



Us A Moment

In our hectic lives, some questions merit deeper reflection. “How can we make this world a better place?” is one. And “How can we transform Singapore into a giving nation?” is another.

We are talking about a nation where the giving of time, talent and treasure becomes a way of life. A society where compassion and camaraderie are celebrated. A community to whom volunteerism is, first and foremost, second nature.

How are we doing as a giving nation? NVPC gives you the bigger picture.



GIVE

Hope A Lift

NVPC Chairman STANLEY TAN asks what needs to be done to make an impact to doing good well.

What does it mean to give well? And what can we be doing to help others give better? Those of us who work or volunteer in the giving sector grapple with these questions every day. To some, giving well may mean giving impactfully, or giving strategically. To others, it may mean giving in an engaged manner, or at a practical level.

What is clear is that we need to be asking these questions, and that there is no one definitive answer.

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of NVPC, we thought it timely to ask several thought leaders to mull over this central question, namely, what is the one thing

that needs to be done to make a significant impact to doing good well?

We publish their collective responses here. The articles are varied enough that we hope every reader will find something that resonates with them, or discovers a relevant connection to the work they are doing.

I would like to thank the following volunteer contributors for tapping on their considerable experience and knowledge and sharing some invaluable insights with us. It is inspiring to see how these contributors embrace the ethos of giving, not just in their professional, but in their personal lives as well.

Susan Ellis spends many hours as a mentor to volunteer management colleagues and to support associations in the field around the world. Susan has given time and money for over a decade to a Philadelphia-based organisation, Books Through Bars, which collects used books and sends them to over 12,000 prisoners a year, in response to their letters requesting reading and research materials.

When Anthony Skillicorn realised Sinhalese school children who had been displaced by the tsunami, were witnessing

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a significant change for the first time in their lives, he realised the impact of volunteering. What Skillicorn’s group of young student volunteers experienced was cooperating with young Tamils, Sinhalese and foreigners to improve the schooling of children they did not know. They found volunteering could break down prejudices at so many levels and promote reconciliation – that was truly impactful.

The driving force behind the good works and training Sreyashi Sen has conducted stem from her work on disaster management projects in tsunami-ravaged southern Sri Lanka. Touched by the humility and hospitality of the Sri Lankans, Sreyashi intensified her advocacy of community work, encouraging more and more to contribute. Her interactions with disadvantaged communities inspired the greater belief that we can reach out and bring that much-needed smile to others.

Thirty years ago, Dean Williams volunteered with Vietnamese refugees at a UNHCR camp. The experience of sitting with them and listening to their harrowing stories of dangerous escapes from Vietnam moved him emotionally and intellectually and was a turning point in his life. He confronted the consequences of the appalling lack of leadership on the part of the many players

who contributed to this problem. It moved him to devote his life to the study and teaching of true leadership, the kind of leadership that could make a difference in the world and lead to positive consequences.

Consulting firm Bain & Company created Friends of Bain, which catered to children with multiple disabilities. The Club Bain charity committee, which formed in January 2000, took the earlier initiative one step further, by initiating a series of events for the elderly, ranging from care and entertainment through providing meals to helping repaint homes. Their educational activities with children include donations of secondhand desktops and laptops to schools and other institutions.

It was at The New York Community Trust that Robert V Edgar felt enormously privileged to be the intermediary between the community of wealthy and generous donors and their talented staff who, in turn, introduce donors to issues and grantees that need and deserve support. Robert feels strongly about trying to build bridges between various communities, rich and poor, the fortunate and unfortunate, so that all parts of the city remain alive and vibrant.

Eugene Tan is a strong advocate for the youth and non-profit sector serving as the

Environment Commissioner (1992 – 2002) of the Singapore Scout Association (SSA). He chaired and fronted the inaugural Youth Forum for the World Scout Organisation Asia-Pacific region as a key stakeholder platform for young adult members to contribute to the scout movement.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, the reader, for engaging with the rich vein of experience found here. It is only through your collaborative efforts that NVPC can hope to achieve its vision of Singapore as a giving nation.

GIVING OUR BEST THE FIRST 10 YEARS

04/2000

The First Giving Survey

NVC starts a national benchmarking study on volunteerism in Singapore. The inaugural Individual Giving Survey is conducted to better understand the local volunteering scene. The bi-annual findings are used to formulate more effective programmes to raise awareness and participation in volunteerism.

07/2000

Launch of National Volunteer Centre

The National Volunteer Centre (NVC) is established as the national agency for promoting and developing volunteerism in Singapore. Officially launched by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on 7 July 2000, NVC offers a holistic, relevant approach to volunteerism for the benefit of the community.

12/2001

Lead agency for International Year of Volunteers

NVC is the lead agency for the International Year of Volunteers in Singapore, spearheading numerous public platforms for the people and private sector to interact and form meaningful partnerships. It culminates in a 24-hour volunteer-round-the-clock event.



12/2001

Start of NVC Conferences & Awards

NVC holds annual conferences from 2001 to 2007 for the non-profit sector, providing a valuable arena for participants from the community, private and public sectors to network and learn best practices. The annual NVC Awards honour those who have set excellence benchmarks in promoting the spirit of giving in Singapore.

08/2003

Launch of National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre

NVC is re-launched as the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC). NVPC becomes the national body promoting and developing volunteerism and philanthropy across all sectors, working in partnership with non-profit organisations, companies and public sector bodies to facilitate and strengthen community giving efforts.



01/2004

Launch of SALT

A bi-monthly magazine for the non-profit sector, SALT reaches out to philanthropists, donors, leaders of non-profit organisations, volunteers, grant makers and decision-makers in the private and public sectors. SALT covers sector best practices, inspirational profiles, new initiatives and research within the non-profit sphere.

06/2004

Launch of NIG

NVPC introduces the New Initiative Grant (NIG), a programme that provides funding for non-profits with new community ideas strong in volunteerism or philanthropy. Recipients include those from the arts, environment, health and social service sectors.



01/2005

Asian Tsunami Volunteer Coordination

NVPC provides a first-stop centre for resource and information, referral and matching of volunteers to opportunities following the Asian Tsunami Crisis in December 2004. The disaster presented many unprecedented challenges for aid organisations and individuals.

02/2007

Launch of ComCare Connection

This programme helps organisations to start employee volunteer schemes, or boost existing curriculum, aiding organisations in matching Voluntary Welfare Organisations to social enterprises. Through Comcare Connection, organisations are able to develop programmes that help fulfil their corporate social responsibility goals and tap on staff skills for a good cause.



10/2007

Launch of Board Match

The Board Match programme aims to build capacity in the non-profit sector. It matches non-profit organisations and committed individuals willing to serve as board members on such boards (or in other leadership positions on committees). The initiative focuses on strengthening non-profit boards in Singapore. NVPC works to tap talent from a wide local pool to boost non-profit board renewal.



12/2007

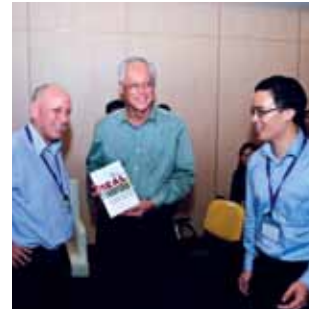
Relocation to Central

On 1 December 2007, NVPC moves from its Maxwell Road premises to The Giving Place, located in The Central on Eu Tong Sen Street. Gifted by Far East Organization, the new office premise houses a multi-purpose hall and incubation space for new charities. Non-profit groups can use the facilities for workshops, retreats, training sessions and meetings.

03/2008

Launch of The Community Foundation of Singapore

The Community Foundation of Singapore is an NVPC-driven effort to make philanthropy easier by providing donor-centric services, aimed at working with individuals, businesses and non-profit organisations to serve community concerns. Its vision is to grow a sustainable culture of giving and more connected community in Singapore.



03/2009

Launch of Social Leadership Singapore

Social Leadership Singapore is established by NVPC to develop a network of non-profit leaders with the skills, capacity and determination to ensure Singapore's well-being. It underlines NVPC's increasing focus on non-profit leadership development and capacity building, the foundation for volunteerism and philanthropy.

09/2009

Launch of SG Cares

SG Cares envisions to make volunteerism a way of life. Launched by President SR Nathan on 6 September, this new NVPC initiative provides episodic volunteering opportunities offered through a real time, online portal. Individuals may sign up for flexible and meaningful volunteering opportunities online and choose the cause, timing and location of the volunteering activity based on their interests, aptitude and schedule.



02/2010

Launch of SG Gives

NVPC launches SG Gives to promote informed giving in Singapore. SG Gives offers an easy, convenient and informed way for people to make donations to charitable organisations. Through an online donation portal, donors can access information on charities and their causes and to make informed choices on their donation.

03/2010

Launch of Centre for Non-Profit Leadership

CNPL, the Centre for Non-Profit Leadership (formerly Mentoring Partnership International) provides capacity building programmes to strengthen leadership roles in non-profits. It supports Board Members and Executive Directors in renewal strategies, and in the development and assessment of leaders.



GIVE

Way To Change

A small gift of time today can grow to be a large gift of time and money in future. NVPC Chief Executive LAURENCE LIEN underlines the critical value of volunteers in the overall plan for a giving nation. Giving, he insists, must be part of our cultural DNA and inscribed in the hearts of each citizen.

Giving is at the core of being human. At the personal level, giving not only gives our life meaning but it can also be highly enjoyable. At the community level, compassion that is manifested in action is important not only for social cohesion, but also for a thriving, engaged and happy society. If all of our relationships were merely transactional – defined by what we get back in monetary or other tangible benefits for what we put in – our world would be unlivable.

NVPC's vision is that of Singapore being a giving nation. A giving nation is where the giving of time, talent and treasure becomes a way of life for all of us. Giving must be part of our cultural DNA and inscribed in the hearts of each citizen. NVPC's mission would then be achieved, and we can happily close down.

A lot of work remains to be done to achieve our vision. While giving comes more naturally when we help our families and friends – even if these relationships are breaking down – giving to strangers is still not yet natural to many of us.

But I believe there are many latent givers – people who want to give or give more but hold back for lack of the right openings to do so. They are either not aware of the many opportunities and needs around us,

“NVPC sees opportunities over the next 10 years – a medium term target for the volunteerism rate to increase to 25%, and the total giving to IPCs to rise to \$1 billion.”

or our social and community organisations do not do a sufficiently good job engaging and managing them. Many parts of our social ecosystem and infrastructure continue to require strengthening and maturing.

We are certainly on the right path. The volunteerism rate increased from 9.3% in 2000 to 16.9% in 2008. Donations to Institutions of Public Character (IPC) increased from \$381 million in 2001 to \$687 million in 2008. Beyond these top line numbers,

anecdotally, both volunteer and donor management are also improving.

But we – all the social and community organisations, and givers – continue to have much to do together. NVPC sees opportunities over the next 10 years, as a medium term target, for the volunteerism rate to increase to 25%, and the total giving to IPCs to rise to \$1 billion. These are stretched, but not unrealistic targets, as we believe there are many latent givers in the community.

But the process and approach of getting there are as important, if not more, as merely achieving these numbers. In this, we think that we need to take a holistic approach in galvanising people around causes, invest in enduring relationships with givers, and continue to build the leadership capacities of our organisations.

Holistic Cause-Related Approach

In business, it is sometimes said that the people who only think about becoming rich are often not the ones who become the richest. Instead, the richest people are often those who first pursue a passion, before chasing the business.

Likewise, if we want to promote more giving, we do not want simply ask people to give for the sake of doing so. Instead,

we need to present the cause – of concrete day-to-day realities that are confronted. This can then trigger a compassionate response, and the giving would naturally flow. Some might also become passionate for the cause and be an excellent advocate for it.

Hence, we see the trend towards a more holistic, cause-related approach – i.e. both needs-centric and giver-centric, and integrating the giving of time, talent and treasures with a higher sense of purpose.

NVPC will help our non-profit organisation (NPO) partners to uncover the broad social needs and gaps and communicate these clearly to the public through our websites and the media. But NPOs need to take this further themselves – making their core mission and *raison d'être* shine through. Collectively, we need to connect to the hearts of all Singaporeans.

Volunteer Engagement & Management

There is a current mismatch between the demand and supply of volunteers, that is, what Volunteer Host Organisations (VHOs) and volunteers want from each other are different. The gap can become persistent if we don't grasp that the profile of the volunteer has been changing – they

are increasingly better educated, prefer shorter-term engagements, more demanding that projects are meaningful and are more cause-driven. Instead of expecting volunteers to change, VHOs need to adapt to the new realities.

In closing this gap, we need to remind ourselves why volunteering is important, beyond bringing needed resources and expertise to social and community organisations and causes. If we continue to limit ourselves to seeing the volunteer as a free source of labour, it would also limit the way we engage volunteers.

There is a public good aspect to volunteering that needs continued investment. As social divides grow, many people in their work can become disconnected to the most pressing social issues of the world and the plight of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Volunteering is a means to connect to the larger social issues of the world and to associate with people outside their normal sphere. If the more advantaged are seen to be doing more to give back to society, social cohesion is enhanced. A volunteer also has a greater stake and sense of ownership in his/her society.

For the VHO, the volunteer can become so much more than a giver of time. A volun-

teer with a meaningful experience is more likely to continue to volunteer, to advocate for the cause, to move on to higher value volunteering, be a more generous donor as well as a long-term supporter.

VHOs need to take a volunteer-centric approach and to create new opportunities to engage volunteers based on the profile of ready supply. Volunteers need to be understood and motivated. VHOs should develop long-term relationships with their volunteers, just like they do with their donors. A small gift of time today can grow to be a large gift of time, and money, in future.

Investing in good, professional volunteer management, akin to investing in good human resource management for their paid staff, should not be seen as an optional extra, but an imperative. Trained professionals would understand the motivations of volunteers better, structure the volunteer “job” that can maximise both public and private value, and have proper volunteer appreciation and motivation programmes.

NVPC is committed to building up the platforms to help create a vibrant marketplace for the demand and supply of volunteers, and building the volunteer management capacity of VHOs.

We will continue to develop and deepen the programmes we offer through Singapore (SG) Cares, our hands-on platform to help VHOs create new, meaningful programmes, whether episodic or long-term. We will revamp and reboot e-match so that VHOs and volunteers can more easily find each other and build up SG Cares as the first-stop portal for everyone looking for new volunteer opportunities.

NVPC will also continue to coordinate the research in volunteering to inform our sector, and publish findings and thought articles to help VHOs, and provide even greater developmental and funding support for volunteer coordinators.

Building Communities & Informal Volunteering

Apart from formal volunteering, we want to also address our declining rates of informal volunteering, and build strong communities. Volunteering should not be like a job that we take on when at a certain date, time and place. If giving is truly a way of life, we should be seeing opportunities for it everywhere, particularly where we live. There are numerous opportunities for mutual self help and support that currently go unfulfilled.

Hence, we believe in the importance of social capital building and community development. One of our new programmes is “Vertical Kampong”, which is a long term endeavour to bring back the kampong or community spirit in our neighbourhoods.

One key approach that we will introduce is to take an asset-based, rather than purely needs-based approach. This means focusing on the half full, not half empty glass, i.e. the assets in the community. The approach starts with the gifts of individuals, then moves on to releasing the power of local groups, and capturing local institutions for community building, before mobilising the entire community. This approach will be experimental and we hope to involve many NPOs, community based organisations and Singaporeans.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy in Singapore has substantial potential to be grown and nurtured. As with promoting volunteering, NVPC will work with NPOs to advocate for causes and to highlight social gaps.

Too many Singaporeans are unaware that there are many people in our midst with significant unmet needs, and have an unhealthy over-dependence on

the government to solve all society's ills. Our government can and should only do so much. Government often has less of the moral authority and the ability to meet the social and emotional needs that civil society organisations have.

NPOs need to incite Singaporeans to give more. They need to learn to harness the forces in the marketplace to further their own mission – particularly by investing in marketing and communications, and by exercising even more transparency and accountability. Web 2.0 social media tools have become an extremely cost-effective means to engage and create the buzz.

NPOs can also move to the next level in donor engagement and management, by developing ongoing relationships that are more enduring, and less transactional. Increasingly, donors want to be better informed, more involved and more strategic in their giving. While NVPC will continue to be the honest broker – for givers to connect with NPOs and with one another – charities need to strengthen their donor relations. Meanwhile, we are committed to building up SG Gives so that online donations are truly an easy and meaningful experience.

The Community Foundation of Singapore (CFS) will continue to be grown as an

“Every Singaporean deserves to have a clearer feel of the real needs out there and where the funding gaps are.”

intermediary to nurture new philanthropists. CFS will continue to build its expertise in community issues and demonstrate its authority on social issues in Singapore and to develop new programmes, with its non-profit partners, to address emerging social needs. This will help funders access programmes that they themselves would not be able to on their own. CFS will continue to introduce new tools to promote giving – including pooled giving circles, and facilitation of succession planning in family philanthropy.

In addition, NVPC will continue to encourage greater corporate philanthropy, more informed giving through charity analysis, and deeper research into social gaps. Every Singaporean deserves to have a clearer feel of the real needs out there and where the fund-

ing gaps are, and be informed of the way that charities are using funds to create impact.

Building On & Deepening Our Leadership Development Initiatives

At NVPC, we believe that ultimately, good leadership at our charities is core. So, leadership development and capacity building will continue to be a key focus for us. This year, the Centre for Non-Profit Leadership (CNPL) – an affiliate of NVPC – has been formally launched. Apart from its established Executive Director (ED) Mentoring and Board Match programmes, it has worked in partnership with NVPC to provide leading edge developmental programmes to non-profit leaders.

For the future, nurturing new talent would be a focus. CNPL has plans to facilitate ED sourcing, develop a Leadership Competency Framework for NPO Leaders in Singapore, and promote planned leadership succession, both for boards and for senior management positions.

At NVPC, we believe in networks. We will continue to promote exchange for NPOs, especially their leaders, to not just meet to share best practices, but also to be in active communities of leaders who can provide peer support to one another.

In conclusion, the next 10 years will be every bit an exciting journey for us at NVPC as it has been for the first 10 years of our existence. The civil society is certainly a growth sector in Singapore, and it is important as a developed nation for this sector to mature. Its growth will sometimes be a bit messy, and we should be happy about this, as a thriving civil society is also a space where there is a great deal of diversity in approaches and contributions.

But we also know that when our citizens are streaming forward to make a difference – whether as a volunteer, advocate or community leader – our society would be that much richer for it. We just have to work together to unleash that passion and compassion that are inside all of us.

GIVE

These A Thought

SEVEN CONCERNS THAT WARRANT A SECOND READ



VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT 2.0

Pay (Executive) Attention!

SUSAN J ELLIS is president of Energize, Inc., an international training, consulting and publishing firm specialising in volunteerism. Based in Philadelphia (USA), the firm has helped a wide diversity of clients from 23 countries to strengthen community engagement. Ellis is a prolific author of books and articles on volunteer involvement and volunteer management.

▶ Turn to page 24 for Susan's article



STUDENT VOLUNTEERING 2.0

Changing the World: One Hour at a Time

ANTHONY SKILLICORN is currently the Head of Global Concerns Projects at United World College (SEA), and the Housemaster of the International Baccalaureate Hostel. He is also the Coordinator of the Initiative for Peace (IfP) and Tsunami Relief Programmes. He has successfully transformed the school's Global Concerns programme into a much admired model of genuine student empowerment. Through his involvement with the IfP programme since its inception, he has brought young people from areas of conflict together to promote reconciliation.

▶ Turn to page 27 for Anthony's article



SERVICE LEARNING & VOLUNTEERING 2.0

Green-Tinted Service Learning

SREYASHI SEN has been part of the non-profit world for 13 years and trains youth and adults in Service Learning and Volunteerism. She is the Founder of Viithii, a training company and President of CREEED, a non-profit working with marginalised women and creativity, in Singapore.

▶ Turn to page 30 for Sreyashi's article



SOCIAL LEADERSHIP 2.0

Real Leadership for Real Challenges

DEAN WILLIAMS is a faculty of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He is a member of the university's Centre for Public Leadership. Dean is an internationally recognised consultant, speaker and educator on leadership and change. He has worked around the world with governments, education systems, corporations, tribal groups and community organisations.

▶ Turn to page 33 for Dean's article



Filling the NPO Talent Gap

Consulting firm **BAIN & COMPANY** engage in *pro bono* work and office-wide volunteering with non-profit organisations in Singapore. **SEOW-CHIEN CHEW** is a partner with Bain & Company's SE Asia practice and heads the firm's non-profit consulting practice in the region. **ALAN BIRD** is a partner in the London office and Bain's global expert on leadership supply.

▶ Turn to page 38 for Bain's article



The Head & Heart of Donor Management

ROBERT V EDGAR has been the principal contact for donors at The New York Community Trust for 25 years and is involved in The Trust's new business initiatives. He sits on the boards of the Memton Fund, the Clinton Hall Association, and the Kingsborough Community College Foundation. He is currently serving as Advisory Council Member at The Community Foundation of Singapore.

The **COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SINGAPORE** is a registered charity aimed at working with individuals, businesses and non-profit organisations to serve community concerns. Its vision is to grow a sustainable culture of giving and create a more connected community in Singapore. Its mission is focused on cultivating an active and committed pool of donors and creating impactful social interventions.

▶ Turn to page 41 for Robert and CF's article



Beyond Cheque-Book Public Relations

EUGENE KB TAN is an Assistant Professor of Law at the Singapore Management University's School of Law. He researches and teaches the university's core curriculum course in ethics and social responsibility at the undergraduate and MBA levels.

▶ Turn to page 45 for Eugene's article

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT 2.0

Pay (Executive) Attention!

Volunteers are always on the cutting edge, it's the organisations engaging volunteers that need a jump start. SUSAN J ELLIS, President of Energize, Inc., underlines the crucial role of executive attention to take volunteer management to the next level.

What is the one thing that would take volunteer management to the next level in 10 years? To answer this question, we need to recognise that there are three perspectives involved: volunteers themselves, the people who lead volunteer efforts, and the organisations that engage them.

Volunteers

Almost by definition, volunteers are always on the cutting edge – recognising needs that have to be addressed and finding ways to solve problems. Certainly many individuals serve in established agencies to support ongoing work, but it's the people who take action on emerging issues who will create tomorrow's organisations.

These are the volunteers who are working now to program open source software for the Internet, reduce everyone's carbon footprint, add holistic health practices to chemical treatment of cancer, find ways

to connect the Chinese population to the rest of the world – anything that actually challenges the status quo in a search for alternative solutions.

The volunteer world has expanded to welcome an ever-growing range of new people seeking service opportunities. These folks often do not label themselves as “volunteers”; in fact, the word volunteer can repel as often as it attracts. It conjures up stereotypes: women, retired folks with plenty of time, enthusiastic amateurs, do-gooders, upper class, and so on. These images neither motivate different populations to get involved nor convince paid staff to welcome questionable help.

Consider other terms that essentially mean the same thing, such as:

- Time donor
- Citizen participation
- Student internships

- Pro bono work
- Civic engagement
- Lay ministry
- Donated professional services
- Neighbourhood action

Note how changing the label brings other pictures to mind – different ages, men as well as women, highly skilled, and other positive characteristics.

Similarly, the term “volunteer programme” conveys the wrong message. The word programme usually describes a subgroup of specific services within an organisation's range of activities: the reading programme, the gardening programme, etc. We do not speak of “the employee programme”, do we? That's because employees provide programme services. So do volunteers.

Leaders: Follow the Volunteers!

If volunteers are the avant-garde, perhaps “leaders of volunteers” are most effective when they follow the passion of volunteers! Again, the vocabulary of “managing” volunteers is much too limiting, as it implies that volunteers are a group of workers to be directed towards a goal.

But there are many models of partnering with volunteers, including recruiting highly-skilled people to consult with paid staff in their area of expertise. A better approach to leadership is that of facilitator – being the person who sees and hears what volunteers want to do, blends these with the identified needs of the organisation, and then provides support, information, and access to resources to enable the contributions of community members.

To re-imagine volunteering, we have to get beyond restricting words. This may mean that today's “volunteer programme managers” will become tomorrow's leaders of a Community Resources Office or Community Engagement Team. And they will define their role as: tapping the community for skills and talents that can be contributed to meet the organisation's mission or further a cause.

Looking ahead, those who pursue a career in leadership of volunteers must want the job (not fall into it by accident), see themselves as professionals, and be effective advocates within their organisations, assuring that volunteers are integrated into all work areas and at all levels.

Executive Attention

The third perspective is that of the organisation wanting to incorporate volunteers into its work, bringing us to the single most important factor that would take volunteer management to the next level: executive attention.

Too many volunteer involvement efforts suffer from “benign neglect”. Top executives consider volunteers nice, but not essential, and so rarely monitor the accomplishments of volunteers or interact with the leader of volunteers. CEOs may want to “have” volunteers, but do not necessarily see this activity as requiring vision or much management attention.

Unfortunately, the subject of volunteer involvement is rarely put on the agenda of an organisation's board of directors (themselves volunteers!) or the top management team. This makes it impossible to do thoughtful, strategic planning for volunteer participation – and once neglected when determining goals, volunteers remain invisible when allocating funds, training paid staff, and initiating new projects. The further ripple effect is that lower levels of the organisation

The volunteer world has expanded to welcome an ever-growing range of new people seeking service opportunities.

Executives must have the conviction that volunteers are important: that they are the non-paid personnel of the agency. Volunteers are not “added spice” to the organisational mix; they are one of the main ingredients.

are left to fend for themselves in defining what they can expect from volunteers and how to partner with the community.

The missed opportunities are staggering! Volunteer initiatives languish from a lack of high expectations, and volunteers are stopped from having substantial impact and achieving their fullest productivity. The unfortunate fact is that more volunteers today are underutilised than overburdened.

Simply: Vision, Commitment & People-Raising

The first step to successful volunteer engagement is vision. Executives must see volunteers as expanding the horizons of the organisation and its staff, adding new skills, perspectives, and spheres of influence in the community.

Self-fulfilling prophecy is a key factor. If top decision makers feel that what volunteers can contribute is limited, the organisation will design a volunteering structure that indeed keeps achievement low. But if executives are open to the potential of what might develop, they will find ways to encourage volunteers' accomplishments.

The second step is commitment. Executives must have the conviction that volunteers are important: that they are the non-paid personnel of the agency. Volunteers are

not “added spice” to the organisational mix; they are one of the main ingredients.

The third step is to see the correlation between fund-raising and people-raising. Executives are forever concerned with finding more money – and understand that seeking money donors requires staffing, expenditures, and attention.

The same holds true for time donors. In fact, these are often the same people, and they can move from one category to another at different points in their lives. Once executives value volunteers as a key component of the organisation's “resource mix,” all sorts of new doors open.

As with all other aspects of organisation management, the time spent planning for volunteers is paid back richly by the results. If, in 10 years, executives of organisations intentionally engage themselves in laying the foundation to welcome the wide range of skills volunteers can contribute, that vision of volunteerism will become a reality. ■

STUDENT VOLUNTEERING 2.0

Changing the World: One Hour at a Time

The trigger for engaging student volunteers is not all carrots or sticks, but a painless, clear and inclusive process from willingness to actual volunteering. ANTHONY SKILLICORN of the United World College, SEA, challenges educators to cut out forms, hassle and other short-sighted barriers.

If every person in Singapore between the ages of 15 and 24 volunteered for one hour a week in a year, there would be slightly over one million hours devoted to improving the quality of people's lives in Singapore. This is changing the world – one hour at a time.

If educators combined the advice of Roger Hart regarding which type of student based volunteering activities are most successful with the wisdom of Kurt Hahn on volunteering, they would come up with the ideal mix.

Kurt Hahn's advice was straightforward: “There are three ways of trying to win the young. There is persuasion. There is compulsion and there is attraction. You can preach at them; that is a hook without a worm. You can say ‘you must volunteer’. That is the devil. And you can tell them, ‘You are needed’. That hardly ever fails.”

In his hierarchy of service projects, Roger Hart advises that the most effective fit is an initiative in which young people initiate and then share projects with adults. This happens when projects or programmes are initiated by young people, and decision-making is shared between young people and adults.

These projects empower young people while enabling them to access and learn from the life experiences and expertise of adults. What is necessary to make this work are structures – those which facilitate and encourage initiative, combined with an awareness of what the challenges and needs of a society are.

No Sticks, No Secrets, Some Juicy Carrots

When any organisation or institution is serious about promoting volunteerism, it

needs to establish what type of volunteers it seeks. If these volunteers are required for one short term need, then the issue of the volunteer's commitment or attitude is less relevant. It is like getting National Servicemen to donate blood. You get the blood, but do you get a lifelong commitment to donating blood?

If volunteering is seen as the shaking of Flag Day tins by school students on a Saturday morning for a cause about which they neither know nor care for, then it does not matter who holds and shakes the tins. If, however, you are attempting to inculcate the desire to volunteer and help others, then compulsion is obviously the wrong way of going about it. What is desirable is a system and culture which makes it easy and desirable to volunteer.

There may be many psychological reasons for volunteering, but the process should not be made difficult. It should also be easy for anyone desiring to establish his own initiative to do so.

Potential volunteering opportunities should be advertised using the new media the young find so familiar. Volunteering should not be a hidden garden, the secrets of which are revealed to only a few, but rather something where window shopping can take place before commitment is made.

The fact that so many 21st century skills are enhanced through and applicable to volunteering, should encourage Chief Executives and Human Resource Managers of large and medium companies to actively support volunteering efforts by their employees.

Those employees who display the initiative to start their own volunteering group, and the organisational skills to run it, should be recognised as employees of potential and fast tracked for promotion.

Clear, Painless Structures

Recognising the potential in school students who volunteer and lead, or university students who lead and organise, often contributes to their being selected by employers. The question facing many educators is how to guide their students to where they will independently make the step forward to lead. My suggested answer to this is to establish the structures which allow this to take place as painlessly as possible. Painless, it must be noted, does not imply without effort; it does imply ensuring the steps an individual has to go through are clear, accessible and transparent.

If individuals believe that volunteering or initiating is going to be fraught with bureaucratic obstacles, numerous forms to

Painless, it must be noted, does not imply without effort; it does imply ensuring the steps an individual has to go through are clear, accessible and transparent.

complete and barriers based on educational achievement or income, then they will be far less inclined to volunteer.

What these do is give the individual who wishes to volunteer, the power to initiate his desire. The desire to do something almost invariably emanates from something one feels passionately about, and with this level of emotional involvement there is a higher chance of seeing a project through to completion.

There are often obstacles in the process, and volunteers and initiators might be met with cynicism, but it is the ability to overcome these hurdles which is the true hallmark of a leader.

High School students are future leaders and when given the opportunity, they show remarkable skills for people their age.

Students at The United World College of South East Asia operate from a framework that enables them to establish their own projects if they follow a series of clearly stated steps. Using these procedures, they have established projects that help others both within and beyond Singapore.

This does not mean they have established their own organisations. What it does mean is that they identify projects and then devise strategies to enable their volunteering to be meaningful.

Two aspects are crucial for volunteering to be properly meaningful. First, there needs to be face to face contact between the two "recipients". Second, the recipients must meet regularly, preferably weekly. A relationship between the two parties involved needs to be developed.

Both groups in the volunteering process are recipients. The volunteer gives time, often one hour at a time, but receives a great deal both intellectually and emotionally in return. Recipients too receive a great deal even if they may be unable to always express this to volunteers because of their physical condition or mental state.

But both ways, lives are being improved, one hour at a time. ■

SERVICE LEARNING & VOLUNTEERING 2.0

Green-Tinted Service Learning

What if aid “givers” were renamed “learners” and receivers “teachers”?
SREYASHI SEN, President of CREEED, argues a case for volunteer projects strongly rooted in eco-friendly practices.

We all love stories, so let me start with a story about two groups of people. Let's call them the givers and the receivers for now.

Let's zoom in on where the two groups are – in a beautiful, small village in a region in Asia. Let's get a feel of the climate: 42°C by day and about 35°C at night. Now, let's see what they're up to...

The givers have decided to be in the village for a three-week period to help build a village community centre. They will live with the receivers, and work on the project with the help of skilled workers. We pan to the end of the three weeks and see the givers and receivers happy with what they have built. The givers leave. We zoom ahead a few more weeks...how come the community centre is all desolate and no one uses it?

We move our story camera to the Asian city where the givers live. We meet some of them – they have long forgotten the village

they were in and have moved on with their own lives.

What Happened?

What did not happen was a needs assessment and understanding of what the community was used to from the perspective of the community receiving the service. What did happen was a mission to replicate a city model in a village – a village with a totally different culture, norms and especially, climate, from the city. Here is where the principle of doing by learning plays a critical part.

What if we rename the givers and call them learners? What if we rename the receivers and call them teachers? Do we see a slight change in how we develop a project?

This paradigm shift lies at the core of the pedagogy of Service Learning, where volunteers learn by doing and the community is involved as the teachers. This not only inculcates more reflective and well

researched projects, but it also helps in establishing parity between the communities that volunteer and the community that receives the service.

Service Learning (SL) is the way forward when individuals or volunteer groups work with communities. The learning based service helps to assess the community more intensively, and from a culturally more intelligent perspective. Where there is reflection, there is better sustainability of volunteer projects.

Incorporating SL in every aspect of community service will make volunteerism and community work more meaningful and reciprocal. When we volunteer to do our bit in the community, we need to shift our attitude from givers to learners. Only then can the sensitivities needed to assess a community's needs from the community's perspective emerge.

When the receivers adopt the role of teachers, they take on the responsibility to help the learners know more. They share, and when they share they see themselves playing a part in the project. SL brings community service onto a more balanced platform, where both groups of people work together to make the change.

Green Tinted Glasses

Even as we move to incorporate SL principles, we cannot ignore the need for our projects to own a green edge. Each project can, and should be, sensitive about not just the community environment but also how it can incorporate something that gives back to our planet.

It is through small communities and villages that the greater change can come. Wherever we volunteer, we need to be cautious, sensitive and aware of making each project an eco-friendly one. This starts with using eco-friendly materials, being sensitive to the flora and fauna of the location, and an awareness of what will help stop further destruction of the green space.

Projects need stronger roots in environmentally friendly practices for a more sustainable and continual circle of learning

while giving. We need to see how we can green what we give back to society, without taking away from grassroots realities.

If we zoom back to our little village, let's consider what went awry and how the volunteer effort weakened the village ecologically.

An existing village community building was re-built into the community centre. The idea was to use electricity from a computer room that was set up. Unfortunately, the rooms built were poorly ventilated and needed fans and lights. In a village where disrupted electricity supplies were frequent, this idea was a non-starter.

This was a village where solar power could have been used much more effectively, instead, the blueprint was dependent on electric power. The well-intentioned plan to build a playground in front of the centre caused existing trees to be cleared, leaving the whole area without shade. The children stopped playing there because of the intense heat.

Finally, a large amount of construction material was left behind, creating a dump yard.

Most of the three weeks the volunteers invested in the project were spent in converting the old village house into the commu-

The learning based service helps to assess the community more intensively, and from a culturally more intelligent perspective. Where there is reflection, there is better sustainability of volunteer projects.

If we are to see a greater learning curve in our volunteer projects, we need to look at incorporating greater responsibility towards the environment through the SL process.

nity centre. No time was allocated to explore the natural environment of the village – any learning opportunities for the volunteers disappeared.

What began as good intentions turned into a failed project which was not just unsustainable, but left behind a used village centre and a bare patch of land once shaded by trees. The learning cycle was incomplete, the project environmentally unfriendly, and funds exhausted.

If we are to see a greater learning curve in our volunteer projects, we need to look at incorporating greater responsibility towards the environment through the SL process. We also need to remember eco-friendly SL projects are not just about eco-research and the use of materials, but also about taking time out before and during the project, to get to know the environment volunteers will work in.

It is also about identifying projects involving work with the environment. We need to emphasise the need to encourage more projects that bring volunteers closer to ecological issues and communities affected by them. For example, projects among

mountain and hill tribes, endangered animal species, work in wildlife sanctuaries, or even those with eco-friendly philanthropy initiatives from corporations.

This will not just deepen knowledge, but also help the sharing of know-how among learners and teachers for a cleaner, greener, fresher environment. Because a greener earth is not just about a few more trees or cleaner water, but about inflicting as little harm as possible to the existing environment – the earth, as we know it and want it to be. ■

SOCIAL LEADERSHIP 2.0

Real Leadership for Real Challenges

People waste time and valuable resources when they act on false tasks or pursue decoy issues. Corrosive values and practices then block and undermine the organisation's success. DEAN WILLIAMS from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, calls for adaptable leaders with different styles for different types of groups and situations.

In every group, organisation or community, there are a set of challenges people must face if they are to survive and if they are to thrive. If they cannot deal with those challenges, then the organisation or community might well be on the pathway to collapse.

Collapse is the term coined by renowned theorist Jared Diamond, who wrote about how many communities and civilisations came to an end because they could not face reality and adapt to changing conditions. A set of threats were before them, but they ignored them or provided the wrong strategies to address them, making collapse inevitable.

In 2007, Bear Stearns was one of the world's largest investment banks with a market capitalisation of US\$66 billion and a share price of US\$172. Just over a year later, the company was in a state of collapse.

Co-President Warren Spector was forced to resign as a result of errant trades that led

to the failure of two hedge funds backed primarily by subprime loans. In 2008, Bear Stearns signed a merger agreement with JP Morgan Chase in a stock swap worth US\$2 a share, or less than 10 percent of Bear Stearns' market value.

Management at Bear Stearns pursued a flawed strategy and a false set of tasks which included betting heavily on the packaging and selling of mortgage-backed securities. They continued to pursue that strategy even when data emerged indicating the tide had turned. When people engage in a false set of tasks or pursue decoy issues, they waste time and valuable resources and consequently, corrosive values and practices emerge that impede or actually undermine organisational success.

Counterfeit Leadership

The Bear Stearns leadership is what I call counterfeit leadership. Such leadership does

What the world needs today, perhaps more than any other time in history, is a heavy dose of real leadership, the kind that agitates systems in a way that gets people to face reality and adapt.

not encourage reality testing, but assumes that the boss knows best and the boss' task is simply to get people to follow.

This, I suggest, is a dangerous proposition, particularly in the modern age of globalisation where problems are complex, messy, and interdependent, and require visible leadership at many levels, so adjustments and adaptations to remain or become relevant can be made speedily.

Counterfeit leadership indicators include:

- Insufficient diagnosis of the real challenge facing the team or organisation. This is usually because the group is preoccupied with implementation at the expense of sensing their environment.
- An excessive reliance on dominance or incentives as a way to achieve compliance.
- The failure to engage all the key people in facing the work of modifying values and mindsets to improve the group's problem solving skills.
- An extreme comfort zone stemming from an unwillingness to explore beyond prevailing mindsets or current boundaries to find more creative solutions.

- The stubborn conviction that your strategy is right, regardless of changes in circumstance.

- A preoccupation with getting people to follow, instead of getting them to deal with threats, take advantage of opportunities, learn through experimenting and make important discoveries.

I use the term counterfeit leadership rather than counterfeit leader because a person might be exercising good leadership on one set of tasks, but counterfeit leadership on others. The important point regarding counterfeit leadership is how the authority figure uses his or her power to distract people from facing the most critical issues.

If a group of people deny or avoid the reality of real threats and dangers, the group will inevitably suffer. If opportunities are not vigorously pursued, the group will stall. If no one faces the reality of the barriers to progress, expressed by the behaviour and priorities of the group, then failure follows. All the value the organisation amassed would be jeopardised, as it happened with Bear Stearns.

And if the group does not vigorously develop new adaptive skills, then a slow, steady process of collapse will set in.

Examples of counterfeit leadership are everywhere. What the world needs today, perhaps more than any other time in history, is a heavy dose of real leadership, the kind that agitates systems in a way that gets people to face reality and adapt.

Real Leadership

Real Leadership indicators include:

- The leader, like a conductor, orchestrates analysis to determine the most critical challenge facing the group. The leader ensures the group's culture and actions are consistent with facing that challenge.
- The leader intervenes to mobilise enough people to face reality and do the necessary problem solving and creative work to give the group its best shot at success.
- The leader intervenes to help people make the necessary adjustments in values, habits, practices and priorities.
- All this is happening because the leader is open and flexible, ensuring his style suits the context and the circumstances of the group, and the dangers and opportunities facing the system.

Let me address a few of these points briefly. Real leadership begins with analysis. Leaders frequently spring into action without doing sufficient diagnosis. Diagnosis begins with examining the real dangers to the group. If the group persists in doing what it is doing, what are the threats that might jeopardise it?

Diagnosis also examines the condition of the system: what is broken, inefficient, or flawed in how people work together, solve problems and create solutions? It also includes testing people to see what values they hold, what they consider more important than facing reality and solving the problems needed for survival and progress.

For example, the Bear Stearns management held the value that making short-term gains was more important than facing the dangers and threats linked with a business strategy based on exploiting a subprime housing bubble.

Six Common Group Challenges

Once the system's fundamental dangers and threats and the avoidance mechanisms are identified, it is time to frame the specific kinds of challenges facing the institution or community. I have identified six common adaptive challenges faced by most groups at various times. They are:

- *The Activist Challenge*
In an activist challenge, the group is under threat because people's actions are not consistent with their values. Here, the leadership task is to orchestrate a well-timed provocative intervention, or what I call a Zen slap, to get people to face reality, see the contradiction, and adjust accordingly.

A multi-dimensional leader knows how to apply his power and influence and assume different styles for different contexts. His leadership role then opens up the possibilities for the organisation or community.

- *The Development Challenge*
A group faces a development challenge when the resources, human capacities and current processes cannot properly deal with emerging dangers and threats. The task is then to bring out the latent resources of the group as fast as possible, so it can respond to dangers and threats and take advantage of opportunities.
- *The Transition Challenge*
In a transition challenge, people's values prevent progress. Faced by threats and dangers, and in order to survive, people must shift their values from one set of values to another. The leadership task is to get people to give up old habits and practices and move them, with minimal opposition and loss, to the other side, much like a ferryman who moves people in his boat across a dangerous river.
- *The Maintenance Challenge*
Sometimes the threats and dangers are so overwhelming the only recourse is to hunker down and protect valuable resources until a better day. The leadership task in a maintenance challenge is to help people make the necessary sacrifices and not flee or lose heart. They focus on the little things that can make

a big difference in day-to-day survival. Another important aspect here is to help people figure out what is precious and what is expendable regarding values and practices, and to do the necessary work of preserving essential values and practices.

- *The Creative Challenge*
There are times when current resources and current thinking are not enough for addressing the dangers or opportunities the group faces. The group has hit a wall. The leadership task is to ignite enough imagination to generate a new solution and then get the group to do something that has never been done before.
- *The Crisis Challenge*
A crisis challenge is a highly volatile and potentially explosive predicament. A sudden convergence of forces has created conditions that make business-as-usual untenable. In a crisis challenge, panic and emotions often cloud people's minds to what the real problems are and what can be done. Leadership here is to diffuse the explosiveness of the situation so the real problem can be addressed and the group can return to normal.

In these complex challenges, the exercise of real leadership requires the leader to adopt a multi-dimensional style. Each adaptive challenge requires a different and distinct leadership approach. Different leadership styles call for different results from a group of people.

A multi-dimensional leader knows how to apply his power and influence and assume different styles for different contexts. His leadership role then opens up the possibilities for the organisation or community.

The question of what is real leadership is the most important question facing anyone concerned about using their power and authority to contribute to real progress. I believe that the wise pursuit of real leadership can make the difference between success and failure in all aspects of human activity – between divided communities and vibrant communities, between poor schools and great schools, between mediocre organisations and excellent organisations, and between failed states and successful states.

The challenge is ours. ■

ORGANISATIONAL EXCELLENCE 2.0

Filling the NPO Talent Gap

A non-profit organisation has a greater chance of success when its talent plan matches its mission statement. SEOW-CHIEN CHEW and ALAN BIRD of Bain & Company, South-East Asia, suggest a three-step strategy for understanding talent needs.

Most not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) across the world – and in Singapore – fail their mission when they face a gap between leadership supply and demand.

Often, visionary leaders head NPOs and their charisma helps promote and sell the organisation's mission. But such leaders require different skills to build a bigger organisation, manage daily operations more effectively, or sustain success. They either have to acquire those capabilities or build the right team around them to ensure the organisation's leadership needs are met. When NPOs lack an adequate supply of leaders in their most effective roles, they struggle to achieve their full potential.

In Singapore, the issue is particularly important as NPOs play a critical role in mobilising volunteers, inspiring donors and creating impact in the community. Recognising this, in 2009, the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) partnered with

Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government to launch an annual programme that develops leadership skills in NPO executives.

The effort highlighted the urgent need to close the leadership gap. Speaking at the conclusion of the inaugural Social Leadership Singapore Programme, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong reiterated that "leadership is the biggest challenge facing the social service sector in Singapore".

Building leadership is a long term process. Many Singapore NPOs can consider three specific steps that can directly impact their talent supply.

Quantify Your Leadership Gap

Many NPOs don't have a detailed picture of the talent challenge they're facing. A rigorous, analytic picture of the gap makes the challenge visible. Suddenly the talent issue can no longer be ignored as a lower priority;

it is now on everyone's agenda, including that of the CEO and perhaps even the NPO's board.

A leadership gap is, by definition, a disparity between the supply of talent and the demand for talent, both now and in the future. On the supply side, look at the basics. How many leaders do you have? What are your recruitment and promotion rates? What is the level of attrition – wanted and unwanted – and retirement? What factors will affect recruitment, promotion and attrition rates in the foreseeable future?

The results provide a rich set of data allowing you to build or validate a talent-supply forecast. Just as important, analysing the leadership gap this way helps to identify choke points that may require immediate attention.

The demand side begins with a similar fundamental analysis. What will the organisation look like in a year, in three years, in five years? How many leaders will you need to deliver critical pieces of the NPO's mission, and what kinds of skills will those people need to have? Matching the supply forecast to the demand forecast, shows in broad terms where the talent needs are likely to be most acute.

Deploy Current Talent More Effectively

Too many NPOs don't have their top performers placed in jobs where they can have the most impact. Mismatches can cripple an NPO's ability to grow and achieve scale. We often ask CEOs to tell us how many of their mission-critical positions are occupied by executives they regard as top talent. It's surprising how many have difficulty answering the question. Those who can answer often reveal an alarming mismatch: most of their mission-critical roles are filled by average performers and some by poor performers, while many top performers are deployed in humdrum positions.

Matching top performers with key roles typically involves three stages. The first is to identify the positions themselves. (What jobs

make the biggest difference to the NPO's performance depending on the calibre of the person occupying them? In which roles will a top performer have more impact compared with an average performer?)

The second stage is a rigorous and realistic system for evaluating employees. (How well has each individual performed? What is his or her potential?)

Stage three, after identifying critical positions and realistically assessing employees, is deployment: placing the right people in the right jobs. (How can we release people from roles where they might be performing like stars? How to match opportunities with a talented person's interests? How should we harmonise compensation?)

Reduce Your Demand For Talent

This step is often overlooked, as organisations focus mainly on the supply of talent. NPOs that simplify their processes and spell out accountabilities more clearly, can keep costs under control and make the most of the talent they have. The two most effective methods of reducing demand are to strip out organisational complexity, and to redesign jobs so that they use the skills of managers more effectively.

While most NPOs tend to be lean and have very few layers, they do suffer from organisational complexity when roles and accountabilities grow murky. Reducing complexity by making roles clearer helps build morale: people feel they can get more done.

A leadership gap is, by definition, a disparity between the supply of talent and the demand for talent, both now and in the future.

NPOs often redesign and expand job responsibilities, ... Redesigning jobs not only reduces the demand for talent, it also helps an NPO deliver its mission more effectively.

NPOs often redesign and expand job responsibilities, partly due to resource constraints and partly because they believe the people holding those jobs will find them more challenging and more satisfying. But this is too simple. What matters is whether people feel they are spending time on things that matter.

Redesigning jobs not only reduces the demand for talent, it also helps an NPO deliver its mission more effectively.

Closing the leadership gap is not quick or easy, but the short-term steps can have a powerful effect. They send a clear signal to people that things are changing. The diagnosis itself uncovers issues that need to be addressed over the long term.

Any supply versus demand analysis of leadership talent needs to be grounded in a clear understanding of the organisation's strategy, so the exercise brings discipline to an NPO's activities. If, over time, the NPO has drifted away from its mission, these steps serve as a reality check. For example, reducing the demand for leaders forces an NPO to focus on the most essential tasks it needs to do to meet its mission and goals.

The result can be exhilarating and liberating: the NPO has a far greater chance of success when its talent plan matches its mission statement. ■

DONOR MANAGEMENT 2.0

The Head & Heart of Donor Management

There are more choices than ever in organised philanthropy and donors are becoming increasingly discerning. Beware the dreaded gap between a donor's expectations and a charity's ability to deliver meaningful engagement with its cause. Donors, ROBERT V EDGAR with THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SINGAPORE points out, are more than just an ATM machine.

Which comes first? Fundraising or donor engagement? Is the latter a means to an end for organisations to achieve fundraising targets and maintain reserves? Do charities actually engage their donors, or do they use their donors purely as sources of money?

The cynical charity will say that a dead donor is the best donor because he won't be able to criticise what's been done with his money. The idealistic charity will say that active donors are partners, who are active participants in the charity's mission.

Some charities contact their donors during the fundraising season or during the festive season and pretty much forget about them until the next fundraising cycle. Donor appreciation comes in the form of thank-you letters or dinners; it may include sending annual reports or regular newsletters to keep the donor updated. However, these almost always include a donation request: for increased support or when the next donation is due.

Many donors make modest, annual contributions and consider these contributions as their dues payments for being good citizens. While annual and regular contributions are to be encouraged, there is a danger that these routine communication methods with donors may be perceived as very transactional in nature. The successful charity is the one that can deduce which of its donors can be selected and solicited to be more than just an ATM machine.

Surely, More Than Just a Transaction?

A "transactional donor" relationship management model will eventually create a donor engagement gap. This is where there is a growing void between a donor's expectations and a charity's ability to offer opportunities that excite and interest the donor, motivating him to contribute towards the betterment of its mission. If the engagement gap is improperly managed, the results may be

Being open means more than posting information online and just only showing the good results. Charities need to help donors understand how their contributions are used meaningfully.

detrimental. The first sign is stagnant giving, reflecting a growing loss of donor interest and finally, donor attrition.

In bridging the gap, charities must first recognise that organised philanthropy is becoming more sophisticated as donors become more discerning in their gifts, and demand greater accountability and real returns from the organisations they support. In short, more “bang for their buck”.

Secondly, donor engagement is both a science and art, constantly about managing both the head and the heart effectively. Some donors prefer an intimate relationship with a feel-good factor; others rely on concise reports to determine their next gift. Still others prefer to remain modest annual givers.

The 2010 Millennial Donor Study surveyed over 2,200 people between ages 20 and 40 across the United States about their giving habits and engagement preferences. Here is some interesting data:

91% Millennial donors are at least somewhat likely to respond to a face-to-face request. Only 8% are highly likely to respond to an email request.

55.2% are likely or highly likely to respond to a specific request or project. 55.7% are not likely to respond to a general non-specific

ask. They want to know more about the organisations they support: 86.3% want updates on programmes or services and 54.6% want information on the organisation and its financial condition.

71.7% said they will be willing to communicate with family and friends about ways to be involved in an organisation they support.

A similar report from HNW Wealth Pulse: Wealth & Giving, showed that 74% high networth individuals (HNWI) give because they feel strongly about a cause, and 55% give because of their personal experience with the organisation.

On attitudes toward giving and organisations, 64% HNWI feel that it is imperative they know how the recipient will use their money, or that they see the tangible results of the giving. This sentiment coincides with 64% of the total population when compared with the HNWI.

Both reports indicated that most donors are moved by a cause they can identify with while expecting to see tangible results and the impact they made with their gifts. To do so, here are four suggested strategies to facilitate the process of engaging the mind and heart of the donor:

1. Be Open

Many charities say they are open and transparent, but what they really mean is they produce annual reports or post their financial reports on the Charity Portal and their website. Donors are expected to know how to understand and interpret financial statements to evaluate if reserve ratios are too high, or determine if programmes are run effectively.

Being open means more than posting information online and just only showing the good results. Charities need to help donors understand how their contributions are used meaningfully. Be honest when programmes do not meet the targets and explain why resources need to be re-distributed and so on. Allow donors and volunteers to understand more about the beneficiaries and help create solutions and solve problems so that they feel they are a part of the organisation.

2. Know Your Donor

Get to know your donor well: is he more of a head or heart person? Create opportunities for donors to experience your programmes and allow them to help craft solutions where possible. Organise regular visits or volunteer opportunities

to show donors how their investments pay off beyond financial support.

Celebrate with them and remind them that the excitement can continue with their involvement. Let them know their value to your organisation, and reinforce that value by offering them a preview of what they will see in the next financial year or next stage of development.

Unfortunately, there really isn't a one-size-fits-all approach in managing different donor's expectations and relationships.

3. Create Leverage Through New Technologies

Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are the latest engagement platforms. Be familiar with social media as a communication tool with donors. Signing up with SG Gives (an online donation portal) or having a website presence will not increase your donation coffers if you do not connect with people about your cause and needs.

When crafting social communications strategies, focus on the qualities you want to be associated with and not the target audience you want to reach. Some

non-profits think social media language and platforms will neglect older supports and traditional donors. The truth is that foundation grantmakers, donors, volunteers and even prospective employees, are all turning to social networks to get a sense of your organisation.

However, be mindful that new technologies are not the cure-all solution. They just provide an important platform with great potential in creating increased outreach and interaction opportunities if done well. Remember that writing letters, telephone calls, and actual face-to-face time with your donors are still very important!

4. Find Intermediaries as Your Evangelists

Most HNWI have gatekeepers and intermediaries to safeguard their interests and provide professional advice for their giving. Identify the intermediaries and familiarise them with your organisation's cause; they will become your organisation's evangelists.

The Community Foundation of Singapore (CFS) is an example of an intermediary that serves as an information centre providing community knowledge and leader-

ship. Here, donors tap on the CFS for expertise and advice. Some donors want anonymity in their gifts; some want advice before making a philanthropic decision, and others trust and support the CFS's grant programmes to give on their behalf. Third-party intermediaries are neutral agencies offering non-biased advice, and they can be an effective ally to manage donor expectations and idiosyncrasies.

An effective donor engagement philosophy is one that approaches donors from two seemingly opposing angles – the head and the heart. The former strikes at the heads of donors using a more investment advisor approach through statistics, measurements and hard data. The donors can appreciate how their charitable dollars can maximise social returns by investing in the right organisation, helping them make the greatest difference to society's problems.

The latter touches the individual's heart. When combined as a meaningful compelling message in the form of stories and photos to intrigue the donor emotionally, it becomes an intricate balance of art and science. And the charity will definitely gain if both are done well. ■

CORPORATE GIVING 2.0

Beyond Cheque-Book Public Relations

Corporate giving is perhaps, the most revealing dimension of a company's social commitment. Assistant Professor EUGENE TAN underlines the need to move beyond the visible public relations and mere cheque-book giving.

Corporate giving is basically, about contributing to society, even as it is also used as a means for improving employee relations and loyalty, enhancing corporate reputation, managing reputational risk, and to secure tax exemptions.

Corporate giving, or corporate philanthropy, is the most visible expression of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) footprint. Essentially, corporate giving is about business enterprises contributing part of their profits, resources, and time to charity, or to address specific community needs.

What is less appreciated is the latent reality that corporate giving is also, perhaps, the most revealing dimension of a company's social commitment.

Can we re-imagine corporate giving going beyond the bland, generic acts of cheque-book philanthropy where the photo opportunities, public relations, and "feel-good" effects seem to be the order of the day?

Does corporate giving in Singapore reflect pragmatic altruism? Or is it more a case of corporate instrumentalism, strategic branding, and peer pressure to keep up with competitors?

The question that faces corporate givers in Singapore today is not "why give?" but rather, how to give in a way that is transformational for both the giver and beneficiary? We ask these questions to cajole all stakeholders – givers, recipients, and the government alike – to examine how corporate giving in Singapore can be revitalised.

Giving & Receiving

The fundamental challenge is to mobilise corporate giving as an innovative opportunity to work with beneficiaries and other givers, so that the relationship is not fashioned as a transaction between giver and recipient. In other words, how can corporate giving be remodelled to remove the rigid distinction

between “giver” and “recipient”? If that distinction is blurred or removed, corporate giving is more likely to be sustainable, impactful and acts as an agent of change.

It is relevant and timely to speak of “corporate receiving” as well: here, the giver benefits in tangible and intangible ways, such that collaboration between the parties creates interdependence, empowerment and a positive impact for the recipient, society and business.

As such, corporate giving needs to be rejuvenated to create a relationship where there is shared value creation which builds on and sustains shared values of the giver and beneficiary. This enables the corporate giving to be sustainable and transformational.

The State of Giving: Inaugural Study of Singapore’s Giving Landscape (NVPC, 2005) captures very well the baseline for our giving landscape. That survey reported that in 2004 average annual corporate giving was a meager \$21,847, or 0.22% of pre-tax corporate profit. Most of the giving was by publicly-listed companies with about 1,000 employees and averaging 27 years of corporate existence.

Social services, education, health, community/grassroots, and youth were the five most popular sector recipients. Singaporeans and the corporate sector are certainly

making up for lost time where volunteerism and philanthropy are concerned.

The focus on giving in Singapore has been on the individual. In 2007, Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong exhorted wealthy Singaporeans to make Singapore a “giving society” where high net-worth individuals are encouraged to contribute at least half a percent of their annual income to help others and to support worthwhile causes.

It is timely to boost corporate giving. Encouraging the long-standing “many helping hands” approach—through volunteerism, individual and corporate philanthropy—signals the importance and urgency of maintaining and enhancing social cohesion in the years ahead, especially with the Singaporean society becoming more diverse and complex, with potentially more pockets of unmet needs.

Yet, a giving society can only come about if corporate philanthropy is scaled up since the potential of business enterprises to create change and the impact is significant.

To revitalise corporate giving, business enterprises must strive to collect data and evidence to examine the social and corporate benefits of their corporate giving. In short, giving has to be aligned with the corporate strategy and regarded as an investment with all the attendant key performance indicators.

Corporate giving efforts need to embrace causes, issues, socio-political trends that impact the business enterprise and society. The best corporate giving opportunities come from areas where the business is aligned to relevant issues.

Sustained Giving

This means moving from “situational corporate giving” to “sustainable corporate giving”. The former is about giving in response to a pressing need such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami disaster. In contrast, the latter is about giving that sustains the partnership between giver and beneficiary, creating behavioural change that inspires long-term thinking and impact. There is the impact of the multiplier effect in the sustainable giving approach.

Corporate giving efforts need to embrace causes, issues, socio-political trends that impact upon the business enterprise and society. The best corporate giving opportunities come from areas where the business is aligned to relevant issues. This drive towards organic corporate giving emphasises the focus of aligning corporate giving with business strategy, making it sustainable, impactful and innovative.

For example, a business enterprise and its employees should be engaged in the charity and the cause when they give. The giving can be structured to help the charity invest in self-sustaining social enterprises to generate the charity’s needed income stream.

Too often, corporate giving is conceived in self-limiting terms where the giver responds to an appeal, or identifies a suitable

activity to support because it attracts visibility. Similarly, the beneficiary depends on the gifts, in cash or in kind, to run its activities and pay its bills.

To be sure, traditional corporate philanthropy is important and necessary since charities and causes depend on a certain income stream to continue their good work.

To move corporate giving to a new level, companies must go beyond cheque writing towards a more purposeful approach where corporate giving motivates leadership, change and actually makes a difference within the giver and beneficiary. Corporate giving ought to be more widely appreciated and practised as going beyond philanthropy.

We live in an interdependent world. The health of our community relies on successful individuals and corporate citizens accepting the obligation to take care of the less privileged and less fortunate. It is also a hallmark of a gracious and compassionate society. Corporate giving can do more. ■



For more insight on the giving scene in Singapore, or to send us your ideas and suggestions, log on to www.salt.org.sg.