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Vicky Julian

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Golden Gate University

Dr. Jay Gonzalez

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Introduction

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum is a public-private partnership. This 55-acre garden in Golden Gate Park is owned by the City of San Francisco and jointly managed by the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and the non-profit San Francisco Botanical Garden Society (SFBGS). The garden was opened to the public in 1940, but it was not until 1955 that the non-profit was established.

The division of responsibilities between the City and the non-profit has changed over time. At present, the City is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the garden, and it employs 11 full-time gardeners, a nurserywoman, a Garden Director and a supervisor toward that end. The Society's paid staff of 23 is responsible for all the other aspects of the garden, including public education programs for adults and children, collections management, interpretive signage, garden publications, planning and funding garden renovation, new garden development, the horticultural library, the bookstore and nursery businesses, volunteer programs, public relations, fundraising and membership. The Society also provides interns for the City gardeners.

The work of the small Society staff is augmented by a volunteer work force numbering around 400. Not all of these volunteers work every week, but many do, and some contribute 20 or more hours a week to the garden. Since the Society's work is heavily reliant on volunteer contributions, the Society strives to create a dynamic and congenial volunteer culture.

As evidenced by the long list of activities above, the work of the Society is wide-ranging. A host of volunteers and lots of money are needed to accomplish its goals. In addition to an endowment and bequests, the Society receives money through

memberships, individuals, foundations and corporations. A not-insignificant contributor is in-house: the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society Nursery.

The Nursery's primary purpose is to raise funds for the work of the Society. Its monthly Saturday plant sales and its Spring Plant Sale, Northern California's largest plant sale, generate approximately $200,000 a year gross, leaving $60,000 - $80,000 net in any given year for the Society. It is the most profitable public garden nursery in California, and nursery volunteers propagate 90% of the plants for the sales.

The work of the nursery is done in very modest physical circumstances. There is a lath house and a nursery, which was built in 1963 and needs replacing. Building a new, larger, and more modern nursery is in fact a priority in the 10-year garden master plan. Space is limited, and additional storage for the nursery's plants has been wrested from an undeveloped steep hillside within the gardens, not exactly an ideal location. Some of the equipment is in disrepair.

Two paid staff, a full time manager and his 60% time assistant, and their staff of 70 volunteers manage the business of the Nursery. Of these volunteers, 50 - 60 show up weekly on one, two, or three of the volunteer days (Wednesday, Friday and Saturday). Of these 60, 20 have volunteered for 7 or more years, 20 for 1 – 6 years, and 20 for less than a year. Despite the modest physical circumstances of the workplace, there is an impressive degree of commitment from the volunteers, as these figures show.

This highly successful volunteer-driven operation serves a two-fold purpose. It both raises money for the other worthy work of the Society, and it provides rare and difficult-to-acquire plants to the community through its monthly plant sales. In the

process, the Nursery offers volunteers of all ages, including many older retired people, the opportunity to contribute to their community through meaningful volunteer work.

The researcher, who has been a Nursery volunteer for three years, decided to conduct a case study of the nursery because it is a successful volunteer program of a nonprofit organization. The Nursery could not do its work without the contribution of its volunteers, many of whom are long-time volunteers. The research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates Nursery volunteers to continue to volunteer their time?
2. What actions do the volunteer managers at SFBGS (including the general volunteer manager, the nursery manager and the nursery assistant) take to motivate, satisfy and retain volunteers?

The research included an extensive literature review as well as in-depth interviews with three paid staff members and 10 volunteers. The researcher was also a participant observer of the Nursery and took notes on relevant occurrences in the Nursery throughout the duration of the study.

Answering the research questions is important because knowing what leads to a successful volunteer program in one organization can help other organizations manage their volunteer programs. The case of the SFBGS Nursery is most applicable to fund-raising nurseries at other public gardens. However, the principles of volunteer management and motivation that can be uncovered by examining any well-run volunteer program have broader applicability for other volunteer programs. As will be shown in the literature review, there is an enormous amount of important work in our society being done by volunteers. The need for volunteers is great, and organizations that make use of

them need to know how to motivate and retain them. Most volunteer programs are not profitable for the nonprofit organization in which they reside, but profitable programs such as the Nursery provide the added benefit of being able to further the other important work of the organization.

Literature Review

The review of the literature examined four areas:

1. The need for volunteers in the non-profit sector, given government funding cuts
2. The historical context of volunteerism in the United States
3. Motivational theories, particularly regarding volunteering in nonprofits
4. Recommendations for successful volunteer management found in professional journals and books

The Need for Volunteers in the Non-Profit Sector

The need for volunteers in the nonprofit sector in the United States is enormous. The nonprofit sector is huge; it "employ(s) more civilians than the federal and all state governments combined, and the yearly budget of the sector exceeds the budgets of all but seven nations of the world" (Brudney, 2001b). Furthermore, it is estimated that as much as 40.4% of employment in the U.S. nonprofit sector is actually work that is done by unpaid volunteers. A substantial volunteer labor force participates in the work of government as well; Brudney estimates voluntary employment in government at 10.2% percent of the government workforce.

The Independent Sector organization has conducted national surveys on volunteering in the United States every other year since 1985, and its findings have

consistently reported that close to half the U.S. population volunteers. In 1993, 47.7% of Americans volunteered an average of 4.2 hours per week, the equivalent of about 9 million full time employees (Ott, 2001b).

The importance of volunteer work at present is clear. Many observers predict that its importance will continue to grow. J. Steven Ott (2001b) states that "the importance of volunteers for nonprofits should continue to rise over the upcoming decades." He gives several reasons for this, the most important being that

> We are in a long-term era of declining government funding for human services and the arts, increasing service populations and needs, and expanded service mandates. If nonprofit organizations do not provide services for many vulnerable populations, it is questionable whether other organizations will. Thus, more volunteers will be needed than perhaps at any other time in our nation's history.

With the volunteer force playing such a crucial part in the American economy and "the competition for volunteers becoming more acute" (Bussell & Forbes, 2001), it is imperative for organizations to develop effective volunteer recruitment, retention and management programs.

Historical Context of Volunteerism in the United States

It is clear from the above facts that the United States in the early 21st century has a robust nonprofit sector. Hodgkinson and Weitzman (2001) report that "America in its post-industrial era is a vigorously civic America." Lester Salamon (2001) states that "the scale of the nonprofit sector is larger in the United States than in most other countries."

In fact, the state of the volunteer sector in present day America builds on a strong tradition of volunteerism that was evident early in American history. J. Steven Ott (2001a) reminds us that "early in the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville documented his amazement at the degree of shared control and responsibility for efforts to meet community needs that existed in the United States." P. L. Berger and R. J. Neuhaus (2001) state that "at least since de Tocqueville the importance of voluntary associations in American democracy has been widely recognized." These authors go on to speculate that "voluntarism has flourished in America more than in any other Western society and it is reasonable to believe this may have something to do with American political institutions. Associations...serve as schools of democracy."

Continuing in this tradition, United States Presidents of recent times, from John F. Kennedy onwards, have promoted voluntarism (Light, 2002). Kennedy himself initiated the Peace Corps; Lyndon Johnson oversaw the establishment of VISTA, the Foster Grandparent Program, the Small Business Administration's Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and other volunteer programs. Richard Nixon created a Cabinet Committee on Voluntary Action and founded the National Center for Voluntary Action. In 1971 Nixon established a new federal bureaucracy to administer the government's growing assortment of voluntary programs, placing the Peace Corps, VISTA and the many other programs within a new agency called ACTION.

Though Jimmy Carter's work with Habitat for Humanity is well known, he did not make voluntary service a hallmark of his presidency. While Ronald Reagan cut government funding for social services, he supported voluntary efforts and established the White House Office of Private-Sector Initiatives in 1981; his conservative successor

George H.W. Bush helped found the private nonprofit Points of Light Foundation. Bill Clinton created the Corporation for National and Community Service, which administers several U.S. government sponsored volunteer programs.

Though government sponsored volunteer programs do laudable work, many social critics believe that volunteerism is not an acceptable substitute for humane state social policies. They hold that volunteerism should exist beside, rather than in place of, social policies that protect our weakest citizens. In their scathing 1998 article in *New Political Science*, James Petras and Chronis Polychroniou denounce volunteerism as an unacceptable "alternative to comprehensive state social policies." They argue that "the shift to volunteerism is prompted by fiscal constraints...and the conversion of the state into an instrument of overseas expansion for the interests of...the multinationals." They claim further "the philosophy of volunteerism is a great deception – an ideology of the rich and powerful that aims to deny that social problems are structural."

On a less strident note, Berger and Neuhaus (2001) state that "using voluntary associations for public policy purposes deserves careful study." In any case, most observers in the field believe that the voluntary sector should be a complement to humane public policies rather than a substitute for government action.

Although the United States has had a strong voluntary sector throughout its history, the demographic make-up of the volunteer force and the type of work that volunteers seek have varied in different historical eras. One group of people whose needs in relation to volunteering have changed as a reflection of more political empowerment and economic opportunity in society is women. Though poorer women have always had to work, middle and upper middle class women were restricted to the role of homemaker,

wife and mother for much of this nation's history. As Johnson, Foley and Elder (2004) point out

> early in the 20th century, when women's opportunities in the labor market were highly restricted, volunteering in the community offered a meaningful alternative to paid work for many women...many women subscribed to an ideology that volunteerism was a natural extension of their roles as wives and mothers.

Thus were born organizations like the Junior League and hospital guilds. Though many of the well off women who volunteered for these organizations sought positions of responsibility and leadership, some of these women volunteers found themselves in menial support roles, performing tasks like stuffing envelopes. In fact, in the early days of the modern women's movement (1974), the National Organization of Women (NOW) stated that volunteerism exploits women (Managing Volunteers for Results, 1979). The exploitation was seen as two-pronged, both because this work was unpaid and because women's roles in volunteer work were often in a menial support capacity. NOW has since moderated its stance, and encourages women to volunteer in roles of political advocacy.

The women's movement has helped create significant professional opportunities for women. Now many in the social class of women who used to channel their creative energies into volunteer work are able to command good salaries in professional jobs; the women among them who can squeeze in volunteer work amid their professional and personal responsibilities want that work to be meaningful and responsible. Organizations are responding by giving their volunteers more opportunities for responsibility rather than

by giving them the dirty work staff want to avoid, and by viewing them as "colleagues" and "unpaid staff" rather than as "helpers" (Drucker, 1990). Ostwald and Runge (2004) speak of "citizen volunteers" who function as "an extension of paid staff."

The role of women in the volunteer force is not the only demographic that is changing. The Baby Boom generation is reaching retirement age, and people are living longer and healthier lives. The potential contribution of retired Baby Boomers as volunteers in all sorts of endeavors cannot be underestimated. J. Steven Ott (2001b) points out that "our population will live more and more productive years after retirement. Volunteering provides retirees with opportunities to use their skills and feel useful while making a difference." In a 1981 study, Karla A. Henderson describes volunteerism as having the characteristics of both work and leisure activity, which would seem desirable for many active retired people. "Volunteerism has a double value for...agencies," she says. "Not only can...programs be supplemented and enhanced by the use of volunteers, but the act of volunteering can be a programmed leisure activity for the volunteer."

Many young people offer their services as volunteers already, but there is hope that more and more young people will be brought into the world of volunteerism through the expansion of college and university programs such as internships, service learning classes, and community service programs. Particularly promising are service-learning classes. Paul C. Light (2002) states that a January 2000 research-in-progress report based on a random sample of more than 22,000 undergraduates indicates that

> students who enrolled in a service-learning course were particularly aware of the benefits of community service probably...because they discussed their service with each other and received emotional support from faculty...

and

compared with traditional community service, students in service-learning courses were more likely to develop a heightened sense of civic responsibility and personal effectiveness through their work.

It has been shown that "parental socialization affects whether young adults volunteer, and how often" (Light, 2002). Light goes on to state that "dinner-table conversations about politics are more strongly related to volunteering than are traditional demographic variables such as race, sex, education and income." It would seem that college service learning courses are the next best thing to parental socialization encouraging civic-mindedness in young people.

Working adults are being given opportunities to volunteer through employee volunteer programs. There are also successful cases of development of disadvantaged communities through community-level volunteer organizations (Hibbert, Piacentini, & Dajani, 2003).

To recap, the literature review has so far established three points:

1. The United States has a strong and healthy tradition of voluntary activity.
2. Since government funding has been cut back for many services, the need for volunteers is acute.
3. The availability of volunteers from demographic groups including retired people and young people is promising.

The United States has a rich civic-oriented culture which may be growing, but the

need is great. Even though many people are volunteering their time, organizations cannot take their volunteers for granted. Nonprofits must invest time and money in training volunteers. A trained volunteer who continues to serve becomes ever more valuable to an organization and reduces the expenses associated with volunteer turnover. The importance of volunteer retention cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore important to investigate the next two areas of the literature review, volunteer motivation and best volunteer management practices for retention.

Motivation of Volunteers

Clary, Snyder and Stukas (1996) state that the question "Why do people volunteer?" is a question of motivation. In other words, "it concerns the internal, psychological forces that move people to overcome obstacles and become involved in volunteer activity."

The most basic theory about motivation posits the so-called "Two-Factor" model, which distinguishes between altruism (concerns for others) and egoism (concerns for self) (Ostwald & Runge, 2004). Though volunteering has been viewed in the past as altruistic behavior, researchers now are in consensus that it has both altruistic and egoistic motivational underpinnings. People want to contribute (altruism), but they are also seeking self-fulfillment (egoism). In a study of job satisfaction among service volunteers, Benjamin Gidron (1983) states that the importance of altruism in volunteer behavior is minimal. "Research on why people participate in volunteerism," he says, "shows that most volunteer activity is the result of multiple causation, with altruism being a very minor factor."

In her 1981 study on the motivations of 4-H volunteers, Karla A. Henderson bases her analyses on the ideas of McClelland and Atkinson, who developed a three-pronged theory of motivation. According to these theorists, motivations can be classified as stemming from a need for achievement (pride in accomplishment), affiliation (relationship with others), and/or power (wanting to have an impact on or influence over others).

There is evidence that people seeking different kinds of volunteer positions have different primary needs among these three motivators. James P. Gelatt (1992) lists four types of roles volunteers may fill – leadership, direct service, general support, and member-at-large. Those who seek leadership roles (for example, board member or fund raiser) might have greater needs for power or achievement, while volunteers who choose direct service roles (i.e. reading to a blind person, working in a museum store) probably have greater needs for affiliation.

Other motivational theories emerge in the literature. The needs-hierarchy model of Abraham Maslow is a well-known theory that asserts that "an individual can move on to meet higher-level needs only after lower-level needs have been satisfied" (Ott, 2001b). Higher level needs ("Being" needs, according to Maslow) involve creativity, self-expression, and self-actualization, while lower-level ("Deficit") needs address self-preservation and security. Ott states that Maslow "believed that most people in our society move among the need levels of safety and security, affiliation, and self-esteem." In Maslow's hierarchy, these are lower and mid-level needs.

In a 2002 article for *Public Administration Review,* Arthur C. Brooks identifies what he believes are the four most important nonmonetary motivators for volunteerism. They are

1. The perceived social meaningfulness of the activity
2. The career-enhancing ability of the volunteer opportunity with respect to both skills and resume building
3. The role of the opportunity as a substitute for market work
4. A positive organizational culture

Joy Turnheim Smith (2004) applies psychological contract theory to the analysis of volunteer motivation. "The psychological contract," she says, "represents understandings held by the volunteer and the nonprofit regarding promises made between them." The promises made are behavioral and attitudinal. A breach in the psychological contract occurs when one party "refuses to comply with their promises or when the understandings of the promises are incongruent." In her analysis of volunteer motivation using this theory, Smith reveals two important findings: volunteers assume that they have been "promised" by the organization to be treated professionally regarding work tasks, but flexibly regarding scheduling.

Michael W. Corrigan and Matthew M. Martin (2004) applied Social Exchange Theory (SET) to the analysis of volunteer motivation. SET involves a cost/benefit analysis of social behavior. These researchers found that one of the benefits of volunteering is that "by contributing a few hours a week to a good cause, volunteers often experience positive feedback that can correlate to higher self-competence and self-liking." Their open-ended questionnaire revealed motivations both altruistic and egoistic,

with the three most commonly identified benefits being, in the order listed, making friends, personal satisfaction, and helping others. This finding identifies McClelland's affiliation need as the most important among volunteer motivational forces; some other research supports this and some doesn't. Henderson's (1981) research into volunteerism as a leisure activity supports this finding; she says that the adults in her study were most motivated to volunteer by affiliation needs. Clary and his colleagues' studies on volunteer motivation, however, which include six motivators for volunteer behavior, indicate that affiliation needs are not the most significant. In fact, "values" (wanting to contribute) ranks much higher than affiliation needs ("social") in his research (Clary et al., 1998).

Clary et al.'s studies are based on functional theories of motivation, which "seek to understand the psychological and social needs and goals, plans and motivations that individuals are attempting to satisfy through their beliefs and behaviors." Functional theories incorporate the idea that similar beliefs or behaviors may serve different psychological functions for different people.

Clary and his associates, whose research appears throughout the most current literature, built on the work of the original functional theorists D. Katz and M. B. Smith. These theorists identified what they believed were the primary psychological functions motivating human behavior. Katz identified four functions and named them knowledge (desire to understand the world), value expressive, ego defensive and utilitarian (desire for rewarding rather than punishing experiences). M. B. Smith also identified four primary functions, which can be roughly equated with Katz'. He named them object

appraisal (knowledge), quality of expression, externalization (ego defensive), and social adjustive (utilitarian) (Clary et al., 1996).

Clary et al. (1996) have expanded on the functionalist theories of Katz and Smith. The focus of their work has been the investigation of volunteer motivation, and they have identified six primary functions, or motivators. These are:

*Values – opportunity to express values important to the self

*Understanding – opportunity for new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities

*Social – opportunity to socialize

*Career – opportunity to prepare for a new career or maintain career-related skills

*Protective – desire to escape from negative feelings or to cope with inner anxiety and conflicts

*Enhancement – opportunity for psychological growth and self-esteem enhancement

Clary and his colleagues have operationalized their functionalist theory in the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), an instrument for assessing these six primary motivations they identified in volunteer work. The VFI, "an inventory that reliably and validly taps a set of motivations of generic relevance to volunteerism," is a 30-question Likert scale tool with five questions for measuring each of the six functions (Clary et al., 1998). Clary and his associates have found that volunteering is a "multimotivational" activity with "unique combinations of these motivations for individual volunteers." They make their inventory available at no cost for use by volunteer managers, under the belief that

matching volunteers with jobs that will satisfy their motivations is essential in retaining volunteers.

To develop the VFI, Clary and his colleagues analyzed data gathered in a national survey for Independent Sector. The data gathered included personal interviews of 2,671 American adults conducted by the Gallup organization. The most important motivation reported by all groups was the "Values" motivation. In fact, through several studies, Clary and his associates found the "Values," "Understanding," and "Enhancement" functions to be rated highest by volunteers (Jones, 2004).

In her recent masters thesis for the M.S. degree in Public Horticulture at the University of Delaware, Christie Jones made use of the VFI to investigate motivations of public garden volunteers. She added six questions related to the garden setting to the VFI, creating a seventh "function" (Garden Setting). She administered this modified VFI, which she called the "Volunteer Survey," to a nationwide sample of public garden volunteers. The "Values" function, followed by the "Understanding" and then the "Garden Settings" functions, received the highest mean scores. The order of less important motivators was as follows: "Enhancement," "Social," "Protective" and "Career." It is not surprising that the "Career" function rated lowest in Jones' research, as garden volunteers are "older than the average of volunteers nationwide" (Jones, 2004). In fact, 85.8% of the 1,538 garden volunteers who returned Jones' survey were over 50 years. Many of these people are retired and are therefore not in the career development phase of life.

In addition to the research conducted on volunteer motivations, there has been research on determinants, or correlates, of volunteer participation. David Horton Smith

(1994) identifies five variables in this regard. They are: contextual (i.e. size of community), social background, personality, attitude, and situation (i.e. being asked to volunteer). Findings in each area include:

*Context – volunteer participation is greater in smaller, rural communities

*Social background – participation is greater in "dominant status" subgroups: i.e. people with higher education and higher income

*Personality – volunteer participation is greater in individuals with a social orientation, empathy, self-esteem and internal locus of control

*Attitude – participation is greater when there is more sense of civic duty

*Situation – volunteer participation is strongly influenced by personal contacts

In addition to the above findings, Smith (1994) states that "volunteer group participation is associated significantly with different types of social participation, such as neighborhood interaction, friendship activity...and participation in other volunteer groups whether at present or earlier in time."

The most important predictor of volunteer participation has been identified by many researchers as "being asked or encouraged to join a volunteer group" (Smith, 1994). Flynn and Feldheim (2003) identify four volunteer recruitment methods, including warm body recruitment, targeted recruitment, concentric circles and ambient recruitment. Concentric circles recruitment relies on word of mouth from current volunteers in an organization to their friends and relatives. "Concentric circles," or person-to-person recruitment, is the most common way people end up volunteering for organizations. Brudney (2001b) speaks of this phenomenon as well when he reports that

"the strongest factor leading one to volunteer is to have been the target of recruitment efforts."

As the above section of the literature review makes clear, there has been a significant amount of research into volunteer motivation. The purpose of this is not just theoretical and academic; researchers investigate this field partly to gather information that can help organizations in their efforts to recruit, retain and manager volunteers. With this in mind, a literature review of volunteer management was conducted. The findings follow.

Volunteer Management

Jeffrey L. Brudney (2001c) defines volunteer management as "the profession concerned with the study and practice of integrating volunteers effectively and ethically into an organization to enhance performance and results." Though volunteers and nonprofits have been around for a long time, the field of nonprofit management and its subfield of volunteer management are relatively new. Brudney states that "only since the 1970s has the nonprofit sector become recognized as a distinctive academic enterprise or professional pursuit."

Volunteer management is a growing area within the field of nonprofit management. As Flynn and Feldheim (2003) report, "professionalism in the field of volunteer management is growing rapidly." Scholarly and professional study in this field has benefits beyond the obvious and considerable one of helping professionals manage the 40.4% of workers who are volunteers in the nonprofit sector and the 10.2% who are volunteers in the government sector (Brudney, 2001b); it also has broader implications in

the field of public administration. Such study offers ideas for managers of paid civil service employees.

In his article for *Public Administration Review*, Arthur C. Brooks (2002) points out that the motivation of nonprofit volunteers and public-sector employees has significant overlap. Compensation "C", he says, equals wages and fringe benefits ("W") plus "nonpecuniary compensation such as job satisfaction, public spiritedness, experience, career enhancement, and a host of other intangible benefits." With "V" representing nonpecuniary compensation, total compensation equals W + V. "Given the relatively low salaries at the local government level, a significant portion of the compensation is certainly nonpecuniary," Brooks states. Understanding the power of nonpecuniary benefits can help managers of government employees enhance them, thereby making civil service jobs more satisfying even when wages and fringe benefits cannot be raised significantly. Jone L. Pearce (2001) concurs with Brooks' point when she states that "volunteers provide a valuable opportunity to study the advantages and disadvantages of harnessing nonmonetary controls for organizational reward systems."

The existence of a strong professional organization in the field of volunteer management reflects the professionalization of the field. This organization, the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA) is based in Boulder, Colorado. It conducts many professional development activities, publishes a quarterly journal (*Journal of Volunteer Administration)* and a newsletter (*Update*) (Brudney, 2001c). It also awards a performance-based "Certificate in Volunteer Administration." Volunteer managers can glean excellent ideas through networking with their colleagues in such organizations as this, and through reading the newsletter and journal. Also reflecting the

growing trend toward professionalism in the field, universities and colleges are beginning to offer programs such as Master of Nonprofit Administration (MNA), with courses and concentrations in volunteer management.

The question now arises: what are the best practices in volunteer management that are recommended throughout the literature?

First, volunteers want to feel that their work is meaningful. This aligns with the top priority placed on "Values" by most volunteers who have taken the VFI. A compelling mission statement of an organization can help its volunteers feel that they are contributing to a good cause (Flynn & Feldheim, 2003).

For volunteers to feel that their work is meaningful, they also must be given meaningful jobs. The Public Management Institute advises in its handbook that managers not give volunteers work that staff wish to avoid (Managing Volunteers for Results, 1979). A positive organizational culture that is volunteer-friendly is important as well (Brooks, 2002). Volunteers appreciate being included in decisions that affect them, and they like having their ideas and feedback listened to and acted upon.

It is essential to match volunteers with jobs that will satisfy their unique mix of motivations. Often volunteers know exactly what they want to do for an organization, but many times they don't. J. Steven Ott (2001b) states that "often (volunteers) do not truly understand why they volunteered or know what they want from their volunteer experience – except that they 'want to help'." A volunteer who hears about the San Francisco Botanical Garden, for instance, is faced with a wide range of volunteer opportunities (gardener's assistant, docent, bookstore seller, office helper, garden greeter, board member, nursery propagator, and others). The volunteer manager can help this

potential volunteer clarify what would be most interesting to him/her by conducting a personal interview and/or by administering a motivational assessment tool such as the VFI.

Since volunteer needs change over time, periodic assessments of volunteer satisfaction are recommended. Though volunteers sometimes leave an organization due to factors outside the control of the organization, exit interviews can provide valuable feedback that can help an organization better manage its volunteers (Ott, 2001b).

A formal recognition program and informal expressions of appreciation by professional staff are important ingredients in a well-run volunteer program. A "positive organizational culture," one that is volunteer-friendly, is essential (Brooks, 2002). Valerie Brown (2003) emphasizes that "the most effective volunteers are those who see themselves as connected to your organization and have a vested interest in its success."

Volunteers who like the organization's mission statement, who have meaningful work that fulfills their motivations, whose feedback is valued and responded to, and who feel comfortable in the organizational culture are likely to stay, to contribute quality work, and to bring new volunteers into the organization.

An initial training program as well as ongoing training, education and development of the volunteer workforce have been shown to contribute to volunteer retention. Some researchers recommend formal volunteer job descriptions. In all cases, strategic planning in relation to volunteer recruitment and retention is invaluable. As Flynn and Feldheim (2003) report,

> Establishing a structure for the recruitment and retention of volunteers...and effective recruitment and retention practices are essential in an organization that

uses volunteers...the importance of organizational strategies to enhance the volunteer experience cannot be overstated.

Methodology

Overview of the Methodology

The research methodology was initially heavily focused on the literature review, which covered readings related to volunteerism, motivation, and volunteer management. Historical archives housed at the Society's Helen Crocker Russell Botanical Library and SFBGS printed materials related to the volunteer program were also reviewed. The researcher's own experience as both a nursery volunteer and assistant volunteer manager in the Garden Bookstore offered an additional perspective.

Since the Nursery is a successful volunteer program, it had been decided to conduct a case study. In addition to the literature review, 13 in-depth interviews were conducted, after an initial pilot interview with a bookstore volunteer. Of the 13 in-depth interviews, 3 were with paid staff and 10 were with volunteers. The paid staff interviewed were the full-time general volunteer manager of SFBGS, the full-time nursery manager and the 60% time nursery assistant. The 10 nursery volunteers who were interviewed were from different departments, different age groups, and they had differing lengths of service. Two of the 13 interviews were conducted on the telephone and the other 11 were in-person interviews. All of the interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour. Notes were taken at all of the interviews, and four of them were also taped. In addition to the interviews, the researcher was a participant observer who made journal notes regarding the research questions throughout the duration of the

project. It was decided to emphasize in-depth interviews in the research in order to gain a deep understanding of the powerful draw of the Nursery for its volunteers.

Limitations of the Research

Since each volunteer that was interviewed offered new insights into the motivations of the nursery volunteers, it would have been ideal to interview all 70 of the nursery volunteers. Time, however, did not permit this.

An interview with the outgoing SFBGS general Volunteer Manager, who had worked for the Society for three years and left in June for another position, might have yielded valuable information. This woman, however, did not respond to the researcher's telephone message request for an interview. Interviews with people with different perspectives within the organization, such as the Executive Director, other volunteer managers (i.e. the Head Librarian, Bookstore Manager, Children's Education Coordinator), the Board president, and others might have yielded other pertinent information. Focus groups or a nursery wide survey might have added depth and breadth to the study.

As pointed out earlier, the study is mostly closely generalizable to nurseries at other public gardens. Since garden setting turned out to be an important element in motivation, some of what was learned was not applicable to volunteerism in non-garden settings.

The research did not survey or interview volunteers who did not stay at the Nursery after initially volunteering. According to the Nursery Manager, 75 applications a year come through the general volunteer office. Of these people, 25 never end up volunteering at the Nursery. Of the 50 new volunteers who do begin at the Nursery, 20

volunteer 3 or fewer times. Ten of the 30 who stay end up staying for a year or more, and 8 of these are still there after two years. This seems like a reasonable attrition rate for new volunteers; however, talking with or surveying volunteers who did not stay one year or who left after three or fewer volunteer days could have provided additional interesting data for the study.

Information about volunteer programs at other public botanical garden nurseries might have helped highlight the unique qualities of the SFBGS Nursery, but this information was only touched upon in the study.

Characteristics of the Research Sample

It was determined that interviews with the three paid staff most responsible for management of the nursery volunteers were essential. This included DM, the Nursery Manager, who has been employed in his position for twenty years, is in his mid-50s, and holds a Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley in Wildland Resource Science. His 60% time assistant, DG, is a 41-year old woman who has been in her position for six years. The SFBGS Volunteer Manager, TL, has been employed by the Society since 1999. His first position, in which he spent 18 months, was as volunteer manager. Then he served 3 ½ years in a fund development position. He just returned in July 2004 to his original position as Volunteer Manager. He is in his mid-40s. All three of these SFBGS employees are Caucasian.

The majority of nursery volunteers are over 50, with many in their 70s and 80s. There are younger volunteers as well. There are also several departments (i.e. Shrubs, Perennials, California Natives, Succulents, Rock Garden Plants, etc.). Each department is its own subculture within the Nursery. The majority of volunteers are women but there

are some men. The majority are Caucasian but there are some minority group members. Length of service varies from brand new to over 20 years.

In choosing subjects for the interviews, an attempt was made to talk with people of a variety of ages, departments, lengths of service, and of both genders. The following people were interviewed.

KB – mid 50s, male, Rock Garden Plants, 15 years service (non-continuous)

FB – early 50s, male, General Helper, 5 years service

GC – early 30s, male, Native California Plants, 2 years service

DC – early 60s, female, Native California Plants, 6 months service

VO – early 80s, female, Shrubs, 23 years service

TS – late 20s, female, Native California Plants, 1 year service

JC – early 80s, female, Ferns, 9 years service

JT – early 70s, female, General Helper for Plant Sales, 9 years service

PH – early 70s, female, Perennials, 7 years service

MC – early 50s, female, Rock Garden Plants, 3 years service

Eight of the above interviewees are Caucasian and two are Asian. Of the Asians, one is Asian American and the other is a Japanese national.

Data collection

All the interviews were conducted between July 19 and August 4, 2004. All the interviewees knew the interviewer already and were generous in answering the questions. One volunteer seemed unwilling to participate and was therefore not interviewed. Notes were taken at all the interviews and four were also taped. Interviews for volunteers focused on uncovering the motivators that initially inspired them to volunteer as well as

what keeps them coming back. Both internal feelings were explored as well as what they thought the paid staff of the organization does to enhance their volunteer experience.

Interviews with paid staff focused on eliciting information about what they thought were key organizational practices to retaining volunteers, what they did to retain volunteers, and how effective they thought their practices are.

Summary of Research Process

An initial pilot interview was conducted with a bookstore volunteer, to give the researcher practice in interviewing regarding volunteer work and to aid in developing questions. In the interviews with the volunteers enumerated above, initial questions were asked about length of service and department. Other questions were designed to elicit information that might shed light on the research questions. To answer the first research question, "What motivates Nursery volunteers to continue to volunteer their time?" the interviewer asked the subjects the following questions:

Why did you start volunteering at the Nursery?

What other contexts have you volunteered in, if any?

Why did you decide to volunteer at the Nursery rather than some other place?

Why do you continue volunteering?

What do you enjoy about volunteering at the Nursery?

To answer the second research question, which regards what actions the volunteer managers at SFBGS take to motivate, satisfy and retain volunteers, and how these practices are received, the following questions were asked:

What, if anything, do DM and DG (Nursery Manager and Assistant) do to make you comfortable at the nursery?

When you initially volunteered, did you know that you wanted to work at the nursery, or did the Volunteer Manager help you determine that?

How important do you think the formal events for volunteers are (summer volunteer bar-b-que, fall volunteer appreciation luncheon)?

Do you get ongoing appreciation from paid staff, and if so, how important is that in your opinion?

Questions that were asked of the general volunteer manager, who screens volunteers for all the different types of volunteer work in the Garden, included:

Do you recruit volunteers, and if so, how do you recruit them?

For prospective volunteers who do not know exactly what they want to do, do you help place them? If so, how?

Do you make use of professional associations, and if so, what help have you gained from them regarding recruitment, motivation and retention of volunteers?

Questions for the Nursery Manager and Assistant included:

What is your philosophy of volunteer management?

To what do you attribute the high level of commitment and long-term service of many of your volunteers?

Do you think the formal recognition programs are important?

After each interview, a summary sheet was compiled. The details of the interviewee's length of service and department were recorded along with a summary of his/her answers. The researcher made notes about the salient points that were related to the research questions.

Later, notes from the interviews were coded by letter, ranging from A – R. The first twelve letters (A-L) denoted motivational categories identified in the literature, including the most fundamental two-fold distinction between Egoism and Altruism, McClelland's Theory of Power, Affiliation and Achievement motivators, and Clary and his associates' six motivational functions (Understanding, Values, Enhancement, Career, Social, Protective). Christie Jones' added category of "Garden Setting" was included as a seventh category. It was hoped that looking at the data through these categories would yield some answers to Research Question #1, "What motivates Nursery volunteers to continue to volunteer their time?"

The other six letters (M-R) were used to code the following six factors:

a. Actions of DM, Nursery Manager

b. Actions of DG, Nursery Assistant

c. Formal volunteer recognition program

d. Feeling of being part of the staff; feeling of inclusion and value

e. Recruitment

f. Informal recognition

As the notes were reviewed, highlighted, summarized and analyzed, other themes began to emerge that will be included in the findings section.

Findings

To answer the first research question, the data were initially analyzed in relation to three motivational theories uncovered in the literature. The first was the simple Egoism/Altruism distinction. The research supported the findings in the literature that volunteers are rarely (if ever) motivated purely by altruism (Gidron, 1983). Only two of

the 10 volunteers interviewed expressed strong altruistic motivations, and each of them was strongly motivated for egoistic reasons as well.

KB, for instance, a professional maintenance gardener who began his 15-year career in gardening as a volunteer at the Nursery, was quite altruistic in his current motivations. He said

> Once you start volunteering, you get addicted to it. It's a good feeling to give something back to the community through horticulture. I want to pass it on. I'm so lucky that I feel I need to give back.

KB's initial motivators were egoistic (Career and Understanding), since he wanted to learn enough about plants to successfully manage a local nursery of which he had become part owner. That later developed into a full-scale maintenance gardening business. Fifteen years later, though (his service has not been continuous), his primary motivators are Social and Values.

The other person strongly motivated by altruism, TS, is a 27-year old Japanese national who is in the United States with her husband, a postdoctoral researcher at UC. With little money and no car, their options for entertainment are limited, and they spend time each weekend at the free public botanical gardens. TS began volunteering at the Nursery because she was so grateful that the gardens had provided her and her husband serene time in a foreign country, and she volunteers partly to "support the gardens and return what I have received." She has egoistic reasons for volunteering as well. She wanted an opportunity to practice speaking English (Social) and to learn about the plants she saw (Understanding).

As information was gathered through the interviews, the researcher understood why Clary and his associates had developed a six-fold volunteer functions motivational

model. Early models such as McClelland's three-fold model in no way accounted for all the data. Though most of the volunteers were somewhat or even greatly motivated by needs for Affiliation, none of them were strongly motivated by Power. In McClelland's model, that leaves only the Achievement motivator, which did not explain the rest of the data.

Clary et al.'s six-fold theory (along with a 7th category, Christie Jones' "Garden Setting") was therefore most useful in analyzing the data. As the literature suggests, each volunteer had a unique constellation of motivators. Some of these motivational profiles changed over time, another fact that is consistent with the literature.

"Understanding" was a major motivator for most of the interviewees. For three of the interviewees, this motivator, the "opportunity for new learning experiences," was primary in their decision to volunteer at the nursery, and for most of the others the opportunity to learn was among their primary motivators. Two of the three for whom "Understanding" was foremost wanted the new knowledge for career development. One of these people said

> I'm a professional writer, and I wanted to write about plants, so I volunteered at the Nursery to learn about them. As a writer, I spend a lot of time alone in front of a computer screen, so I also wanted an opportunity for regular social interaction.

VO, who began volunteering 23 years ago, was considering graduate school at the time. In her words

> I was bored and I wanted to learn something new. Volunteering at the nursery was exciting because I was learning new things in a systematic way. After 10 months I was asked to be in charge of Herbaceous Perennials, which I felt I didn't know enough about. I studied a lot at home to learn about them.

> Five years later I began the two-year docent training program, which was rigorous and competitive at the time. Only 12 of the 42 people who began the program completed it.

MC, who came to nursery work after volunteering as a docent, said that she likes to "bring in new plants in order to learn more." She expressed a desire for nursery volunteers to be able to gain more knowledge by attending the weekly enrichment program, a continuing education program for docents.

As anticipated, "Garden Setting" was an important motivator to everyone, albeit to different degrees. Here are some of the comments that were made:

> I volunteered after I retired from my position as a staff research Associate at UC San Francisco. I worked on the 13th floor and on my breaks I used to go to the end of the hall and look out at Golden Gate Park. I thought that someday it would be nice to work there. It's nature, and it's peaceful. Working with plants makes you calm and patient.
>
> I had started in the UC Berkeley Garden Design Certificate Program. I wanted hands on plant experience. I work with native grasses. I like the rhythm of grooming the plants. It's relaxing and meditative.
>
> I wanted to do volunteer work outside. I was interested in plants and had been involved in an informal outings group called "Plants of the Bay Area." My grandparents were tenant farmers in Central Illinois and my grandmother had a formal garden. We had a victory garden in Wisconsin during WWII.

Social motivators were high on the scale as well. Here are some of the motivations that came out in the interviews:

> You meet deep, interesting people who are interested in plants.
>
> I like being with other people who are interested in the same things I am. Nursery people think differently; they're into growing things. It's a great opportunity to talk about plants.

One volunteer who recently became the Rock Garden Department Head expressed excitement about working with her group. She said

> I'm not the boss. My job is to keep everybody happy. We're a team. We are all together but each person is independent. Everyone is so energized and there is such strong bonding. It's an incredible friendship.

In addition to her Social motivation, this volunteer was strongly motivated by Values (the opportunity to express values important to the self). In her case, the value was the creation of something beautiful. She says

> I became a docent, and I was recruited to the Nursery by some of my docent friends. I'm the only one who stayed. When I saw the rock garden plants, I fell in love with them. I knew I wanted to do that. It's a really beautiful garden art form. I don't do ceramics or paint but this was a creative outlet that I could be good at and enjoy.

In confirmation of what is reported in the literature, the Enhancement (opportunity for psychological growth and self-esteem enhancement) and Protective (desire to escape from negative feelings or cope with inner anxiety) motivational functions were not primary or even in the mix for many of the volunteers. However, one man seemed chiefly motivated by these functions. He said

> I don't like being told what to do. I couldn't work for The Man. I have a problem with authority. I retired in my 20s. I don't like working with groups of people so I come on non-volunteer days and help DM and GC. I run interference for DM because he's easily distractible. I've made a job for myself here. I'm a valuable member of the team.

Although there was no question in the interviews about volunteering versus paid work, half of the interviewees brought up the differences between paid work and volunteering as one reason they liked volunteering so much. Here are some of their statements:

> It's not like being in a business. You're not on the clock. No one makes you do anything. It's a different perspective.

> It's the inverse of working for pay. There's no alarm and they thank you. I don't like being told what to do. When you're a volunteer, they don't tell you what to do.

> At a job there's no choice about what you do. You have no control at a real job. There's a feeling of so much more freedom in volunteering, which allows you to be pretty creative. I'm there because I want to be there, but it's a commitment to me. I treat it as a real job.
>
> In Japan I had a paid job, and it was horrible, very stressful. There was a rigid hierarchy and schedule and the older people were bossy. Volunteering is more relaxed and free. It's a good way to get more comfortable in America.
>
> People are nicer to you when you're volunteering. It's an entirely different relationship than in a job.

Another interesting finding is that many of the volunteers were recruited from other volunteer positions within the organization. These are their comments:

> I returned to the Garden after being gone 10 years to become a docent in October 2000. WM left the Rock Garden Department six months ago. He and MC asked me to step in. I did it because they asked.
>
> I was a docent and some of my docent friends recruited me to the nursery. I'm the only one who stayed.
>
> I was a docent first. I had talked with various volunteers about how nice it was at the Nursery. The hands-on work appealed to me, so I decided to try it.

The positive atmosphere for older people was also mentioned as a draw. JC, a volunteer in her early 80s with nine years of experience, said "this is a good place for retired people. We're not made to feel old." A 71-year old volunteer, who also volunteers as a children's docent, said

> There are extremely wonderful role models at the nursery...women of an uncertain age. DM [the Nursery Manager] told me that at the last plant sale the three volunteers who were here before him were all over 80....I like the benefit of all the generations, the older ones in the Nursery and the children on my walks.

The youngest person interviewed, TS, a 27-year old Japanese national, commented:

> I feel uncomfortable around younger Americans sometimes because they can be selfish. It's inspiring to see active, productive older people. They have high passion to make our City and community better through the gardens.

The organizational culture is one of friendliness, inclusion, appreciation, and freedom to experiment. This culture is co-created by the paid staff and the volunteers, but the tone is set by the Manager and the Assistant Manager through their approach to working with volunteers.

DM, the Nursery Manager, says that he likes his job because he loves plants and "I genuinely enjoy people." As the Manager and a consummate horticulturist, DM teaches propagation to the volunteers. His philosophy is one of openness. In his words:

> I have a real strong philosophy that the only way to teach is to let people make their own mistakes rather than tell them the answer...I really try to let people learn by doing things and I often find that there's six different ways of doing things. I'm really good at saying OK, try it your way and we'll watch...I'm quite eager to see where your instincts are, and we all learn from each other. If it works, great, and if it doesn't they've learned a whole lot.
>
> This way people think you're respecting them and their talents and you are. Where if you come in and just lay down the law, not only are they not going to learn very much, but they'll get bored really quickly and will tend to leave. If they're allowed to have some say in what they're doing, they're much more likely to stay.

This man is widely admired and respected for his vast plant knowledge, and he is loved for his humility and humanity. In speaking of him, these are some of the comments the volunteers made:

> He's open minded, in there with his sleeves rolled-up. He shows you what needs to be done rather than tells you. I envy him for his knowledge of so many diverse plants. There's no one with such diverse plant knowledge on the planet.
>
> He's considerate...not a boss...there's mutual respect.
>
> He listens...likes to teach...he's unassuming.
>
> He's just such a great resource. His whole life is plants. He's such a good friend.

> I like the way he handles people. It's amazing the way he keeps it all together. He's so nice to the volunteers. We feel so appreciated. There's no difference between him and us.
>
> Whatever we need, he'll help. He's honest and he truly loves plants.

DM's paid assistant, DG, who is also much appreciated by the volunteers, echoes the volunteers' comments about her boss. She says

> DM is the king of trying to go with what the volunteers want to do. He's amazingly adaptable, forgiving and willing to teach. He's also a very learned expert on plants.

Indeed, non-rigidity is a key to the nursery's success. The Manager said that he recently was called in to co-facilitate a workshop on volunteer management at the UC Berkeley Botanical Garden Nursery, which was having trouble attracting new volunteers. In his words:

> Over at UC and some other places they have a very rigid system...you have to go through a six-week training program and learn their system and do things their way. It takes a really dedicated person to make it through those hoops and become a reliable volunteer.

Another key to the success of the nursery is delegation. There are eight departments in the Nursery, and most are managed by a senior volunteer. A few departments are managed by a team of volunteers, with no one volunteer in charge. DM describes this as fairly unique in public botanical garden nurseries. He says

> This is the only institution I know where volunteers can take the responsibility to be a team captain, and I give them lots of leeway unless they do something really outrageously silly...The Rancho Santa Ana Nursery Volunteer Manager was here and he was absolutely amazed. He said he limits his organization to six volunteers because that's the most he can supervise. I delegate. None of the other groups I know of do that...every other place I know of, the manager basically manages everybody.

This practice truly allows volunteers meaningful, responsible, creative work, and it is a great practice for retention. Volunteers with responsibility and the opportunity to call their own shots develop a vested interest in the organization and a commitment to it. This can be seen in many volunteers' desire to do well at the monthly plant sales. As the Nursery Assistant puts it, "it never ceases to amaze me how competitive the volunteers are at the plant sales. Each department wants to outdo the others." It can also be seen in the way one volunteer described her work with the native California grasses.

> I like having a project that is my responsibility. There's freedom within that. I have my plan for the grasses. My first goal is to clean them up. Then I want to categorize them, develop an inventory system, and work on plans for marketing them. I like developing knowledge of the grasses and working with all the different aspects of them, including publicity and marketing. I look forward to all of it.

Volunteers arrive at the Nursery only after having been carefully screened by the general SFBGS Volunteer Coordinator, TL. Some people know exactly what they want to do for the Garden, but TL interviews the ones who don't with the intention of placing them where they will be happy. In his words

> I describe the jobs in detail and try to paint an accurate picture of what volunteers can expect. I try to give people realistic expectations and match them with jobs that best suit their interests. This saves the departments time, which I think is an important element of my job.

TL goes on to state that the "common wisdom" among volunteer managers is that formal recruitment efforts are generally not successful. This supports the findings in the literature that the most common way people come to volunteer for an organization is by being recruited by someone they know, often someone who is already volunteering for the organization. What is more important than formal recruitment, TL says, is "to

effectively place the volunteers that come to you" and to "recruit existing volunteers for special events."

When pre-screened volunteers first arrive at the Nursery, DG (the Nursery Assistant) gives them a complete orientation to the nursery and encourages them to move between departments to see where they are most comfortable. She says, "We give the volunteers attention immediately to help them feel welcome. The initial investment of time is well worth it." DM adds to this:

> UC Berkeley Botanical Garden [staff] were amazed about how easily we accepted new volunteers and how easily we could get them to be part of our group. Oftentimes within weeks new volunteers feel really part of our group...they feel really welcomed and accepted.

The larger organization, the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society, holds three special volunteer recognition events a year. Though most volunteers appreciated these events, they did not focus on them as an important reason for continuing to volunteer. Day-to-day appreciation was very important, however. One volunteer said that she really felt good because the Nursery Assistant "makes a point to speak to everyone every time." When the Nursery Assistant was asked about this in her interview, she said, "I try to say hello and thank you to everyone every day, something I learned from my old employer. It's rude not to. The volunteers are putting in a lot of effort to be here."

This woman, whom the volunteers praised for being helpful, responsive and friendly, revealed a deep respect for the volunteers in her interview. She said

> The volunteers are passionate about what they're doing here...they really love plants and the garden...it blows my mind that people give so much time...they really want to help...they're amazing and inspiring...I am a resource person for them...I feel treasured.

This respectful, appreciative attitude by paid staff who work with volunteers, which is shared by the Nursery Manager, is probably the most important ingredient in creating an organizational culture conducive to motivating, retaining and bringing out the best in volunteers.

Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

This research investigated the case of the San Francisco Botanical Garden Society nursery volunteer program. Attempts were made to identify nursery volunteers' motivations and the actions volunteer managers take to retain and motivate volunteers. Answers to the research questions that were presented in the "Findings" section of this paper led to the following conclusions and recommendations.

First, like other volunteers, nursery volunteers are motivated by a combination of altruistic and egoistic factors, and each volunteer has a unique motivational profile that can change over time. When a prospective volunteer's motivations can be identified, he or she can be placed in a position within the organization in which he or she will most likely be happy and stay. TL, the SFBGS general volunteer manager, places volunteers by reading a prospective volunteer's application and interviewing that person. In addition, he might consider using a tool such as the Volunteer Functions Inventory developed by Clary et al. or the Volunteer Survey developed by Christie Jones especially for garden volunteers. These tools are free, easy to administer, and easy to score.

Since volunteer motivational profiles can change over time, it is important for Nursery managers DM and DG to be attuned to their volunteers and offer them opportunities for new learning and growth. Such opportunities include changing

departments, adding new responsibilities, or taking charge of their own projects. The research indicated that these managers are flexible and well attuned to their volunteers' changing needs. However, if the organization experiences turnover, it would be essential to hire new managers who were equally attuned and responsive to their volunteers' changing motivations.

"Understanding" (the opportunity for new learning experiences and the chance to exercise knowledge, skills and abilities) rated high among the motivational functions. DM's practice of delegating responsibility for departments to volunteers allows them rich opportunities to learn and exercise their abilities. However, learning opportunities could be expanded. One volunteer lamented that there is no continuing education program for nursery volunteers like there is for docents. She and some other nursery volunteers would welcome a learning enrichment program. Either nursery volunteers could be allowed to attend the weekly continuing education program for docents, or a new continuing education program could be started. A team that included nursery volunteers, and the nursery manager and his assistant could develop ideas for such a program. In addition, since most volunteers said that DM's tremendous knowledge of plants and his accessibility allowed them a great opportunity for learning, it is very important for the Society to look for a botanically knowledgeable and accessible manager to replace him if he should leave.

Many volunteers commented that they came to the nursery after volunteering for the Garden in another capacity and hearing about the nursery through other volunteers and/or staff. Volunteers who offer their services in more than one department of the Garden develop a great commitment to the organization and often bring brand new

volunteers in. The Society has a monthly volunteer newsletter. Articles could be written for the newsletter about the advantages of volunteering in multiple departments and volunteers could be encouraged to tell their friends about the exciting opportunities available.

The research revealed that the Nursery in particular and the Society as a whole does a good job of cultivating a volunteer friendly culture. Although organizational culture is subjective and results from many influences, specific practices that contribute to a volunteer friendly culture can be identified and strengthened.

For instance, the Nursery assistant does well to spend a few hours orienting each new volunteer. This practice makes a new volunteer feel most welcome. Also, it is a good idea to allow new volunteers to try out working in different departments so that they can select for themselves the group that is most comfortable for them. It is also a good practice to allow new nursery volunteers to "get their hands dirty" right away rather than to put them through an extensive training program. This allows new volunteers to become part of the team quickly. They learn by doing and discover what else they want to learn by jumping in. They can then consult the nursery manager about how to learn additional things, or take part in the extensive educational program that the Society already has in place. If a nursery volunteer enrichment program is developed, it can provide additional learning opportunities as well.

The Nursery manager and his assistant are doing a good job of letting volunteers know on an ongoing basis that they are appreciated. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. Although the formal volunteer recognition program (luncheon, bar-b-que,

etc.) appears to be icing on the cake, icing does make the cake more attractive, so these events should be continued.

Though the lack of a modern greenhouse facility and some broken down equipment did not cause volunteers to quit, more than one expressed enthusiasm about plans for a new, modern nursery that will be built in a warmer and more hospitable location in the Garden. The Society should proceed with the capital campaign it is now conducting to raise funds for this project. It should not let other garden needs replace the new nursery as a top priority project for the capital campaign. "Garden Setting" proved to be an important volunteer motivator, and a nicer nursery in a better setting would strengthen this motivator. Also, a more modern nursery with more space has the potential to raise even more money for the Garden than the current nursery does. More money earned at plant sales will benefit all aspects of the Garden.

DM, the Nursery Manager, has given a two-day workshop on managing a successful public garden nursery volunteer program. The program was given at UC Berkeley Botanical Garden. Such in-service programs and research like this project can help public gardens everywhere develop successful in-house volunteer based fund-raising nurseries. These nurseries provide benefits for the Botanical Garden in which they reside, the wider horticultural community the Garden serves, and the volunteers who find meaning working for them.

Areas for Further Research

This research has identified many successful aspects of the nursery volunteer program at the San Francisco Botanical Garden, and it has led to some policy

recommendations for an improved program. Through the course of the project, areas for further research were identified.

First, only ten in-depth interviews with volunteers were conducted in this research, and more could be learned by interviewing more volunteers. In addition, research could be conducted into why some volunteers leave after only a short time at the nursery. Though some of these people probably leave for personal reasons that cannot be impacted by policy changes, such research might pinpoint additional ways to help new volunteers feel part of the team. Research could also focus on volunteers who leave after a considerable length of service (i.e. one year or more) to determine if management practices could be developed to retain them. Another interesting project could focus on volunteers who have been at the Nursery for seven or more years, in hopes of identifying organizational practices that are important in encouraging long-term volunteer commitment. Research comparing the volunteer management programs of several public botanical gardens could help further knowledge about best practices for motivating and retaining volunteers.

Since many of the Nursery volunteers are retired people in their 70s and 80s, research could be conducted on how volunteering at a nursery enhances their ability to contribute to society and thereby improves their feelings of self-worth. Older adults often feel discarded by the larger society. This kind of research could lead to the development of new opportunities for them to contribute and to feel useful and valued.

As the literature review makes clear, the need for volunteers in the important work of our society is growing. More research into volunteer motivation, retention and best practices for volunteer management can contribute to filling this need. The work

that volunteers do is beneficial in many ways. It builds a better society, creates stronger communities, and offers individuals opportunities for learning, growth and self-expression. A stronger volunteer society is a stronger civic society, one toward which we should aspire.

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