



**Influencing our future leaders:
Creating a stronger community by
recruiting and nurturing youth
volunteers.**

Jess van Arendonk and Marcelo Calderon

Introduction

Interchange Outer East is a not for profit community organisation. The core responsibility of Interchange is to support families of children with disabilities; however, we want to work towards a better community as a whole. To achieve this, we seek youth from our community to be involved in our service. This is what sets us apart from other community organisations, as we support hundreds of young volunteers, recruiting them to support our participants 'to create opportunity and choice.' In the last financial year, our recreational volunteers provided a total of 25,250 hours of support to the Outer Eastern community.

Interchange Outer East has been utilising, and benefiting from, the help of youth volunteers for the past 30 years. We currently have 150 volunteers aged 18 years or younger, and 80% of our volunteers fit in the youth bracket, aged between 12 and 24. By recruiting volunteers from the age of 14, Interchange Outer East plays a huge part in nurturing the future leaders of Australian communities; by teaching them the skills, and giving them the practical experience needed to support, and advocate, for those enduring adverse life experiences, as well as planting, nourishing and reaping the benefits of young adults with strong social consciences, so that they can make positive changes for humanity.

Through recruiting and nurturing these young people, we have supported them to become doctors, nurses, teachers, naval officers, psychiatrists, disability support workers, managers in the field of disability, artists, reporters and many other outstanding citizens in our community. The relationships that they have formed and the skills that they have learnt as a young person donating their time to other people, has given them passion for people, and for making changes to the way that people look at disability. '*See the person, not the disability.*' From recent research there is evidence that shows a young volunteer is more likely to continue volunteering as an adult, than someone who has not experienced this before, and more likely to work and contribute to the community sector.

Not only do we play a part in these young people's lives but they play an important part in the lives of the people that they support. Youth volunteers provide a genuine energy and excitement, and matching young children with another young person gives them the ability to share similar interests and skills. Young people are often able to offer more energy and keep up with their energetic peers. These teenagers are constantly being role models and encouraging inclusion for all young people.

We believe we have unique opportunities at Interchange Outer East. We cannot emphasise strongly enough how important it is to notice the skills that youth in our community have, and to encourage them to be strong influences and mentors to other youth.

We hope to inspire you to do the same by showing you:

- Who these young people are
- Where they are from, and where they go after volunteering
- How to engage young people into your organization: and keep them engaged
- What benefits they bring to our organization and the wider community.

Assumptions

Today's young people are selfish and uninvolved – In fact, there is documented evidence that the great majority of Young people are empathetic and want to change the world for the better.

Duty of care towards volunteers – *Duty of care towards youth is no different to any other volunteer.*

Young people are particularly sensitive to being 'talked at' or 'talked down to' – Nobody should be talked at or down to.

They will expect meaningful duties, not ad hoc tasks that nobody else in the organisation wants to do – It is important that all volunteers are given meaningful duties if you would like them to become long term volunteers.

Young people are apathetic and unresponsive – Youth are extremely enthusiastic and have many interests and abilities that can be utilised in your organisation.

Young people are inwardly focused and 'out for themselves' – Again, young people are constantly thinking of what they can do to better the world.

Summary of recent survey conducted on volunteers regarding motivation.

We sent the survey to all volunteers on our database, with over 500 volunteers of which 80% fall in the youth category (any volunteer aged between 12-25). We didn't receive many responses, so during the school holidays program we asked all the volunteers to complete the survey before heading out to their activities.

From this we received 47 completed surveys. The breakdown of this was 13 experienced, 19 new and 15 that fall somewhere in between. The percentage of youth volunteers surveyed was 94%, which is a great reflection and representation of why youth volunteers are volunteering, and also an accurate reflection of the demographics of our volunteer database.

The Functional Approach to Volunteers' Motivations survey was used, developed by Gil Clary and Mark Snyder, was used to measure the 6 functions that motivate volunteers.

The Motivations for Volunteering

- **Values function;** the person is volunteering in order to express or act on important values, such as humanitarianism and helping the less fortunate.
- **Understanding function;** the volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world and/or exercise skills that are often unused.
- **Enhancement function;** the individual is seeking to grow and develop psychologically through involvement in volunteering.
- **Career function;** the volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.
- **Social function;** volunteering allows the person to strengthen one's social relationships.
- **Protective function;** the individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.

From the data collected, we found that the Understanding function & Value function rated highest at 84% and 83% respectively, were the main motivational factors. This is a truly encouraging result, as often youth have been inaccurately portrayed as being selfish, and uninterested in others. Our results show that this is not the case, and, if given a chance, youth have the same ability as others. The important thing with any volunteering is the task is meaningful for the volunteers involved.

In the past, we believed that the main motivational factors were career and social functions. This was an interesting result, as both had a very low percentage, with social 54%, and career 64%. It was, however, interesting to note that 20% of the group surveyed showed a mean percentage of over 80%. This could reflect the number of new volunteers, which consist of 40% of the population. New volunteers may have high percentages in all areas as they are not quite sure what their main reason is, and score everything high, as they may feel all are good reasons.

The last thing measured was the overall satisfaction of volunteers while volunteering with Interchange Outer East. The volunteers at Interchanged showed an 87% satisfaction, which is fantastic for interchange Outer East. It demonstrates that no matter what the motivational factors of the volunteers, Interchange Outer East is providing the right support as well as healthy and meaningful activities that keep volunteers involved and participating.

Recruitment process: Retain, Support, Skill & Training.

Process and Model: visual model and further detail.

School presentations

1. Contact schools and other educational institutions. Explain how our volunteer program works and how we run a presentation.
2. Book in dates and times to do presentation.
3. Contact current volunteers and families to see if anyone is available to attend the presentation and speak about their experiences.
4. Gather paperwork, presentation DVD, and other information to share at the presentation. Jot down points that are to be spoken about at the presentation.
5. Present to the school or institution. Leave business cards, VNews, Annual reports, contact list for students interested in volunteering, and other documents that they require.

This is a great way to recruit many youth volunteers.

- Relationships have been developed with schools and tertiary institutions which means that recruitment is ongoing.
- With the support from schools, parents feel better about sending their children to us as volunteers.

General Volunteering Enquiries

Step one: Can be done a few different ways; a face to face meeting, a phone call, an email or a school presentation. This step is usually the first enquiry to Interchange Outer East.

Step two: The information pack is then sent to the person enquiring by interchange volunteer coordinators; this pack is sent out within two days and includes:

- Crim-check forms
- Working with children's check if the applicant is over the age of 18
- Membership form
- V news (the volunteer newsletter)
- Rights and responsibilities for volunteers
- Brief description of the job
- Information about the different programs that volunteers can be involved in
- Reference check forms
- Parents/ guardians permission slip

Step three: When the applicant responds to the email to set up an interview. They must bring to the interview:

- All forms that were sent by email
- 100 points of I.D.
- 2 referee contact details.
- If under the age of 18, their parent is encouraged to attend

Step four: The interview process. Forms will be checked, as well as 100 points of I.D for the crim-check. At the interview there will be several things that are discussed:

- The training dates
- Rights and responsibilities
- Any questions that the volunteer may have
- Information about the next volunteer orientation
- Any additional information that is needed
- Who Interchange Outer East is, and what we do
- Brief on where to meet before camps or activities.
- Introduction to the site and some of the staff
- Interview questions(refer to appendix 1)

Step 5: Decisions on the suitability of the candidate will be based on:

- Crim check free from convictions of violent crimes (where applicant is over 16yrs)
- Possession of a Working with children's check (if over 18 yrs)
- Desirable answers to interview questions
- Positive referee checks

Step six: Go on the first activity, then, afterwards, get a feedback sheet about how everything went.

The volunteer is then informed that they are ready to start and encouraged to attend the next volunteer orientation training. Volunteers are entered onto the volunteer database, IX database and outlook database. They are then sent information for upcoming activities via email and text.

We have been told that our recruitment process is a lot easier than other volunteer organizations. This means that people are more likely to volunteer with us.

We recruit volunteers every day, which means that we don't turn away anyone who has made an expression of interest.

We recruit volunteers from the age of 14. This gives us a larger option of volunteers. Our youth volunteers have proven to be a huge benefit to IOE.

The process follows the CHILDWISE directions, which keeps our organization safe from harmful predators.

It is an easy process to follow, and can be done by other coordinators if the volunteer coordinators are unavailable.

Orientation Training

1. Sort out dates that work for both volunteer coordinators, and fit in prior to school holidays. Create orientation event on outlook calendar. Book out training room.
2. Include orientation date/s in VNews, ensuring it is clear for all volunteers to see. Contact guest speaker with dates for orientation, and ask if they can attend. Put volunteers on Outlook
3. Send out an email to volunteers 3 weeks after VNews, or 3 weeks prior to orientation, advertising the event, and explaining why it's important for all volunteers to attend. Also email staff asking them to come along and introduce themselves to volunteers.
4. Go over training notes; make any changes that may be relevant at the time to volunteers that are attending. Talk to other coordinators about particular issues for volunteers. Confirm volunteers & staff attendance.
5. Organize catering. Create agenda. Set up training room. Run training.

Orientation training is advertised at least a month prior to the day. Volunteer coordinators steadily work on filling the training for the time leading up to it, then work on it for the 2 weeks leading up to the training.

Volunteers who have completed their orientation feel more like they are apart of IOE & more equipped to do their job.

The new orientation session/s got positive feedback.

Having staff attend makes volunteers feel more comfortable and a part of IOE. This also gives staff an introduction to new volunteers.

Ongoing Support and training.

- Receive feedback from volunteers from feedback sheets and orientation training to see what training volunteers are looking for.
- Discuss with other coordinators, and the Training coordinator, if training in these areas is already being organized. If not, look into different training options and costs of training, and decide which are most important and when they can be most conveniently run.
- Contact the training coordinator, or training facilitators, to see if this training can be organized, then work out dates and cost. Book the training room for the proposed date.
- Advertise the training to all volunteers via the VNews, email, website, facebook and other IOE newsletters. Enter volunteers' names onto the training calendar when they express interest.

Confirm training with facilitators and volunteers. Organize catering and set up the training room. Introduce the facilitator to the volunteers and be present on the evening of the training.

The significance of youth contribution

We have been asking people about the impact they feel youth make to the community by volunteering their time.

We spoke with Danae and Kristina from SYN radio in Melbourne. SYN is a local radio station in Melbourne that is predominately run by volunteers. They have 880 volunteers and only 9 paid staff. Their volunteers are recruited from the age of 14 and retire at the age of 26. This works really well, and their station is extremely popular with listeners of all ages. Personally, we think this is fantastic!

Danae and Kristina shared with us the importance that youth play on community radio, and it was apparent that youth are able to be just as mature minded, and resourceful, as any other reporter on air. Their volunteers bring diversity, energy, enthusiasm, confidence and strength to their audience. Many of their young volunteers grow up to work in media in all different ways, and continue to be huge influences to not only the local community, but Australia wide, depending on the roles they choose to take on.

What really stands out is the amazing work that both Danae and Kristina do in supporting, training and mentoring these young people. Training is a huge part in developing the skills of a young volunteer, and SYN do this really well. I believe that's because both Danae and Kristina have volunteered many times. Speaking with them highlights that it makes no difference what your organisation does, or who your clients or audience are, young people can take on any role with the right support.

In the survey we conducted, it was made evident that young people volunteer their time because they want to do something of value for their community. Young people have time, enthusiasm, energy, drive, and dedication that most people lose when they enter the workforce, then depend on full time work.

Youth are hugely influential to their peers, and will often be even more dedicated if they get the opportunity to work in groups. This also makes recruitment easier, because young people are more likely to go where their friends are going.

Our young volunteers often don't just volunteer for us, they volunteer for soup kitchens, their local sports clubs, their churches, and other local events that happen in their community. I am often overwhelmed when speaking with our young volunteers who are busy with school or uni, work part time, play a sport, and then volunteer for us on a regular basis. I struggle to find time to do work, house work, fitness and have a social life; so I look at these young people with awe when I hear how busy their lives are, and yet they're willing to take on even more!

These young people are being mentored by our organisations that are passionate about human rights. So they in turn become the mentors, encouraging all people to be treated with equality, freedom, respect and dignity.



5 - 7 Yose Street
Ferntree Gully 3156

Phone: (03) 9758 5522

Fax: (03) 9758 5899

Email: ioe@ioe.org.au

Marcelo & Jess: volunteers@ioe.org.au



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