Accommodating Generational Differences in Volunteer Management Practices: Case Study of Habitat MidOhio

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INTRODUCTION

Today's volunteer managers are facilitating the work of four generations side-by-side. In order to maintain a strong volunteer workforce, organizational leaders must become adept at responding to and maximizing the needs and preferences of their blended-generational volunteers so that they can continue to empower successful initiatives.

PURPOSE

Discover ways Habitat MidOhio can engage its volunteers in the face of generational differences in order to more successfully secure, motivate, and support their volunteers now and into the future.

GENERATION

Definition: A distinguishable group that shares a specific range of birth years and significant life events (Smola & Sutton, 2002)

HISTORY

First discussed by Karl Mannheim (1920's, not well publicized until the 1950's). He suggested that attitudes and values form due to major economic, political, and social events that people experience throughout their formative years during youth (Benson & Brown, 2011; Dekker & Halman, 2003; Arsenault, 2003). According to Mannheim and other generational theorists, people interpret the world through a specific generational lens (Brinckerhoff, 2007). This interpretation results in generational cohorts that share emotions, attitudes, preferences, and often traditions (Arsenault, 2003).

METHODS

16 question web-based survey to Habitat MidOhio's volunteers through Survey Monkey over the course of 10 days in March 2013: 4,458 e-mails sent/423 responses received, 401 usable responses

CONCLUSIONS

Habitat MidOhio has a committed, generationally diverse, fairly happy volunteer base.

Key Differences Between Each Generational Cohort

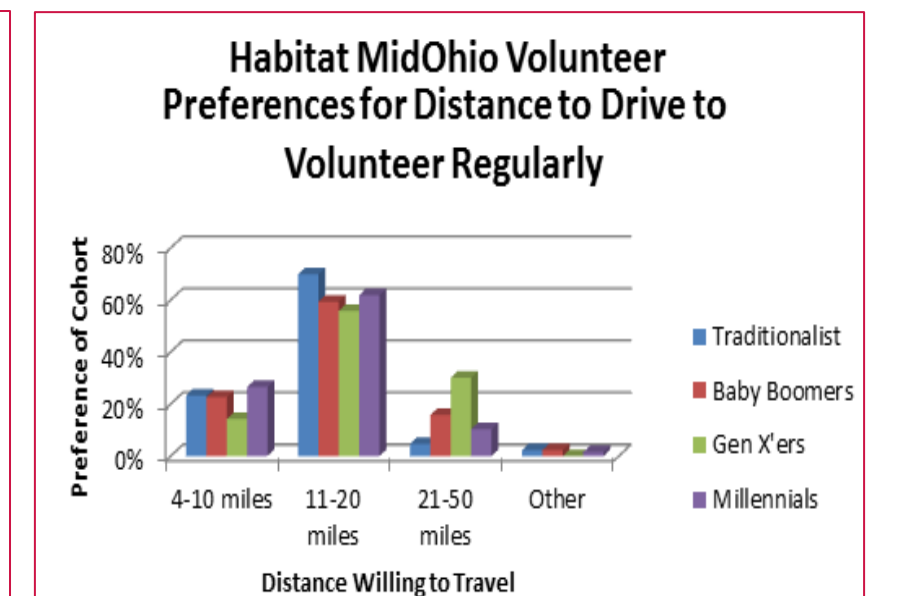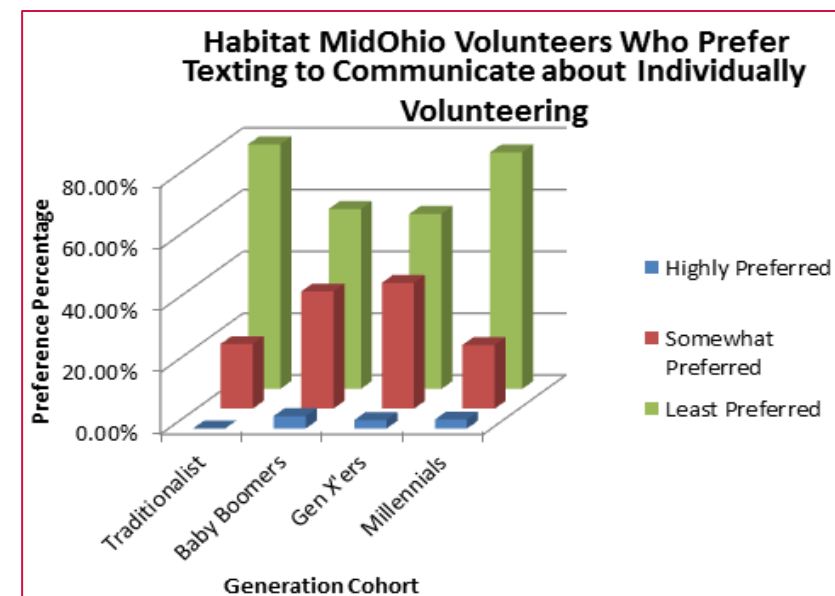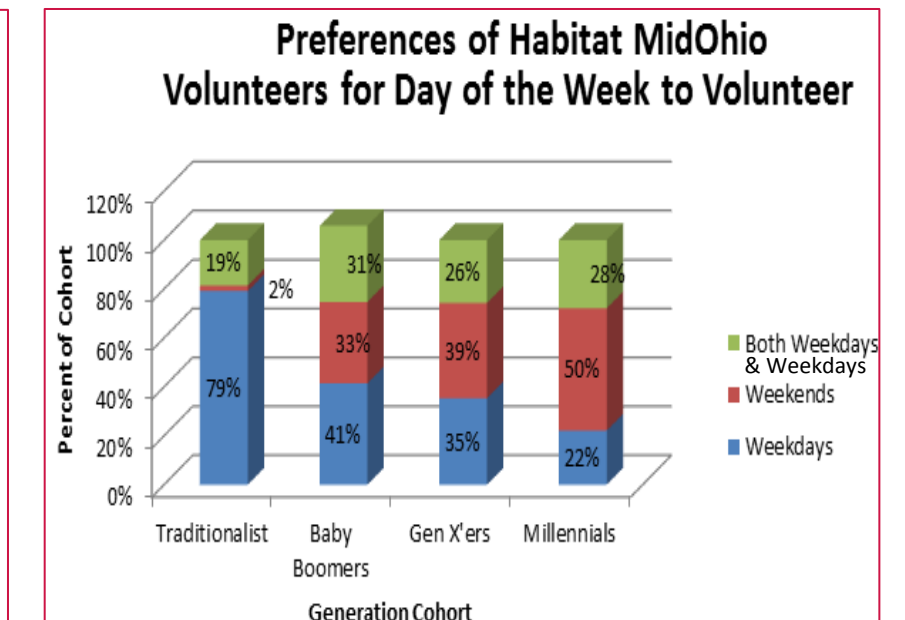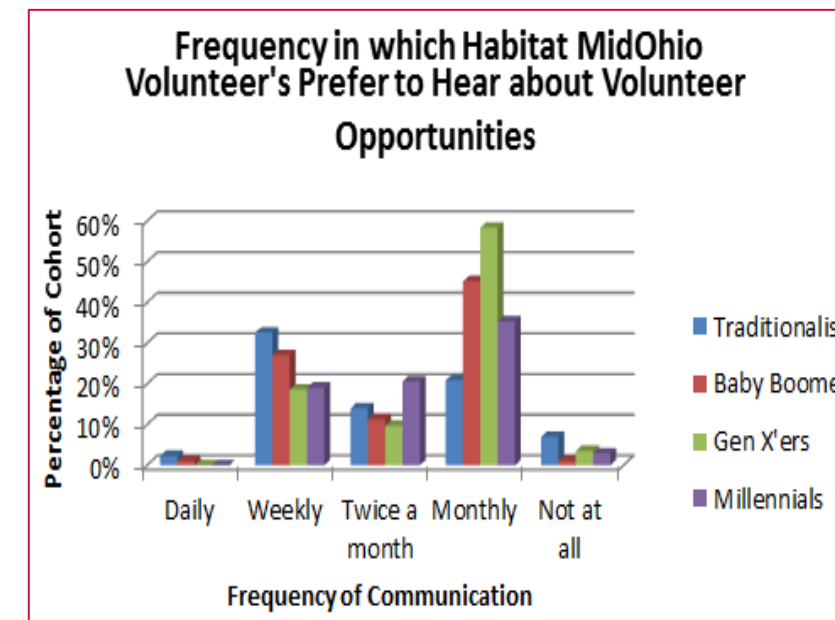|	Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Gen X'ers	Millennials
Birth Years	Pre-1946	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-2000
Pop. Size	75 million	80 million	46 million	76 million
Historical Influences	The Great Depression, World War II, GI Bill, Cold War	Soaring birthrate, economic prosperity, Vietnam War, Watergate scandal, human rights protests, sex, drugs, and rock n' roll, suburbs, dual incomes	Sesame Street, MTV, personal computers, increasing divorce rate, AIDS, crack cocaine	Growing use of technology and media, drugs and gangs, pervasive public violence, growing divide between haves and have-nots, immigration issues
Traits	Patriotic, loyal, patient, onward and upward attitudes, polite, fiscally conservative, faith in institutions, strong work ethic, institutional memory, overworked and underappreciated	Idealistic, optimistic, competitive, hard workers, question authority, "sandwich generation," resistant to ask for help, at risk for burn out, experienced, team oriented, skilled mentors	Eclectic, resourceful, self-reliant, adaptable, skeptical about relationships and institutions, high divorce rate, entrepreneurial, innovative, energetic, fun at work, information highway pioneers	Globally concerned, tolerant, media and technology savvy, expect constant contact, realistic, acknowledge diversity, environmentally conscious, will try anything
Values	Long-term careers, respect rules and authority, great reputation, fiscal responsibility, take cake of possessions and responsibilities	Integrity, self-improvement, loyal to organizations and causes, community involvement, identity questioning, seeking new passions	Be my own boss, supports team environment but conflicts with entrepreneurial spirit, advancement opportunity, loyal to people	High value of education, work-life balance, high-tech, innovative, diverse, loyal to ideas

(Lancaster, 2004; May, 2010, Smola & Sutton, 2002)

Understanding historical influences present during each generation's youth will help administrators understand each generation's stereotypical traits and values.

Trends in Generational Preferences when Volunteering

	Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Gen X'ers	Millennials
Communication	Keep the peace, keep opinions to themselves, tolerant of meetings, no news is good news	Tolerant of meetings, formal review, open when asked	Good at networking, asks for feedback occasionally but without demand	Crave rapid & constant feedback, personal & up-to-date technology, outspoken, impatient, sensitive to criticism
Scheduling	Does what is needed and what is asked because *"it's what's right,"* might be seasonal volunteers in correlation with retirement travel, consistent, reliable	Flexibility to take care of kids & parents, many interests, recent/impending retirement, team player	Self-sufficient, wants to work with other to develop new skills, volunteering must work around their family lives	Flexibility, collaboration, teamwork, feeling connected, short term volunteer opportunities, online scheduling, corporate or group volunteering
Appreciation	They have lived long enough to have their advice be desired and respected, respects authority and doesn't expect recognition, satisfaction in a job well done	Crave recognition for making a difference, value awards and titles, feeling needed	Helping the mission, freedom to do it their way, greater responsibility	Included in decision making, respect talents, use insights, results oriented, exposed to authority who will teach them
	(Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin, & Perrin, 2011; Hammill, 2005; Schoch, 2012)	(Hammill, 2005; Schoch, 2012)	(Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin, & Perrin, 2011; Hammill, 2005; Schoch, 2012)	(Ellis & McCurley, 2009; Hammill, 2005; Stillman & Lancaster, 2006)

Three areas that volunteers care about and the organization can influence: Communication, Scheduling, and Appreciation

Frequency in which Habitat MidOhio Volunteer's Prefer to Hear about Volunteer Opportunities

Preferences of Habitat MidOhio Volunteers for Day of the Week to Volunteer

Habitat MidOhio Volunteers Who Prefer Texting to Communicate about Individually Volunteering

Habitat MidOhio Volunteer Preferences for Distance to Drive to Volunteer Regularly

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to secure future multi & inter-generational volunteer engagement:

- Update forms of communication– yet no generation prefers texting as the primary means of communication
- Maintain a wide variety of volunteering options for time and length– only 2 percent of Traditionalists prefer to volunteer on the weekends compared to 50 percent of Millennials preferring weekend service opportunities.
- Focus on monthly volunteer updates
- Provide volunteer opportunities within 20 miles of a volunteer's home