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The Volunteer Engagement Cha-Cha

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Professional associations, certifications, and various iterations of member-based affiliation groups have existed within the field of Volunteer Engagement for decades, ranging from the informal and casual to formal and paid. Over the years there has been an ebb and flow of the success, longevity, and level of participation in any and all of these groups. You could say that the two-steps forward, one-step-back dance we seem to continually do is the Volunteer Engagement Cha-Cha!

We have both been in the profession for some time and recognize this constant churning as the norm. Yet to us it seems more exaggerated compared to other non-profit professions. Consider, for example, the longevity of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (50-plus years old) and the Institute of Fundraising in the UK (in existence since 1983).



At any given time around the world, some Volunteer Engagement professional associations are on a high but others are on a low or closing down, with little rhyme or reason for why and even less indication of when things will shift again. This is concerning for a number of reasons, not least of which is that as a profession one of our chief complaints is lack of movement forward and momentum. So we have to ask: Is our inability to realize progress directly connected to the instability of our professional associations?

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