



Why 50 Volunteers Can Make a BIG Difference for a Nonprofit Organization

Peter York

New research gleaned from TCC Group's Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT) confirms that nonprofits that operate with volunteer assistance are much more effective. We've learned that organizational effectiveness (as indicated by being more sustainably resourced, led, managed, and adaptable, as well as moving further along the organizational lifecycle) is significantly stronger for nonprofits with more than 50 volunteers **and** a robust volunteer management model. Over 50% of nonprofits in TCC's national database of 1500+ organizations engage 50 or more volunteers on an annual basis, but only 11% manage them well. Effective volunteer management includes recruitment; retention; supervision; and support. These 11% are what some national leaders of the service movement call "service enterprise" organizations.

What makes a nonprofit organization ready to become a service enterprise? Service enterprise organizations are more successful at overall human resource management practices, and have made significant investments in financial and managerial resources. They are distinguished by their sophisticated HR practices and behaviors with respect to:

- hiring and staff development;
- competitive salaries and benefits;
- establishing realistic expectations around performance and workload;
- providing formal, consistent, and frequent feedback;
- and understanding and measuring the skills and behaviors staff need to achieve successful outcomes for those they serve.

Talent management matters to nonprofit effectiveness because engaging and managing volunteers may be the key to cost-effective outcomes. Although half of all nonprofits in the CCAT database engage 50 or more volunteers on an annual basis, most of these neither receive nor invest the resources to be able to formalize and institutionalize effective volunteer management practices. It is time for the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors to intentionally invest time and money toward the development of service enterprise organizations by providing the opportunity for nonprofits to become service enterprises and empowering intermediary service organizations to support multiple programs within a community. These strategies will advance the sector's ability to take their vitally important social change efforts to scale.