

VOLUNTEER RETENTION IN EMERGENCY SERVICES



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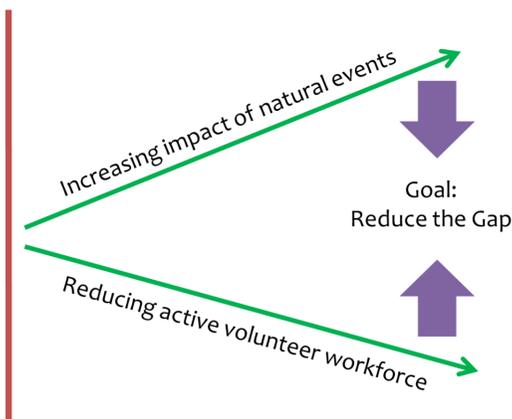
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Redesigning Leadership Self Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence

The quality of volunteer leadership is an important factor in attracting and keeping volunteers ¹

Problem

The Australian emergency service landscape is on the cusp of change. On the one hand the frequency and impact of natural disasters is on the increase, while on the other hand the volunteer workforce who are available and able to assist communities during these crises is reducing.



A large part of the problem in retaining volunteers has been identified with poor volunteer leadership. Volunteers are far less tolerant of poor leadership than they would be in paid occupations. We therefore need to address this issue and develop effective leadership skills so that we can maintain effective volunteer capacity.

Program

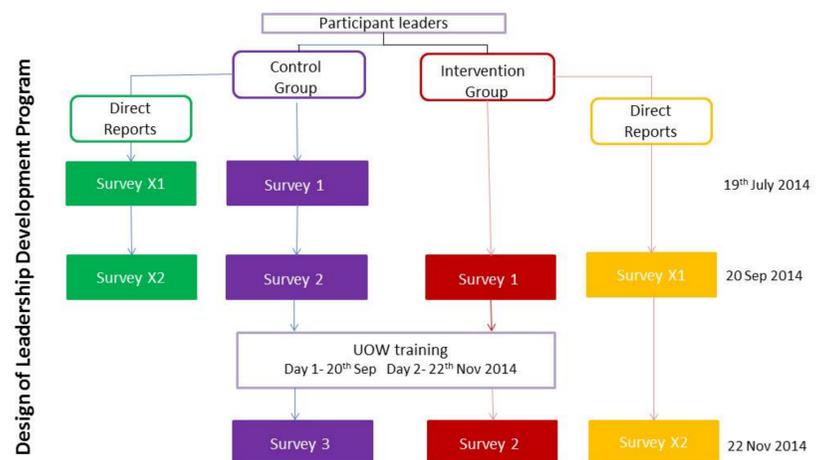
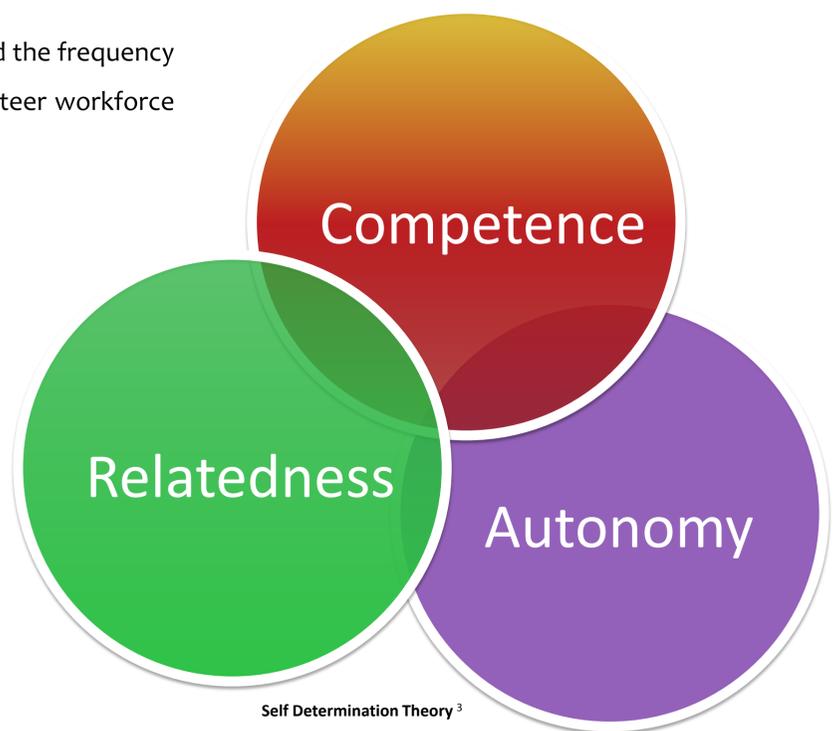
The Sustainable Volunteer Team at the University of Wollongong will develop a program to close the gap by preparing brigade leaders and unit controllers to create more effective leadership environments. Using leading edge concepts of leadership (Self-Determination Theory and Emotional Intelligence ^{2,3}) leaders will be able to foster volunteer environments and relationships which will empower volunteers, increase their connectedness and unlock individual competencies. The outcome will be the development of optimally motivating and supportive environments for emergency volunteers.

Experimental Design

1. Surveys for leaders and their direct reports.
2. Two day training sessions focusing on knowledge development and awareness.
3. On-the-job application of the learning supported by online content.

Expected outcome

Participants will learn what a leader can do to improve the quality of the volunteer experience and increase the motivation, wellbeing and retention of the volunteers in a unit.



References:

1. New South Wales Auditor, Management of volunteers NSW State Emergency Service, in Performance Audit. 2014, Audit Office of New South Wales: Sydney.
2. Oostlander, J., et al., Leadership and Volunteer Motivation: A Study Using Self-Determination Theory. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 2013.
3. Deci, E.L. and R.M. Ryan, The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. Psychological Inquiry, 2000. 11(4): p. 227-268.

Source photos: NSW SES and NSW RFS