ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION OF VOLUNTEERS IN AN AUSTRALIAN EMERGENCY SERVICE AGENCY

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THE PROBLEM

1) ES organisations are facing increased difficulties attracting and recruiting new volunteers, especially younger generations

and more importantly,

2) organisations are experiencing difficulties *retaining* them

This depletes the organisation’s financial, social, skill, and knowledge resources
THE PROBLEM

Turnover occurs at various stages of the volunteering life cycle (recruitment, training, socialisation, performance, and retirement).

But turnover during the socialisation stage is something that can be managed and will have positive outcomes.

It is also poorly studied.

It is also the stage which holds the greatest benefit for the organisation (investment has begun, but there has been little time for ROI).
THE RESEARCH

As little research had been done in this area, this study adopted a Grounded Theory approach.

AIM: To examine the processes that newly trained volunteers go through during their socialisation once they are deployed to their respective units, and the underlying mechanisms which lead to their retention or turnover.
Focus Groups & Interviews across 7 SES units involving 157 participants.

12 focus groups with 8-10 participants

63 In-depth face-to-face interviews – 40 mins
WHAT IS SOCIALISATION

the ‘process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role’ (J. van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211).

It is important because this is where new members develop required:

• attitudes,
• values,
• Knowledge,
• behavioural expectations, and
• norms
WHAT IS SOCIALISATION

It is important because:
• it sustains the organisation’s values, culture and norms,
• it helps newcomers make sense of their role, and
• it increases their commitment to the organisation

It improves:
• newcomers’ task mastery,
• role orientation,
• affiliation to the work group, and
• understanding of organisational issues and practices
The process of joining an organisation, followed by participating in it and eventually leaving it, is known as organisational socialisation.
THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS
- HOW IT SHOULD WORK

People join for shared values and locale.

Sociisation is achieved through the accumulation of shared experiences. This is realised through norms, culture, and social fit.

Shared values and experiences lead to the development of mutual trust.

Mutual trust builds the foundations of shared values and experiences, whilst in an environment of trust, leaders can collaborate.

Camaraderie

Trust Development

Enduring Friendships work as a Hygiene Factor, making it easier to turn up.

Enduring Friendships

Long-term Commitment
THE SOCIALISATION PROCESS
– WHERE THE PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS BEGIN
CONCLUSION

Managing turnover during the socialisation stage

1. Be sure to adopt an early socialisation policy for new recruits so that they can undergo their ‘trial by personality’ early
   1. They can be expelled or self-excluded early, before creating harm and consuming resources.

2. Ensure the culture of the unit or brigade is the right culture to attract and retain the right people
   1. If it isn’t right, then the best way to change it is to change executive leadership because:
CONCLUSION

Given that many Controllers and Captains may not want to leave to make way for an improved culture...

There are three strategies to help incumbent leaders shape the right culture:

2. Leadership.
3. Socialisation Approaches.
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Selection, promotion and removal processes

- New volunteers can be selected through a deliberate strategy focusing on job and cultural fit.

- Which is reinforced through promotion.

- Volunteers who do not fit can be discouraged from further participation – although not always easy.
HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

• Power, status, and rewards
  • reinforce the deeds of individuals who live the desired culture, promoting their actions for others to see.

• Punishment – i.e. negative reinforcement
  • deemphasise and disempower individuals who work against the culture.
LEADERSHIP

• Lead by example.
  • Through *role modelling* and *coaching*

• Sponsorship and facilitation of training
  • Leaders can influence how others should act and behave through the allocation of training and other desired resources
SOCIALISATION

• **Rites and ceremonies.**
  • Create a code of conduct for illustrating desired behavioural protocols.

• **Stories and myths.**
  • Are a means of manipulating the culture to something the company finds more desirable.
  • For example, Tom Hanks’ portrayal of a loyal Federal Express worker in ‘Castaway’ is a way of reinforcing a culture through fictional accounts.
THE SOCIALISATION MODEL

Socialization process

- Prearrival
- Encounter
- Metamorphosis

Outcomes

- Productivity
- Commitment
- Turnover
THE SOCIALISATION MODEL

Increasing impact of natural events

Goal: Reduce the Gap

Reducing active volunteer workforce
QUESTIONS ???

THANKS FOR LISTENING