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Resource Potential of Volunteers With Professional Knowledge for the Development of Regional Socially Oriented Non-Profit Organizations in Russia

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the work models that have arisen in the non-profit sector of Russian regions, including those that involve volunteers with specialized professional knowledge and skills. The socio-economic situation is currently leading to a general lack of resources, especially in the socially oriented non-profit organizations of the regions. One of the channels for additional capacity attraction for SO NPOs is the appeal for free assistance to professional volunteers in certain areas. In this regard, it is important to find ways to attract and work with such professionals, since simple financial motivation is excluded from the process of functioning. Accordingly, this article focuses on the issue of finding effective models to organize the activities of volunteers with professional skills in regional SO NPOs. Materials obtained in a series of 29 semi-structured interviews with the managers of regional SO NPOs show that the main models of work with volunteers have been developed in Russia. As a result of attracting volunteers on a gratuitous basis, organizations manage to cover the demand for rare specialists, quickly solve the arising problems that go beyond the specialization of SO NPOs, and gain access to innovative technologies for their activities.

KEYWORDS

non-profit organization (NPO), volunteers, professional skills, gratuitous assistance, social support, Russian regions

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The article was prepared within the framework of the Basic Research Program at HSE University.

Introduction

Volunteering today is quite an appeal that is actively used in the social sphere and in the field of human resource management around the world (Wilson, 2000). This idea covers various forms of social interaction, and most of them refer to voluntary and gratuitous assistance of various types (Wilson, 2012). From the research point of view, specialists in the social and humanitarian field are primarily interested in identification of the reasons that cause people to spend time and effort on gratuitous assistance. This issue becomes particularly important when volunteers apply their professional skills in an organized activity, since there is no obvious financial incentive to perform (essentially) labor functions. The study of such practices allows identifying the non-financial, organizational, and social foundations for the implementation of professional activities.

Involvement of professionals in volunteer activities is studied on the example of Europe and the USA (Lukka, 2000; Pearce, 1993). Volunteering in the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe has attracted less attention. This particularly concerns the practice of gratuitous provision of professional assistance (Dekker & Halman, 2003). However, the accumulated material demonstrates the discrepancies in the mechanisms for volunteers' participation in the provision of social assistance in different countries: in some cases, personal contact and direct trust to organized activities are important; in many countries, preference is given to understandable organized structures with clearly defined rules (Wilson, 2012).

Similar research in Russia has focused on the study of general issues of volunteering (Sukharkova, 2022) without reference to the application of professional skills in a volunteer environment or an environment of socially oriented non-profit organizations. Even if there is such a perspective, organizations and volunteers of specific information platforms, megacities, and large cities (National Council on Corporate Volunteering et al., 2017), or individual professional groups (lawyers, doctors, translators) (Kazun, 2015) are subject to study.

This article focuses on the organizational forms of volunteer work that requires professional skills and knowledge currently existing in the socially oriented non-profit organizations (SO NPOs) of the Russian regions. Studying general mechanisms of work with volunteers in a non-profit environment will help determine the context for work with professional volunteers that currently exists in the Russian regions. The search for and description of successful practices that involve professionals in the provision of gratuitous assistance within the scope of organized activities allows registering the non-economic foundations of labor activities of SO NPOs. In the future, the identified interaction models may serve as a resource for the development of non-profit organizations attracting highly specialized professionals or people with specialists with particular professional skills.

Sociological Approach to Volunteering Study

There are diverse approaches toward defining the phenomenon of volunteering (Hustinx et al., 2010). The research focused on the study of volunteer participation typically describes the volunteer experience based on a variety of simple, empirical, and recordable indicators (Wilson, 2012) without reference to a well-defined theoretical framework. Such a situation has developed in sociology either. This is partly because volunteering is a broad category used in the daily practice of organization management and interactions in a wide variety of countries and socio-economic environments (Wilson, 2000). Accordingly, the very content of this notion and its typical forms of interaction may change over time in different contexts (regarding Russia, the discussion continues on applicability of terms related to “volunteering” and the adequacy of its correlation with the Russian equivalent stemming from the word combination *dobroia volia* [free will] (Oberemko, 2016).

For social scientists, volunteering is not a traditional or historically established object of study. However, certain aspects related to volunteering can be found in classical sociological works (Pevnaya, 2016). In the sociological study of volunteering, theories related to the study of social capital, or the theory of exchange have become quite popular. However, these theories have some limitations. The main one is an internal gravitation toward economic and super-rational models of individuals' behavior, when social alternatives do not replace but only mask the focus on economic forms of interaction. Despite these limitations, the theory of social capital further provides an opportunity to develop research that focuses on solidarity, trust, and mutual assistance in a volunteer environment.

Today, sociological research is more associated with receiving definitions from related fields or analyzing social problems. If we exclude the “negative” ways of defining volunteering activity, which proceed from the designation of what is not volunteering, then we can distinguish several steadily reproducing components in the existing definitions. First, volunteering is associated to some extent with activities that are socially mediated in nature, even if they are not directly aimed at helping other people (Hustinx et al., 2010). Second, volunteering takes time and develops over time. Accordingly, the most universal and simple definition of volunteering is “*gratuitous assistance provided to another person, who is not a family member*” [emphasis added] (Verduzco, 2010, p. 49). All other elements of volunteering remain debated, modified, and transformed in accordance with the period and area of study, the disciplinary framework, and the problem underlying the study. In particular, the debates continue around including the term of “organized participation” in the definition of volunteering and the availability of specialized skills for volunteers to provide assistance.

Studies of volunteering show that the organized nature of activities within a particular legal entity or public organization is not the same for every country, type of assistance provided, and social group (Verduzco, 2010). Existence of formal organizations is more typical for Western countries with a long history of volunteerism and countries with “non-democratic” regimes. In addition, organized participation is more common among middle- and high-income groups in Western countries

(Taniguchi, 2011). At the same time, the countries of Latin America, some Eastern European and Asian countries demonstrate a lower level of formal organization of volunteering and a greater importance of interpersonal connections forming networks outside of mutual assistance within a family (Wilson, 2012). In Russia, volunteer activity has been changing over time. In the current socio-economic and political situation, it tends to have organized forms within the framework of the activities in the non-profit sector or numerous volunteer centers with a significant level of state participation (Skokova et al., 2018). However, the significance of volunteering in organizations is increasing, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Researchers of Western Europe and the USA actively explore the issue of how volunteers perceive and react to the environment created for them in organizations in the non-profit sector (Englert, 2019). In general, the studies show that the most long-term and productive relationships between volunteers arise in organizations under the following conditions:

- if the mission of the organization coincides with the personal values and views of volunteers;
- if the organization has a curator, who facilitates “soft” and free forms of volunteers’ participation;
- if there is a flexible but structured approach to time spent;
- if volunteers receive support from the organization (if required);
- if volunteer work is related to the knowledge and skills that a volunteer possesses or to the goals of their participation in volunteer activities.

The activities of volunteers in NPOs can contribute to the development of the organization by introducing new social contacts and connections, the necessary (missing) skills to help beneficiaries, and expanding the scale of the organization’s activities. The key motives underlying volunteer involvement in the activities of the organization (Clary et al., 1998) are to help others, build up new relationships, improve self-esteem, distract from personal problems, accumulate knowledge and skills, and enhance career opportunities. In a situation of successful integration into the organization, volunteers get a sense of satisfaction with their work/activity, expand their personal network of contacts, and gain new knowledge, skills, and experience.

Another controversial point in the study of volunteering is whether a volunteer needs special skills. Organized activity itself, regardless of what it is aimed at, requires the participants in the process to have a certain level of coordination and social skills development (Englert et al., 2020). With the growth of NPOs’ specialization, the demand for specific skills that are necessary to assist beneficiaries also increases. This is especially true in the situation of project activities organizing within the framework of socially oriented non-profit organizations (Holavins, 2020), when the allocated funding is intermittent, and the specifics of project work may require a change of skills from those involved in the implementation of activities. When certain professional skills are included in the study of volunteering, the problem of distinguishing between volunteering and paid work arises. Meanwhile, the sociological perspective of the study becomes more considerable through registration outside the economic interaction of people based on organized and specialized activities. From

this point of view, a key element in the definition of volunteering is free will and the absence of direct forms of payment for the time spent. Thus, Snyder & Omoto (2008) defined volunteering as *“freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time, are engaged in without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations”* [emphasis added] (p. 5).

Studies of volunteer activity in Russia focus less on the use of special professional skills. Most of this research is centered around “pro bono volunteering” practices in the fields of law, medicine, and social work, “intellectual volunteering” or more generally “corporate volunteering” (National Council on Corporate Volunteering et al., 2017). This shows that there is a problem of distinguishing these concepts, both among volunteerism researchers and representatives of the social sphere. What creates additional difficulties when studying the participation of professionals in volunteering is the fact that unpaid participation of professionals may not be identified as volunteering or may be identified using different categories. In my research, professional participation is associated with the voluntary application of professional skills and abilities in volunteer work without the expectation of direct financial reward.

Research Methodology

The analyzed data were obtained during a study aimed at determining the place of professional volunteering in the activities of socially oriented non-profit organizations operating in the regions of Russia. A series of semi-structured online interviews were conducted from 23 February 2022 to 2 February 2023 with leaders of SO NPOs from Russian regions other than Moscow, the Moscow region, St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region. These regions were excluded due to their higher development level both in terms of volunteering infrastructure and non-profit field as such (Skokova & Rybnikova, 2022). A combined respondent selection strategy was used, that is targeted selection combined with the “snowball” method. At the initial stage, participants and winners of competitions held by major donor funds (Presidential Grants Foundation, Potanin Foundation, Prokhorov Foundation, Timchenko Foundation) and resource centers of Russian regions were selected. At the second stage, the managers of SO NPOs included in the study recommended organizations that they considered significant either in their own or other regions. During the selection process, the level of the differentiation of organizations by federal district, size, and the area of work was monitored. The focus was on SO NPOs engaged in helping other people.

Representatives of organizations were asked questions on the following topics: the history of the organization creation, the peculiarities of the organization's employees work, interaction with the beneficiaries of the organization, interaction with volunteers, interaction with donors and regulators, and informational openness of the organization. Based on the results of the analysis, the broader context of the interview allows making a number of hypotheses regarding the specifics of organizing volunteer activities, which require professional skills, in Russian SO NPOs. In total, 29 interviews were held; their time was from 42 to 125 minutes. Geographically, they covered all federal districts, 20 locations from 17 regions. The managers of the

following organizational and legal forms participated in the study: autonomous non-profit organizations, public organizations, foundations, non-profit partnerships. The profile of socially oriented organizations included the following activities: education and support for the elderly, support for the homeless, support for children and adults with disabilities, support for rural residents, support for young people and adults in difficult life situations, support for orphans (including adoption), and support for local communities. The organizations included in the study have been operating from one to 29 years. Most of the organizations worked mainly within the boundaries of their region, only three organizations worked in several regions at the same time, five more organizations were associated with large federal network structures. The approximate staffing of organizations ranged from one to 25 employees.

The study proceeded from the basic hypothesis that the managers of SO NPOs organize their work with volunteers having professional skills in special ways. In some cases, they can identify professionals through categories other than “volunteer”. The analysis of volunteering is seen in all blocks of interviews, and the criteria for inclusion in volunteering are set as broadly as possible: the lack of direct financial motivation to help the organization or beneficiaries. The interview transcripts are analyzed through open coding. The resulting codes coincide with the main topics of the empirical results of the study.

Volunteering Models in Regional SO NPOs

Appeals of SO NPO managers to professionals should be considered in the context of the general models of interaction with volunteers. Representatives of the organizations that participated in the research did not clearly perceive the needs of their institutions for volunteering in general. Some managers indicated that currently interaction with volunteers is not a priority for their organization. However, out of those some would like to organize such cooperation in the future: “No. Not now. We have, as you said, a special sphere. Not everyone can, of course. You can’t just recruit anyone, you can’t just take volunteers” (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with up to five employees).

The refusal to involve volunteers is related to the lack of need for volunteers, the impossibility for volunteers to participate due to the specifics of the organization’s activities (providing specialized medical, psychological assistance or assistance in accompanying seriously ill patients), negative experience of recruiting in the past, or lack of resources (in this case there is a general realization that “volunteers are not a free resource”). The intentions to turn to volunteers’ assistance in the future are typical for organizations and managers, who have been working in the social or non-profit sphere for less than three years. In cases where the respondent is aware of the resource intensity of volunteering, they may declare the need to create conditions for working and attracting people (primarily in the form of having a professional employee responsible for volunteering, a clearer formulation of a set of tasks, building an incentive system, channels of attraction). When forming and launching their activities, managers often prefer to concentrate their efforts on key areas of work and form the main team. Some respondents directly proceed from the “free” nature of the volunteer

resource and are more eager to cooperate with volunteer centers in the future. In all these cases, they never mention the possibility of contacting volunteers with some professional skills and abilities.

Not all managers are inclined to describe volunteers' work using the volunteer category (in addition to the traditional category of "voluntary aid," the category "like-minded" can be used, and the importance of ideological involvement in the work of the organization can be emphasized):

We try, in fact, to do without them [volunteers]. Because volunteers ... well, I'm not sure if I can call them volunteers ... you can say that some of our guys are not volunteers, they are just ideological volunteers. I can't call them literally volunteers. (A man, the organization exists from five to ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

This situation is related to the underlying problem of using certain terminology for the designation of free labor or assistance. Some SO NPO managers explicitly adhere to the Russian tradition of calling volunteers *dobrovolets* [voluntary aid]. Although the use of this or that name for gratuitous aid is not a frequently articulated problem, several respondents tried to consciously use the term "voluntary aid" based on an ideological setting.

From the analysis of interview transcripts, I identified several possible models of work with volunteers within the socially oriented non-profit sector of Russian regions. The first model is associated with the appeal of organizations to existing volunteer or resource centers in the region (including those based on educational institutions):

Well, we turn to the volunteer corps ... we write, draw up an application, what we need, how many volunteers, what work to do. Well, they send us information about volunteers, as a rule we contact the curator of volunteers ... we discuss all the details, everything. They already come either to the event itself, or we meet the day before, once again we discuss everything that needs to be done. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In the situation of applying for help to established organized structures, the respondents generally spoke about saving the main resources associated with the organization of the work of volunteers. However, even in this case, they directly stated that volunteer resources were not free. Volunteers are most often supervised by employees, who benefit from volunteer activities. The problems of interaction with resource centers are partially indicated: high bureaucratization of the application process, a formal approach to the selection of volunteers, frequent lack of interest of volunteers in the work performed, and the need to provide "reciprocal services".

The second model assumes the existence of own volunteer network, which is formed over time:

Well, we don't attract volunteers an masse, yes, that's right, yes, we use probably targeted help, when we need volunteers, or when we ... I already said that these volunteers can be either from a pedagogical institute, right, someone who's going to be a clinical psychologist, or future social work specialists, because this is their activity in the future, and therefore we take people only in this category. We do not take just anyone. Well, that is, these are people, who will be professionals, or, well, this may be within the scope of their practical assignments. ... Then this is exactly their specific task. Then we also use the work of the guys, yes, that is, for example, they can conduct some classes, events, or they can attend our events. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

The interview materials show that such volunteer networks arise in a situation of poor development of volunteer centers in the region (or simply their absence) or in a situation where volunteers need to specialize in a certain type of activity (helping and living together with someone who needs assistance, working with children with disabilities). For some respondents, the need to create their own volunteer network was associated with general dissatisfaction with the formal attitude to help provided by the volunteers of specialized centers.

The third model is mixed; it involves a combination of own volunteer network and appeals to volunteer centers:

Well, everything went super cool when we hired part-time volunteer coordinator. This is a person who knows where to look for them and knows how to support them. But you still feel such a small, well, sometimes such a desynchronization between different volunteer teams, our main one and those from the centers. They are more formal, more for events. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees)

SO NPOs' own volunteer network is becoming more specialized in terms of the volunteer skills that are in demand. Organization managers perceive it as more disciplined, reliable, and open to new proposals and projects. Moreover, within their own networks, they identify high motivation to help and develop the organization as a whole.

Basic models of interaction with volunteers have been developed in regional Russian SO NPOs. Based on the interview materials, I can assume that new organizations that are at the initial stage of their formation prefer turning to existing volunteer networks or do not allocate their limited resources to interact with volunteers. If SO NPOs need general assistance and support, without special requirements for the quality of work performed or assistance, then managers tend to resort to the help of resource centers. In a situation where the resource centers of the region are underdeveloped, there is negative experience of interaction with volunteers, or specific assistance is required, SO NPO managers tend to form their own volunteer networks, supplementing them with resource support from specialized volunteer groups.

Volunteering of Professionals in Regional SO NPOs as Perceived by Managers of Organizations

In the presented models of work with volunteers, the general role of volunteers having professional skills is ambiguous. Not all managers of organizations identify professional volunteers through the “volunteer” category. Along with the category of “pro bono volunteer” or “like-minded person”, such categories as “(good) friend of the organization”, “partners of the organization”, “assistants” are distinguished. Interns, trainees, and beneficiaries have a problematic status in terms of being classified as volunteers: some managers call them volunteers, since their work is not paid; but the other part (this also applies to beneficiaries or members of their families) considers them as potential employees, who are on probation or receive relevant professional experience:

At the initial stage, he becomes a coach for the kids for free, they want to attend the workouts themselves, everyone is interested. If we understand that a person is doing well, I mean if he shows good results, we say, “Well done!” If we have a project, if it is possible to allocate 5–10 thousand rubles (about \$75–150) a month, we hire him, but then again, as soon as he is our employee, he has some duties. That is, in fact, our offer to a person. He may continue working for free, but we are not very interested in the free format of visits. (A man, the organization exists from five to ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In all the cases under consideration, professional skills are associated exclusively with work and the performance of labor functions rather than just help.

There are two main models of appealing to professional volunteering, which are irregular appeal and continuous, developed interaction with professional volunteers (or organizations). Irregular appeal stems from the temporary need of the organization for a narrow specialist, which arises unexpectedly or is associated with a side activity for the organization within a specific project:

We didn’t have a website for the organization; we only had social media accounts. Therefore, of course, we resolved this issue by asking for help, and they started a website free for us. Of course, now we maintain it ourselves. But they helped us for free. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

In this case, they look for a volunteer through a network of personal and professional contacts of the organization (through employees, beneficiaries, donors, contractors of the organization, employees of other NPOs in the region, erratic and permanent volunteers without professional skills, those who follow the organization on various information resources) or by contacting IT platforms that have databases of volunteers with the necessary skills.

In case of a situational search, the general strategy of attraction is built by indicating a clear (and one-time) contribution to the provision of assistance to specific

beneficiaries or the activities of the organization as a whole. Sometimes such information is supplemented by an explanation of the reasons for the need. In this case, a volunteer is selected mostly based on the feedback of the partners of the organization or the availability of a portfolio. The SO NPO managers assess the experience of one-time participation rather positively, without subsequent refusal to re-engage professionals in such projects. At the same time, managers indicate the following negative situations that they encountered when working with professionals: failure to meet deadlines, excessive departure from the terms of reference, disappearance of a specialist in the process of work performing, and the need to find another professional. They mention that before starting work, it is necessary to set up clear communication between the professional and the employees of the organization, who are responsible for the corresponding area of work.

Constant seamless interaction with professionals in the area of interest to the organization is more complex. The difficulties in distinguishing between the formats of volunteering and professional development, which were described above, are clearly indicated. In addition, the problem of distinguishing between corporate, pro bono volunteering, and intellectual volunteering arises. The managers of the organization ask themselves a question about the distinction between concepts and the basic criteria for classifying specialists as volunteers, which they have individually developed in practice. The continuity of the rhetoric and concepts used can be traced based on the practice of interaction between the managers of the organization and certain donors and foundations, which directly refers us to the spread of certain managerial models of volunteering among regional SO NPOs. The constant development of cooperation with professionals in certain fields is typical for organizations that build their own networks of volunteers or use a mixed model of volunteer participation. The interview materials allow identifying additional strategies for long-term interacting with potential professional volunteers.

The first strategy involves introducing a specialist as a volunteer employee into a resource-intensive project or a new project without resources:

Well, if a specialist is important to me, if it is important to develop a new area, then maybe it will go in parallel. And if a specialist is ready to try to be a volunteer first, then it is possible that at first the specialist will be a volunteer, and then we will look for an opportunity to decide together with the specialist how to find funding for this activity. (A woman, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

A volunteer will be considered as a potential employee if funding is found to pay for their work and if their competencies meet the requirements of the organization. The manager or coordinator of such a specialist may or may not voice the prospect of further employment to them. The materials of the interview indicate that in any case, organizations still have to create favorable conditions for such a volunteer: prepare for interaction with beneficiaries (including support for activities), ensure additional training, provide the necessary material resources or jointly search for them, carefully consider

the proposals of a specialist to improve activities in the organization, and provide mandatory symbolic encouragement (directly from employees and managers of SO NPOs, stimulate encouragement from beneficiaries). Volunteers are attracted through universities, employees of the organization, employees of other SO NPOs, ordinary volunteers, beneficiaries and their relatives, and media platforms of the organization.

In order to hire such a volunteer as an employee, the specialist has to be willing to develop, actively participate in all the activities of the organization, and match the values and emotional patterns of behavior with the representatives of the main team:

Well, you mentioned a lawyer, yes, we tried to work with a lawyer pro bono, and a young man helped us for almost a year. Now we have an opportunity to hire him as an outsourced specialist. He helps us with some things. He has been friends with us for almost a year, so to speak, and then he got such a perk. We became very good friends, we got used to it. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

Within the framework of this strategy, the most frequently encountered problems are the distinction between the concepts of “intern”, “trainee”, and “pro bono volunteer”. Situations associated with the negative experience of professionals’ engagement are more common: some of them do not cope with the amount of work, do not demonstrate the required level of qualification, cannot “work well” with other employees of the organization, people’s life strategies change, or people are generally unprepared to work on a project at a different level:

As a project manager, I was also shocked by the fact that when we began to somehow become more institutionalized, people, who were ready to get involved in the project as volunteers and invest their resources and energy, said no, this does not suit me. I have other plans for life. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees)

The second strategy of working with professionals involves constant turning to them for help:

Yes, we used the pro bono practice, and now we use it very often ... sometimes we lack experts. Unfortunately, I believe that each work should be paid, but sometimes we do not have the opportunity in all programs to allocate payments to experts, so we engage experts as volunteers. (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with 10 to 20 employees)

Cooperation can be built through formal interaction with the manager of the organization employing a professional, directly with a professional engaged in the activities of a certain organization or company, self-employed, individual entrepreneurs, or temporarily unemployed people. In cases where interaction is built with large firms, respondents tend to use the term “corporate volunteering”:

This is corporate volunteering. They are already accustomed to working with us, they see that we continue working too; they see that we are doing real things, although their managers change. Therefore, they somehow react. Yes, at first it was probably difficult, because nothing was set up. It was about 5 or 6 years ago ... In the process of interaction, we showed that they might be interested in it too. We showed our audience, we showed the aspects that interested them, they looked, "Really, this comes from the people, we didn't come up with it." (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with five to ten employees)

In all other cases of assistance, "pro bono volunteering" or simply "gratuitous assistance" appears. Volunteers of this type are found among the organization's subcontractors, major donors, and partners through the organization's main information resources or commercial networking and through specialized platforms.

It is noteworthy that among SO NPOs, which adhere to a policy of information openness and have been working in the region for a long time, there are cases when professionals initiated contacts with the organizations expressing a desire to help them: "Contacts with them started because they showed initiative; they said exactly how to do it. What advice we need. Showed the best way to implement it. They found us" (A woman, the organization exists up to five years, organization with five to ten employees).

Both personal professional resource and professional resources of the entire organization of the employee (business owner) could be offered as assistance. Strong ties form "automatically"; often the respondents do not have to make additional efforts to retain such a volunteer. A major part of the necessary work could be carried out not on the SO NPOs' side. If the work is carried out directly in a socially oriented organization, then managers try to create the most comfortable conditions for the employee, including the aspect of their interaction with other team members. A number of managers emphasize that some employees of external organizations continue working as volunteers, despite the increased workload, due to the "special climate" and style of communication in SO NPOs, the opportunity to observe the effect of socially useful work, and try new and nonstandard methods of work:

For example, we have much more young specialists than very experienced specialists. So, probably, in this case, communication [with volunteers with professional skills] is about what you can try, how you can learn, how you can quickly develop. Here, rather, we are talking about these advantages. Plus, from what we see, people are tired of excessive regulation, tired of the inability to show initiative, but with us it is possible. Rather, that's the point. (A woman, the organization exists from five to ten years, more than 20 employees in the organization)

In the situations where volunteers are associated with large firms and organizations, interaction can be built in a complex formalized way. The managers of large commercial organizations find the professionals they need and provide them with the necessary resources:

These are employees of the organization, who were released by the HR¹ in order to work with us. They may have some corporate bonuses for this. They would come here or there and arrange something. We had repairs to do ... A guy arrived and fixed everything in two hours, for example. Well, there are different stories. (A man, the organization has been in existence for over ten years, organization with up to five employees)

Certain difficulties are highlighted in interaction with such volunteers: the turnover of people, a more complex structure of communication, possible inconsistencies in the corporate culture, an increase in the burden on the volunteers and their rapid “burnout”, the need to constantly search for personal contact both with the managers of a third-party organization, and with employees, who are involved as volunteers. In addition, the risks associated with changes in the financial and economic situation in the region make such cooperation unpredictable, since in a situation of economic contraction, cooperation may be limited, suspended, or terminated. Some of SO NPO managers say that activities in the commercial sphere are only a little more stable than activities in the non-profit sector, and corporate forms of volunteering divert the organizational resources of SO NPOs and require constant attention, including proper media support.

Conclusion

All of the above shows that in the regional socially oriented non-profit sector of Russia, basic models of interaction with volunteers having specific professional skills and abilities have developed. Based on the interview materials, I can assume that they spread primarily in those organizations that have developed a system of work with volunteers. In many ways, these models require following certain strategies to manage volunteering, which are distributed in the process of implementing educational programs of donor funds and because of the interaction between various SO NPO managers and specialists.

In the models presented, the involvement of a professional volunteer can be associated both with situational problems that have arisen for the managers or employees of SO NPOs and with the integration of professional volunteers into the processes of the organization's core activities. The set of skills that are in demand among organizations is quite wide, depending on the profile of their activities and the current situation in the labor market of a particular region. Conversations with the SO NPO managers reveal that situational support is in demand in the following areas or types of work: legal, accounting, financial, or other expert support, assistance in the development of IT projects, and communication systems in the organization. Permanent support is more closely related to the profile of the organization. Most often, these are such kinds of support as psychological and pedagogical, medical, specialized legal, household, information, and management support.

In a situation of successful experience in attracting volunteers with professional skills, SO NPO managers realize that they need to compensate for the specialists' expended resources and need to make a kind of “exchange.” Creative freedom is

¹ Human Resource Department.

offered during the implementation of the project, symbolic stimulation of participation, comfortable interaction with the team and beneficiaries, the opportunity to develop professional skills, information support for cooperation (advertising), and support for the initiatives of specialists. The managers of some SO NPOs perceive “pro bono volunteers” as a resource for the development of the organization through obtaining not only certain experience, knowledge, and professional skills that may be in short supply on the labor market but also through the social connections of volunteers. Professional volunteers are perceived as specialists, who require an individual approach to communication development. I have to mention the need to disseminate successful practices for involving specialists into volunteer activities of SO NPOs. The managers speak about the need to coordinate standard tasks for specialists, educate people about the corporate volunteering practices, and provide general information about the SO NPOs’ demand for volunteers with special skills and abilities.

Based on the results obtained, some hypotheses can be put forward that need to be confirmed based on quantitative research. It is necessary to clarify the level of relationship between the dissemination of specific models of work with volunteers and models of interaction with volunteers having professional skills. The analysis reveals associations between the duration of the organization existence and models of volunteering, which requires further detail and confirmation. An important point that emerged in the course of the study is the ambiguous perception and attitude of SO NPO managers toward corporate forms of volunteering, which Western research represents as having the highest priority in terms of developing NPOs’ resource potential. It is noteworthy that in the array of interviews, the most successful and clearly structured practices of working with volunteers having professional knowledge are associated with SO NPOs that adhere to policies of information openness and transparency. All these hypotheses can be tested based on quantitative studies. A quantitative study will allow overcoming several limitations of this research: information was obtained from the managers of organizations that were not always directly involved in working with volunteers; there was no detailed verification of the data received verbally from the managers; the sampled information was focused on regional diversity and general work with volunteers, while professional skills were mentioned in only a third of the interviews.

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