wave of baby boomers reaching retirement (the oldest, born in 1946, turn 63 this year). There is much speculation about what this will mean for society. And much speculation about what this may mean for volunteerism. Could they be the source of volunteers we are looking for?

The authors of *Boomer Volunteer Engagement* see the boomer population as a great resource for volunteer services, if we can shift our approach from one of management to one of engagement, in a richly collaborative environment. In their book, the authors offer a practical, step-by-step approach for organizations wishing to “reimagine the role of volunteers ... and the possible results of involving volunteers in every aspect of operations”.

The book begins with a thorough background on boomers – who they are and how engaging them could truly enrich organizations. Each following chapter describes one step in the process of creating a boomer-friendly volunteer culture. Beginning with the formation of a cross-organizational task force, the reader is taken through the steps of needs assessment and developing a plan to engage boomers in a pilot project. Next, the focus is on creating opportunities and developing connections (rather than just recruiting). Following a review of motivational analysis, there is an excellent guide to interviewing and finding the fit collaboratively (versus screening and placement). The mutual relationship is built through volunteer support and acknowledgement (not supervision and recognition). The authors conclude with a clear approach to ongoing engagement through feedback, communication and building on experience.

In this guidebook, the easy-to-read chapters outline the steps, one building on the next, to create this new model. They start with key concepts, outline the framework and background for the step, and then give specific details on how to make it happen. Blank worksheets and progress report forms are provided and also available for download online.

*Boomer Volunteer Engagement* is a terrific and practical resource for agencies wishing to bring boomers into their volunteer force, especially those with an aging population of volunteers. It is firmly rooted in the experience boomers bring and in their desire to have fulfillment, to grow and learn and to make a

difference. By following this strategic, focused approach and adopting the writers' philosophy, managers of volunteers will become “volunteer engagement professionals”. In the authors' own words: “Boomer volunteer engagement is a new way of thinking. We passionately believe that this philosophy applies to the Boomer cohort and to the generations that follow.”

*Christine Martin is the Manager, Volunteer Development with Evergreen, in Toronto.*

## PEER EXPERT

**Scenario:** What challenges and/or opportunities have you noticed in supervising volunteers who have heavy responsibilities, such as caring for their grandchildren and/or aging parents?

For this issue we are designating all of our readers “Peer Experts”. We love to hear from our readers and we realize that most people “wait to be asked” so we are asking you to send us your answer to the above question. Email your responses to [contact@cjvrm.org](mailto:contact@cjvrm.org). We will publish the responses in the next issue of the Journal.

The Editorial Team

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

“The Boomer Boon: Recruiting & retaining late career employees to the non-profit sector”. An article by Susan Carter, available at the Trends & Issues page of the HR Council for the Voluntary & Non-Profit Sector site.  
<http://www.hrvs-rhsbc.ca/trends-issues/october2009.cfm>.

“YoungRetired.ca is a web magazine about retirement planning for active Canadians, offering over 100 short videos about volunteering, physical exercise, lifelong learning, travel clubs and caring for ageing parents.”  
[www.youngretired.ca](http://www.youngretired.ca)

[www.volunteer50plus.ca](http://www.volunteer50plus.ca) - Volunteer Canada's new site, focusing on volunteering & healthy ageing.

[www.linkingboomers.com](http://www.linkingboomers.com) - a web site for anyone 50+ interested in staying connected to their community through events, work, volunteering, classifieds, and meeting other people. Currently includes pages for Toronto and Ottawa.

# JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

## Objective

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views on a specific and predetermined theme.

## Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

## Submissions

All manuscripts will be accepted on diskette or via e-mail in either Microsoft Word or Word Perfect. Submissions should be written according to "Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press. External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee.

The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

## Format and Style

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	Words	Pages
<b>Lead Article</b>	1000	5-6
<b>Secondary Article</b>	700-800	2-3
<b>Book Review</b>	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

## Advertising

Limited advertising space will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team.

## Guidelines:

1. Only ¼ page and ½ page ads will be accepted.
2. Ad must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Job ads are not recommended.
5. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.

## LOOKING AHEAD

PAVR-O "Embrace the Winds of Change" 2010 Conference  
May 12 - 14.  
Orillia, ON.  
[www.pavro.on.ca](http://www.pavro.on.ca)

CAVR - NLAVR Conference 2010  
May 30 - June 1.  
St. John's NL.  
[www.cavrcanada.org](http://www.cavrcanada.org)

## DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS & THEMES

Issue	Deadline	Theme
Volume 18.1	articles due end of January 2010	Going Green
Volume 18.2	articles due end of March 2010	Advocacy
Volume 18.3	articles due end of August 2010	Recruitment and Screening