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FROM VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT TO PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT: REDUCING INEQUALITIES AMONG MARGINALIZED VOLUNTEERS

Abstract:

Despite the beneficial image of volunteering, research shows that the volunteer sector encompasses the traditional inequalities found in the job market, which are based on social class, income, ethnicity, and race. For example, volunteering is related to social resources, such as a presence in organizations and public institutions, and, as a result, marginalized young adults are not “invited” to volunteer. Even when specially designated projects are set up for marginalized young adults, those running them tend to seek social capital that is characteristic of volunteers from privileged groups and classify marginalized volunteers as unsuitable. They assign volunteer jobs that are beneath the volunteers’ abilities and implement supervision and control that leaves the volunteers with a low level of autonomy.

□At the same time, the research on management indicates that inclusive management increases initiative and initiatives stimulates commitment to and identification with one’s position, and serves as a tool for organizational empowerment. Although this view is common in employee management it is rare in the literature on volunteer management. The question of how we can promote a sense of partnership with volunteers has still not been sufficiently addressed. The present article seeks to address this gap. The key to reducing the inequality in volunteering, we will argue, lies in the creation of partnerships with volunteers. These partnerships are linked to recognition of the unique social capital of the volunteers in third sector organizations and their right to make decisions pertaining to their social participation.

□We propose four ways of promoting partnership with volunteers: (1) by facilitating volunteering in groups; (2) by establishing volunteer councils; (3) by using mentoring as a management strategy; and (4) by integrating expert volunteers into the organization’s leadership. These partnerships are not dichotomous and reflect different rankings suited to volunteer seniority, the recipients of the service, and organizational structure. Each constitutes a strategy for making volunteers’ voices heard, for granting autonomy in their activity, and for providing volunteers with the authority necessary to have an influence on organizational leadership. We will demonstrate how these partnerships are better suited for the new trends in management and for advancing volunteers as citizens and as equal adults.

Keywords:

employee management, non-profit organizations, volunteering