



# NATIONAL VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION SURVEY

## INAUGURAL RESULTS

A WHITE PAPER ON  
*RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTION DEDICATED  
VOLUNTEERS MAKE TO YOUR ORGANIZATION,  
SHOWING THAT WORTH TO OTHERS, AND  
MAKING SURE YOUR VOLUNTEERS REMAIN  
ENGAGED AND VALUABLE.*



**MSA HR CAPITAL™**

*An Integrated Healthcare Strategies Practice*

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# BACKGROUND

The role of volunteers is as critical a need today as when the first volunteers established healthcare in America centuries ago. As Volunteer leaders, you clearly recognize the contribution you and these dedicated individuals make to your organizations. The question is: how do you show that worth to others and make sure that your volunteers remain engaged and valuable? By using an empirical, evidence-based approach instead of the current, common anecdotal “we think we are making a difference” approach, success is being achieved in volunteer environments across the nation. In 2010, Volunteer, Human Resources, and Quality leaders from three top-performing healthcare systems – Bronson Healthcare Group, Lancaster General Health, and Kettering Health Network – teamed with MSA HR Capital, a practice of Integrated Healthcare Strategies, a leading human capital consulting firm, to create the National Volunteer Engagement and Satisfaction Survey.



# INITIAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

In August 2010, over 2,300 volunteers, representing 23 organizations in ten different states across America, weighed-in on matters of volunteer engagement and satisfaction. Among many insights garnered from the National Volunteer Engagement and Satisfaction Survey, a key finding that Volunteer Leaders can assert with confidence is that volunteers are significantly more engaged when compared to their paid counterparts in the healthcare workforce. Healthcare organizations across the country spend millions of dollars per year searching for methods to accurately measure, quantify, and improve employee engagement and satisfaction. (It is not uncommon for a health system to spend over \$100,000 for an employee engagement survey.) Despite the investment, they do not necessarily take advantage of one of their largest workforce groups - unpaid volunteers. Volunteers arrive every day energized and ready to contribute to the success of the organization, with even higher levels of engagement and satisfaction than the compensated workforce.

In addition, this new research indicates that volunteers are significantly more positive than the paid workforce in terms of the following key areas: *view of supervisory responsiveness; view of senior leadership as strong role models; feeling appreciated and recognized; being kept informed about policies and important information; and, feeling good about the organization's culture of friendliness and acceptance.* One area where participating volunteers scored lower than the paid workforce on satisfaction is *a feeling their job is not challenging enough.* This response represents a unique opportunity for healthcare leadership to harness the power of a positive, engaged group that is committed and prepared to contribute in more meaningful and complex ways to support the mission of the organization. The only other area where volunteers showed less engagement or satisfaction than paid employees was related to *receiving enough performance feedback.* This may be due to the fact that healthcare organizations have invested heavily in creating sophisticated performance feedback systems for the paid workforce, while providing little, if any, formal feedback to volunteers. As we know from best practice employee performance feedback programs, developing simple and effective feedback mechanisms can significantly increase the engagement and productivity of the workforce, and easily correlates to the same result for the volunteer workforce.



# INITIAL RESEARCH FINDINGS (CONT'D)

In addition to collecting data about volunteers in general, the National Volunteer Engagement and Satisfaction Survey measured multiple demographic areas, to include: length of service; education level; frequency of volunteer service; and multigenerational data. The national data shows that Baby Boomers (those born 1946-1964) are more satisfied with their ability to make an impact with their volunteer assignments versus Gen Ys (born between 1977-1996) who are less satisfied with their perceived impact. It is surmised that this result is driven by two factors; one, that this age group is still developing their skills and interest, and two, as a generation, they need to be identified as unique and as an individual more than other generations. Volunteer leaders can also key on the fact that Gen Ys are driven by individual recognition from their supervisor more than the other generations in the workforce.

Developing opportunities within volunteer programs that speak specifically to increasing the satisfaction of Gen Ys in this area will be a key component in maintaining a growing and vital team of healthcare volunteers that will be critical to future success. The new research also indicates that the Traditionalists generation (born in 1945 or before) are less satisfied with how they are on-boarded (given a detailed description of their assigned duties) than other generations. The conclusion drawn from this data reminds us that our older volunteers are more comfortable with, and in need of, structure and detailed information to feel fully engaged in their volunteer experience. Additionally, the new national data shows Gen Xers (born between 1965-1976) are more satisfied than other generations in terms of feeling that they are a member of the organization's team. This is a key characteristic of Generation X - that they enjoy and need to be seen as a vital member of the volunteer and organizational team to be fully engaged.

These insights and countless others found in the recent national survey of volunteers will, for the first time, provide data-driven conclusions that will allow volunteer leaders to be in a position to identify and understand the primary and secondary motivational drivers for their volunteer workforce as a whole. Additionally, these insights will provide volunteer leaders with insight into the various demographic groups and the ability to utilize this knowledge to better recruit, retain, and motivate their volunteer teams.



# INITIAL RESEARCH FINDINGS (CONT'D)

Based on this groundbreaking new knowledge, healthcare Senior Leaders, and Volunteer and Human Capital leaders now have a professionally developed, scientifically-structured and validated mechanism as a catalyst to drive the discussion of redirecting more time, attention, and even resources to the value proposition of leveraging one of the most highly engaged and satisfied segments of their workforce. Just like organizations utilize high-performing departments as role models and mentors for those wishing to improve levels of engagement and satisfaction, perhaps it is time for the paid part of the workforce to take some lessons on engagement from the unpaid volunteer sector.

As a result of this national study, Volunteer leaders are already stepping up with confidence and using the new research to authoritatively make the case that Volunteer Services is positioned to play an increasingly greater role in helping shape the future of healthcare. As hospital leaders start to recognize that Volunteer Services can play an even greater role in organizational quality and effectiveness, everyone wins. For example, at one organization in Arizona, volunteers have been certified to feed patients, freeing nurses to focus their time on other more complex, clinical tasks. Barb Farmer, Director of Volunteer Services at Catholic Healthcare West says, "The nurses can't get enough of our department and love what we are doing to help them achieve their patient care goals." Julie VanderNoot, CAVS, Manager of Volunteers for Bronson Healthcare and incoming President of AHVRP says, "Our CEO considers volunteers as a key part of the workforce and is looking to us to come up with innovative ways that our team can contribute."



# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## SUMMARY

In addition to enhancing the value proposition for Volunteer Services in healthcare, new knowledge found in the National Volunteer Engagement and Satisfaction Survey provides accurate and timely information to volunteer leaders that assists with the design of meaningful recruitment and retention strategies and volunteer opportunities, as well as setting a direction to improve upon already high levels of engagement and satisfaction of their current volunteers. Utilizing knowledge derived from the demographic data gathered on generation, length of service, frequency of service, and education level, as well as open-ended question survey results, volunteer leaders can tailor their departmental strategic plans for better future outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

With the National Volunteer Engagement and Satisfaction Survey results, Volunteer Leaders, for the first time, have a new way to empirically demonstrate their value in healthcare and benchmark their performance to the nation's best. In these turbulent days when healthcare is facing its greatest challenges in decades, forward-thinking Volunteer leaders will use this new knowledge to answer the call by alerting senior leaders that they are ready as never before to be part of the solution. It may come as a pleasant surprise to many healthcare executives that a strategic component to "doing more with less" is already in place, ready to serve, fully-engaged, and mission-driven...their Volunteer Workforce!



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The MSA HR Capital practice helps clients develop a human resources organization that supports their strategic goals. MSA HR Capital provides comparative data from over 1,000 hospital organizations to tailor solutions for your specific work environment to ensure that you reach objectives by integrating your management, compensation, labor relations and employee engagement goals into one seamlessly operating strategy. Our process is simple - turn data into information which helps develop more knowledge, better

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