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## The chances of successful recruitment of volunteers among management students (in the light of empirical research)<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Non-governmental (social, public) organizations arise from grass-roots civic initiatives and are motivated not by a desire to make profit, but the achievement of important social objectives. They cannot operate properly without community involvement (many civil society theorists even recognize it as an autotelic objective). Their foundation is social community-driven people: social entrepreneurs, managers, members as well as volunteers. These organizations base their activity on voluntary mobilization, becoming *de facto* an intermediary between those who give and receive support. Their structural characteristics are more labor-intensive, rather than capital-intensive (Anheier 2005).

Contribution of those involved in founding non-governmental organizations is emphasized by the so-called supply concepts of voluntary activity (economic and sociological) (Seiler 2014). However, some researchers analyzing social activity tend

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to focus their attention on a specific category of civic organization workers, namely volunteers. Without their support, it would be difficult to imagine the functioning of many of the existing non-governmental bodies. In 2012, more than half (55%) of Polish third-sector organizations cooperated with external volunteers (Przewłocka 2013). According to the Central Statistical Office (CSO, GUS), non-profit entities engaged nearly about 2.5 million volunteers in the given year (Central Statistical Office, 2014).

The involvement of voluntary workers is characterized by unpaid, gratuitous and often spontaneous participation, and may stem from various motivations (Peterson 2004; cf. Chimiak 2006): altruistic, ideological, affiliative, status-related, associated with the disposal of free time, instrumental. From the standpoint of non-governmental organizations, it is important to take deliberate, conscious and formalized actions geared toward acquisition, maintenance and development of social workers. In this area, the experience of business organizations that have developed advanced methods of recruitment can be useful. Implementation of certain practices is particularly important in view of professionalization required of civil parties by today's world (Stankiewicz, Seiler 2013). An opportunity for this lies in cooperating with people who have organizational expertise, such as students of managerial courses.

This article aims to answer the following questions: Do management students want to get involved in the activities of non-governmental organizations? What would encourage them to do so? In which areas of non-governmental activity would they wish to work and what kind of jobs would they do? How to recruit management students? What advantages are to be highlighted when coming up with cooperation offers for them?

## 2. Constitutive characteristics of today's volunteering

Volunteering (voluntary activity, volunteer work, social work) is inherently linked with support activity. A volunteer is someone who dedicates their time to helping others, not expecting payment or other material benefits in return (Wilson, Musick 2000). The association "Klon/Jawor" in their studies, described volunteering as unpaid and voluntary spending of time on social work in non-governmental organizations, institutions, etc. (Dabrowska, Gumkowska 2002). The Central Statistical Office (2012), on the other hand, opts for the term "unpaid work outside the household", including: activities, i.e. work undertaken during one's free time, provided voluntarily, gratuitously, offering aid for people, communities, groups, organizations, institutions, that have not been referred

to one's own household. In the Polish literature on the subject, references were made also to the legal definition contained in the Act of 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work, according to which a volunteer is a natural person providing benefits, voluntarily and without material gratification, to non-governmental organizations, public administration bodies and their subordinate organizational units (Dz.U. 2003 nr 96 poz. 873).

The constitutive characteristics of volunteer work are voluntary and non-material nature of the undertaken activities. As shown by studies, the motivating factors behind volunteering can vary (Chimiak 2006; Rehberg, 2005; Yeung 2004; Peterson 2004). Apart from them, today's volunteering gradually loses its amateur status, becoming a specialized activity. Its professionalization and change in emphasis from participation on performance is a consequence of the growing importance of voluntary work within the framework of the so-called „triad of work” (volunteering, paid employment and self-employment). There is a shift from activities undertaken for the sake of others to those aimed at “getting to know the new” and that are “self-oriented” (Rehberg 2005); from collective activities to those that are individualistic (Finkelstein 2010). The so-called reflective volunteering is becoming prevalent (Hustinx, Lammertyn 2003), finding common language with the representatives of Generation Y who value education, interesting job positions and vibrant interesting lifestyle. They feel less connected to traditional communities (religion, nation), but at the same time feel a strong need for community among themselves. This generation holds personal and affiliative values (happiness, love, family life) in high esteem and perceives work as a successful condition for (e.g. prosperous, pleasant and interesting) life and the source of personal satisfaction (Chomałkowska, Smolbik-Jęczmień 2013; Olson, Brescher 2011 ).

### 3. The specifics of volunteer recruitment among students

In seeking stability and durability, which in turn will allow them to effectively reach their public goals, non-governmental organizations should employ loyal and dedicated staff. For this reason, some of these bodies rely on paid employment, although it comes with certain important consequences (in the dimension of ethics and organization). Despite some signs of change, the third sector still is dominated by the model of social work. In 2014, more than half of non-governmental organizations (61%) relied solely on the involvement of volunteers (Central Statistical Office 2016). One can point to a number of barriers related to commercial employment, most importantly financial one (Seiler,

Stankiewicz 2011). In this situation, it would be worth recommending to the analyzed organizations professionalization of their recruitment process of social employees, including the one that has to do with the segment of young workers who are a natural reservoir of volunteers (people aged 15-24 represent the most numerous group of volunteers - Central Statistical Office 2012).

The success of an organization depends not only on the funds gathered, including those coming from donors, but also on the constant effort of the whole community of these organizations, among them volunteers. Establishing and continuing cooperation with people possessing the necessary skills, and who are ready to dedicate their time to non-profit organizations and its beneficiaries, is oftentimes crucial for the mission and objectives of these bodies to be accomplished. It is therefore important to conduct the recruitment process in a professional manner. Its main task is to show potential applicants the possibility of volunteer work, stimulate their interest in the offer of cooperation, and then motivate them to apply for work in organizations seeking volunteers.

Those responsible for recruiting volunteers among students in non-governmental organizations may adopt a passive attitude and wait for the volunteers to express their willingness to cooperate upon their own initiative. However, the passive approach is in many cases ineffective. The candidates are better searched for independently or by applying for help in this regard to regional or local volunteer centers (more broadly, in Polish: <http://wolontariat.org.pl/siec/>, 25.02.2016 - date of access). Offers for volunteers can be promoted in both real and virtual world through one- or two-way communication with potential candidates (or groups of them), either directly or indirectly.

Recruitment methods depend, *inter alia*, on the number of required students and their expertise. Looking for many volunteers, whose work will not require specialized knowledge and skills (e.g. distribution of leaflets, fundraising), one can conduct broad recruitment with the use of mass media. On the other hand, when in need of specialists, it is worth considering places where such people tend to gather (e.g. scientific circles), and then forward an invitation directly to this group (e.g. in print or by way of individual conversations).

Recruitment of volunteers among students should start from preparing relevant offers of cooperation that will be tailored to their needs. It should take into account elements such as (cf. Rustecki 2011; Wciseł 2015): brief description of the non-governmental organization, volunteer personal profile, scope of activities the implementation of which they may get involved in (with special attention to those that the analyzed a group of students would be keen on),

timeframe (when cooperation commences, how long it lasts, between what hours), brief description of the recruitment process (required documents, application deadline, ways of communicating with potential volunteers, deadline of recruitment campaign resolution or informational meetings for candidates). It is also worth considering doing market segmentation of potential volunteers, e.g. by accounting for the reasons why students engage in voluntary activity [such analysis was proposed, *inter alia*, by: M.S. Garver ; R.L. Divine, S.A. Spralls (2009; cf. Wymer 2003)]. By doing so, in the offers of cooperation, one can expose the benefits to be gained by a volunteer through joining the activity of a given non-governmental organization, e.g. opportunity to develop skills and gain experience, participate in interesting projects, help those in need, establish new interesting interpersonal relations, etc.. Also the literature stresses the importance of the proper selection of recruitment strategies with respect to potential motives of volunteers' engagement (Peterson 2004).

The substantive content of the offers aimed at volunteers is not the only aspect that counts, and the way the information is passed is equally important. In order to recruit volunteers, managers of non-governmental organizations can use the "standard" methods, including (e.g. Stankiewicz, Bortnowska 2014):

- *networking* (using a network of interpersonal contacts),
- advertisements in the daily press, professional magazines, on radio or on television,
- Internet publications (one one's own or university's website, using services such as: Infopraca, Pracuj.pl, MonsterPolska), sharing relevant information on professional social media (such as GoldenLine, Profeo or LinkedIn), or those associating non-governmental organizations (<http://www.ngo.pl/> - date of access: 03.04.2016), blogs, newsletters, as well as sending e-mails to candidates, e.g. in cooperation with the university),
- advertisements in print, using, e.g. leaflets, posters, newsletters,
- public speaking at universities, participation in job fairs and/or university "career days", etc.

One should also consider developing alternative methods to reach potential volunteers. Used can be (cf. Stankiewicz, Bortnowska 2014), e.g.: publication of notices of unusual content, slogan or with an unconventional name of the "job", etc., publishing recruitment advertisements in unusual places, e.g. on T-shirts of volunteers or members of non-governmental organizations, billboards, buses, pens, inner sides of the cartons for packaging sponsors' products, etc. Due to budgetary constraints, recruiting volunteers should also be done over the Internet.

In the following sections, this article will focus on recruiting volunteers among management students who possess the relevant knowledge and skills in the field of management. Cooperation with such people may be an opportunity for Polish non-governmental organizations facing the challenges associated with professionalization of their activities (Stankiewicz, Seiler 2013). The considerations were based on the results of empirical research conducted among the students of the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Zielona Gora.

#### **4. Research methodology and characteristics of the research sample**

The research was conducted in December 2015. The technique opted for was direct survey based on a categorized and standardized questionnaire containing, *inter alia*, nine questions: closed and semi-open (single and multiple choice). The following scales were used: ordinal scale and Likert scale. The questionnaire also included socio-demographic variables characterizing the respondents.

The study examined the opinions of 281 deliberately selected full-time (56%) and part-time (44%) students of three courses offered within the Faculty of Economics and Management at the University of Zielona Gora: Logistics (42.7%), Economics (31.7%) , Management (25.6%). Among the respondents, there were more women (68.9%) than men. The majority of the respondents (87.9%) were undergraduate students. More than half (60.1%) were less than 22 years old. Between 2011 and 2015, one in four (26.3%) was involved in the activities of non-governmental organizations.

#### **5. Employment opportunities for management students as volunteers**

One of the things found during the research was the hierarchy of values of the surveyed students. They prefer those values that refer to the personal sphere of life [family (82.2%), health (77.2%), love (62.3%)] and to the functioning within the so-called "exclusive groups". This may indicate the limited social involvement [caused by, e.g. a phenomenon that E. Banfield (1967) called "amoral familism" ]. Further, the surveyed students mentioned the values related to professional life [job (55.5%), money (46.6%), education (41.6%)], and those associated with liberty, self-expression and development of interests [freedom (41.3%) and fulfilling passions (29.2%)]. This shows that, among the surveyed students preparing for future executive roles, there is a strong need for action based on individualistic and instrumental motives. This can provide guidance to those responsible for

recruiting volunteers among this target group in non-profit organizations, so that messages addressed to them should emphasize such potential benefits as preparation for a given profession, acquiring new skills, resume enhancement, development of interests<sup>2</sup>.

Another thing found during the research was that, in the concerned hierarchy, the surveyed students held in lower esteem values associated with the operation of traditional communities [honor (18.2%), homeland (17.4) and creed (15.3%)] and with helping those in need (13.2%). The implementation of these goals in life is associated with the attitude of commitment and altruism, and can be an important predicate of voluntary activity. It should be noted that this need was not heavily emphasized by the respondents. Despite this fact, the majority of them, who are not so far volunteers (71%), expressed their willingness to engage in the activities of non-governmental organizations<sup>3</sup>. This indicates the existence of a reservoir of social work among future executives.

## 6. Areas and types of voluntary work preferred by management students

During the research, it was found that most of the respondents were involved or would be willing to participate in social or humanitarian help and rescue (27.8%) - an area that is traditionally associated with volunteering. One in six respondents (17.1%) preferred to work for organizations dealing with sport, tourism, recreation and hobbies, while one in nine (11.7%) - education and upbringing, and scientific research activity. It appears that the surveyed students perceive volunteering as an opportunity to develop their interests and knowledge. Further down the line, the respondents chose: support for non-governmental organizations and civic initiatives (10.3%) and health (9.6%). It should be noted that the students are least

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2 There was no significant correlation found between the recognition by the respondents of this value

important and socio-demographic variables the study participants were characterized by (coefficient values of  $F_i$  and V-Cramer did not exceed 0.3). The article includes the following scale in the case of V-Cramer's coefficient:  $|r|=0$  (correlation does not exist),  $0<|r|<0,3$  (is weak),  $0,3\leq|r|<0,5$  (average),  $0,5\leq|r|<0,7$  (significant),  $0,7\leq|r|<0,9$  (high),  $0,9\leq|r|<1,0$  (very high),  $|r|=1$  (complete) (Stanisz 2006). Additionally, it was assumed, following Cohen, that  $f_i$  with the value of 0.1 or less is a small effect; (0.1; 0.3) is an average effect, and greater than or equal to 0.5 is a large effect (Arcimowicz et al., [www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~uamzpoip/corobia.../Effect%20size.ppt](http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~uamzpoip/corobia.../Effect%20size.ppt), 02.07.2015 - date of access).

3 The choice of respondents in this regard was not strongly correlated with any of their socio-demographic variables (as shown by the results of the analysis of the coefficients V-Cramer and  $F_i$ ).

likely to engage in activities related to the development of art and culture (5%) and to religion (3.6%).

Not only the area of activity of the students was identified, but also their preferred and performed types of work in voluntary organizations. It was found that the most common choice (40.9%) was preparation and handling of events, festivals and conferences. Direct help to those in need was opted for as often (39.9%). One third of the respondents (27.8%) have done or would do office work, while every eighth (12%) has distributed or would distribute leaflets and posters; one in ten (respectively 10.7% and 10.3%) has done or would do accounting and/or participate in a quest<sup>4</sup>.

The presented arrangement of preferences among the respondents can be useful to those responsible for recruiting volunteers in non-profit organizations with respect to the formulation of cooperation offers for this particular target group. These offers should accentuate not only the possibility of providing help to those in need, but also opportunities to develop the skills referred to in the terminology of the Central Statistical Office (2012) as characteristic of business and administration workers.

## 7. Sources for recruiting volunteers among management students

Also determined were the sources of information about the opportunities to engage in the activities of non-governmental organizations. It was found that such messages have not even reached every one in three students (34.5%). In other cases, the information was usually extracted through direct interactions with people acquainted, to varying degrees, with the third sector. Most often, these were family members and/or friends (25.62%), representatives of non-governmental organizations (24.65%), university employees (15.3%) (see Tab. 1).

It should be noted that cooperation offers that managed to reach potential volunteers usually had the "traditional" form, i.e. were in print (posters - 28.47%, leaflets - 24.91%). To every one in five respondents (18.15%), the source of knowledge about the opportunities to engage in volunteer activities were social-networking sites. Non-standard ways of presenting such opportunities were seen rarely billboards - 9.96%, banners - 7.47%), and the same goes for publications in unusual places, e.g. on employees' T-shirts, buses, bursars' cans

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4 Other types of work were preferred less frequently: repairs (8.9%), website development (6.4%), translation (5%).

(5.34%). This may be due to their relatively less widespread use in practice. A barrier to the use of such creative solutions can be high costs of preparing these types of advertisement that prove overly burdensome to the budget of non-profit organizations, as they often do not have such means or avoid increasing administrative costs. The solution to this problem could be to seek sponsors or develop targeted and affiliate marketing programs.

**Table 1. Sources of information about the opportunities to engage in the activities of non-governmental organizations**

Sources of information about cooperation offers	[%]
<b>Personal - direct interactions with people acquainted with the third sector</b>	
Family members / friends	25,62
Representatives of non-governmental organizations (other than family members and friends)	24,65
University staff	15,30
Volunteer Center employees	4,63
Proteges of non-governmental organizations	4,27
Workers of employment agencies	2,85
<b>Advertisements (in print and electronic media)</b>	
Posters	28,47
Leaflets	24,91
Social-networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Profeo etc.)	18,15
Billboards	9,96
Radio/TV	9,61
Newspapers, magazines	8,90
Websites of non-governmental organizations	7,83
Banners	7,47
Electronic mail	6,41
University website	5,69

Unusual places, np. employees' T-shirts, buses, bursars' cans	5,34
Information booklets of non-governmental organizations	4,98

**Source:** own study based on empirical research

Taking into account the above considerations, it is worth noting the remarkable effectiveness of recruitment advertisement published on social-networking sites. The use of this medium does not entail significant costs, and can reach many potential volunteers. Posts published on Facebook and other websites were seen by every fifth student (18.15%). This is a consequence of young people's growing active presence in the virtual world.

## 8. Conclusion

Non-governmental organizations are help-oriented and operate in order to pursue public objectives. To the significant extent, they base their activity on social involvement, volunteer work. For this reason, the key task of the managers of these organizations is professionalization of the process of recruiting volunteers. It forms part of a broader approach to improve the methods of management of non-profit bodies, where an important role may be played by management students. Bearing in mind that the motives behind involvement in a third-sector organization may not only be altruistic, but also instrumental, one should formulate the content of recruitment advertisements accordingly. The conducted research showed that the need to help those in need was not widely perceived by the surveyed management students. Nevertheless, 70% of the respondents, who have not yet been volunteers, expressed their willingness to participate in the activities of non-governmental organizations. This would usually involve social or humanitarian aid and rescue, preparation and handling of events, festivals and conferences, directly helping those in need, office work. Therefore, it is important for those responsible for recruiting volunteers among management students in non-profit organizations to address in their cooperation offers not only altruistic motives, but also point to the opportunities of professional skills development, including those related to management of organizations. In this regard, used can be not only the traditional methods of recruitment (studies have shown their considerable prevalence), but also more creative means, with the support from commercial organizations (that may thus reach people possessing skills sought on the labor market).

## Summary

### **The chances of successful recruitment of volunteers among management students (in the light of empirical research)**

Non-profit organizations pursue social objectives. They base on the work of volunteers - people who devote their time to help others without expecting in return material benefits. They can perform various works, including those ones which require knowledge and skills in the area of management. It is possible to find such competences among the students of Management. The aim of the article is to discuss some opportunities of recruitment volunteers among that target market.

**Keywords:** *non-profit organizations, volunteers, recruitment, management students.*

## Streszczenie

### **Szanse na skuteczną rekrutację wolontariuszy wśród studentów kierunków menedżerskich (w świetle badań empirycznych)**

Organizacje pozarządowe realizują cele społeczne. Opierają swoją działalność na pracy wolontariuszy, czyli osób, które poświęcają czas, aby pomagać innym, nie oczekując w zamian korzyści materialnych. Mogą oni wykonywać różne prace, w tym takie, które wymagają wiedzy i umiejętności z zakresu zarządzania. Takich kompetencji można poszukiwać u studentów kierunków menedżerskich. Celem artykułu jest omówienie szans na rekrutację wolontariuszy wśród tej grupy docelowej.

## Słowa

**kluczowe:** *organizacje non profit, wolontariusze, rekrutacja, studenci kierunków menedżerskich.*

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