

MARKETING FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:

A Case Study

By D. Martin Sparks and William R. George

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, marketers have called attention to the fact that every organization produces a product of some kind and that all organizations do marketing. They advocate that marketing should be broadened to include non-profit/non-business organizations, in order to help these organizations to achieve their goals.¹ Thus, marketing has expanded to include not only the distribution of products and services but also the distribution of ideas, concepts, people and causes. However, little literature on the empirical analysis of marketing to attract volunteers is available. The authors present a case for marketing for volunteer service organizations. Specifically this case study deals with how marketing can be used to recruit volunteers for a volunteer program in community based corrections.

VOLUNTEERISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Volunteerism is a concept that can be traced back to the colonial era. Early volunteerism centered around one neighbor helping another. Due to major depressions

during the first half of the 19th Century, assistance to the underprivileged sprang up in the form of soup kitchens, fund raising events, and the like. By the 1840's several cities had formed Associations for Improving the Conditions of the Poor. These organizations utilized volunteers who were "instructed to learn what had caused the poverty of the needy person, to point out his intemperance or drunkenness, etc., and to endeavor to reawaken his self-respect, to strengthen his ability for self support."² In 1851 Travelers Aid was formed to assist stranded persons arriving in St. Louis.

The early 1900's brought a number of volunteer organizations into existence. The Boy's Club, The Boy Scouts, The Camp Fire Girls, Goodwill Industries, and The Family Service Association, were organized nationally. In 1913, The American Cancer Society was formed. The first World War brought such organizations as the "War Chest", shortly followed by The Community Chest, now renamed The United Way. Many of these organizations depend to a significant extent on volunteers to provide their services.

In 1970, The National Center for Voluntary Action (NCVA) was founded. Through some 300 affiliated Voluntary Action Centers throughout the United States, NCVA offers assistance to volunteer organizations, in such areas as program development, volunteer training, recognition and the like.

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The economic impact of volunteers is considerable. A study by ACTION in 1974, entitled *Americans Volunteer - 1974*, states that 33.9 billion dollars worth of organized volunteer services were contributed by volunteers. This figure doubles to 67.8 billion dollars when unorganized or informal volunteer services are computed and added to organized volunteer services. This includes some 35 million Americans over the age of 13 who participated in some form of volunteer work in 1974. The study also contained selected demographic data. Using this information, the average volunteer in the United States during 1974 can be described as follows: A married female between 25 and 44 years of age, living in the northcentral area of the United States, who has completed 4 years of high school, and is employed with an annual family income between 15,000 - 19,999 dollars.

How Marketing Can Help Volunteerism

One of the most important techniques for the volunteer service organization is market segmentation. Market segmentation is the process of separating a market into a number of different publics, e.g., clients, donors, internal staff, regulatory bodies, volunteers, etc. Each of these publics can be further segmented in order to enhance the likelihood of exchange. Each resulting segment is appealed to more directly. This provides a number of benefits for the organization. *First, marketing can be used to better screen volunteers by appealing to the "right kind of volunteers".* Marketing can be used to select the type of volunteer needed and thus reduce the number of volunteers who must be screened out. For example, teenage volunteers are not acceptable in certain adult volunteer programs. *Second, marketing can also be used to recruit appropriate volunteers.* For instance, black volunteers are more appropriate than white volunteers in some volunteer programs. *Most, importantly, marketing can help to recruit large numbers of appropriate volunteers. Thus, marketing can be used to meet the demand for volunteer services by increasing the organization's supply of volunteers.*

While this article concentrates on recruitment and on the image of the volunteer service organization, *marketing can also help the volunteer service organization to: raise funds, improve volunteer relations with staff, and improve relations with the community to name just a few.*

Barneby and Hills point out, "It is important for more groups to integrate systematically basic marketing practices

into social action programs."⁴ To do so, the volunteer service organization must have a competent staff who understands marketing. The organization should adopt a marketing philosophy so that the organization develops a marketing attitude as a way of effectively reaching organizational goals. In addition, the volunteer service organization must use marketing techniques that can be implemented within the resources of the organization.

A Case for Marketing Offender Aid and Restoration of Richmond (OAR)

Volunteers have been used for some time in correctional programs. The first volunteer in criminal justice was John Augustis, a wealthy Boston shoemaker, who in 1822 paid bail for a drunkard and returned him to a life of sobriety.⁵ Two now famous volunteer programs in criminal justice are the Boulder, Colorado Juvenile Court Program, and the Royal Oak, Michigan Volunteer Program. Both programs were started in the late 1950's and were instrumental in the development of programs such as OAR. The Royal Oak, Michigan program is a good example of the success volunteers have had in criminal justice. Judge Keith J. Leenhouts, of the Royal Oak Juvenile Court, developed a volunteer program that served as an alternative to incarceration for many minor offenders. The results were impressive. "In 1968, the Royal Oak court showed for offender cases studied, a 73% improvement and only 12% regressed versus an 18% improvement and 48% regressed in the comparative court." Further, through volunteer service, the Royal Oak court was able to provide \$300,000 worth of services per year on a \$17,000 budget.⁶

Judge Leenhouts now devotes his attention to establishing volunteer programs throughout the United States. Today, approximately one million Americans are volunteering in juvenile justice, crime prevention, victim assistance, courts, prisons and correctional policy.⁷ Still for many programs more volunteers are needed.

Offender Aid and Restoration of Richmond (OAR), established in January of 1972, is a private, non-profit organization which uses volunteers from the Richmond metropolitan area to assist adult misdemeanor offenders in OAR's jail, court and hospitality house programs. Nearly all volunteers work in either the jail or court program. Volunteers are assigned to the hospitality house on a special needs basis.

An OAR volunteer is required to meet with the offender an hour a week to discuss problems, set meaningful goals, and most importantly, be a friend to the offender. The one-to-one volunteer/offender relationship has proved to reduce the number of repeat offenders. OAR estimates its recidivism rate in the jail program at 15%. In 1977, the recidivism rate for misdemeanants was 73%.

The case analysis following demonstrates how marketing was effectively used to recruit volunteers and improve the image and awareness of OAR.

A Marketing Orientation for OAR

Much of the success in recruiting volunteers to work in OAR's program has been due to the adoption of a marketing orientation. Past efforts in recruiting volunteers centered around a product orientation. OAR assumed that since it had a good "product" to offer the potential volunteer, recruiting would be an easy task. This strategy worked well in the beginning as OAR was a new volunteer opportunity. General appeals to the public and speechmaking attracted new volunteers. Later, OAR adopted a selling orientation, after volunteer recruitment became competitive. Promotional efforts were increased, emphasizing the good volunteer program of OAR to attract new volunteers. *Finally, OAR adopted a marketing orientation to recruit the "hard to find" volunteer. This marketing orientation focuses on the needs of the prospective volunteers. By first considering the needs of the potential volunteer the organization then can appeal to these needs.*

One example of the marketing orientation adopted by OAR was to assess the time commitment necessary to complete OAR pre-service training. Where it once took one evening a week for five weeks to complete training, now OAR volunteers complete training in two nights (See Appendix 3). This was accomplished by assessing the training sessions, eliminating unimportant parts and providing the volunteer with a volunteer manual which has study sections that the volunteer can review at home. The results are beneficial to both the volunteer and OAR. Volunteers spend less of their valuable time at training sessions and OAR is able to quickly assign volunteers.

Another example of a marketing orientation is the number of training sessions offered for new volunteers. In the past, OAR offered three training sessions per year.

OAR now has doubled this so that six training sessions are held annually. In addition, five separate orientation sessions are held before each training session. Thus, the longest period a volunteer has to wait to personally get involved with OAR is no more than one month. The volunteer is free to choose any one of the five orientation meetings to attend. For those who cannot make an orientation meeting, OAR arranges a private meeting. The marketing perspective adopted by OAR has made it easier for potential volunteers to become a volunteer and thus more volunteers are recruited. *In essence, OAR has lowered the "price" of volunteering by reducing the pre-service training time requirements and by offering more training sessions per year.*

The Image of OAR

It is the author's opinion that the success of a volunteer service organization is to a great extent dependent on the image it presents to the community it services. Many volunteer service organizations are often perceived as "do gooder" organizations that make no real impact on society. These organizations are often misunderstood and thus lack credibility in the community. Often, little is known about these organizations; in fact, only a very small portion of the community is aware these organizations exist. Thus, awareness and credibility of the volunteer service organization are important if the volunteer service organization is to successfully recruit volunteers. OAR has communicated its value to the community by an active program of speaking engagements, guest appearances on television and radio talk shows, as well as other promotional efforts such as direct mail, public service announcements and the like. An attempt has been made to channel and manage word-of-mouth communications. As a result of these activities, there has been an increase in the number of volunteers being referred to OAR by colleges and universities, friends of OAR, correctional officials, and most importantly OAR volunteers. The positive image and the increased level of awareness of OAR have made a real impact on the effectiveness of the organization.

MARKET SEGMENTATION FOR OAR

A simplified segmentation approach has been integrated into the recruitment process at OAR. Staff members who supervise volunteers were asked to determine what

characteristics make up a good OAR volunteer. OAR has found that it needs more men than women, more blacks than white, more young volunteers than older volunteers, as well as more well educated volunteers than less educated volunteers. While this segmentation technique may appear overly simple to marketing practitioners in the business sector, it is relatively advanced for a small volunteer service organization and has served OAR well in recruiting greater numbers and more qualified volunteers. By combining the various groups, a more specific target market can be obtained. For example, the ideal OAR volunteer would be a well educated, young, black male. By using demographic data, these target groups can be pinpointed and reached.

OAR uses a number of approaches to reach different market segments: direct mail to black communities; guest appearances on black television and radio shows; and utilization of other black-oriented media, has resulted in a 30% increase in black volunteers over the past year and a half. Furthermore, through the use of proper promotional techniques targeted at the young volunteer, 38.2% of OAR volunteers are between 25 and 35 years of age. Thus, an increase of 66.8% has been achieved over the past year and a half.

The OAR Marketing Mix

Appendix 1 shows the OAR marketing mix. The marketing mix consists of those variables over which the manager has control. Product/service, price, place and promotion variables are commonly used to develop a marketing mix unique to each market segment. The major differences within the marketing mix exist for the promotion variable. Product offering, place and price of becoming an OAR volunteer are basically the same. The authors recognize the need for the elements of marketing mix to be prepared for each group. Due to resource limitations this has not been possible. However, the various promotional approaches do achieve differential marketing for OAR.

The OAR *product offering* centers around the total volunteer experience. Advertising messages communicate the benefits of becoming an OAR volunteer. Points stressed are involvement in the offender's life, community service, and an opportunity to learn more about the correctional system.

The *place offering* consists of volunteer work in either jail or court programs. For the volunteer who cannot accommodate the

jail visitor schedule, the less structured court program is available. Volunteers perceive this added flexibility as another benefit of volunteering for OAR.

The *price* of becoming an OAR volunteer has been held to a minimum. After attending an orientation meeting, volunteers complete a short training program and are required to meet with the offender one hour per week. The price of becoming an OAR volunteer is also stressed in promotional efforts by informing the potential volunteer of the training and weekly time commitments.

Promotion is a very important aspect of OAR's success in recruiting new volunteers and developing its image. Promotional techniques used most often depend on the specific target markets and include: television and radio; newspaper; house organs; church bulletins; group presentations; direct mail; and guest appearances on television and radio shows. Appendix 2 shows the various promotional techniques, frequency of use and results.

THE SYSTEMATIC RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

OAR has developed a systematic recruitment system to move the volunteer through the recruitment process in an efficient and satisfying manner (for both the volunteer and OAR). Appendix 3 details the volunteer recruitment system. First, the potential volunteer responds by phone or mail to an OAR appeal for certain kinds of volunteers. Second, the volunteer is then sent information about OAR and orientation dates. Third, the potential volunteer attends an orientation meeting and completes home training. Fourth, the volunteer attends two training sessions and is assigned to an offender.

The volunteer recruitment system enables OAR to follow the volunteer through the recruitment system. Also the potential volunteer knows exactly what steps need to be completed to become an OAR volunteer. Given the structure of the system, it is easy to plan, and allows OAR to train new volunteers six times a year.

The orientation meetings are very important to OAR. Not only do they give the potential volunteer information concerning the OAR program, but they give OAR a chance to sell OAR volunteer work to the potential volunteer. These meetings have been very successful in retaining the interest of the potential volunteer. At least 75% of those who attend the OAR orientation meetings

complete training. The information given allows those who will not be able to meet the demanding requirements of an OAR volunteer an honorable way to leave the program at an early stage.

CONCLUSION

This article develops a case study of how marketing can be used to recruit volunteers and improve the image of a volunteer service organization. OAR has been quite impressed with the results thus far. To highlight the major accomplishments of market segmentation, OAR now is recruiting more volunteers of the appropriate kind, and is particularly impressed with the number of young black volunteers working in its programs. Until recently, this segment has been difficult to reach. The marketing orientation adopted by OAR has resulted in recruiting some 160 new volunteers, as well as improving the image of OAR in the Richmond area.

This case study of OAR demonstrates how marketing can be applied to serve nonprofit, non-business organizations which utilize volunteers as a major resource in achieving their goals.

FOOTNOTES

1. Philip Kotler and Sidney J. Levy, "Broadening the Concept of Marketing," Journal of Marketing, (January 1969), pp. 10-15; and Philip Kotler, Marketing for Non-Profit Organizations (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975)
2. National Academy for Voluntarism, "A Brief History of Voluntarism In America," United Way of America, (June 1976), p. 7
3. Harold Wolozin, "The Value of Volunteer Services in the United States". ACTION, Contract #75-043-1044, (October 15, 1975)
4. David J. Barnaby and Gerald E. Hills, "Marketing Volunteer Social-Action Programs," Atlanta Economic Review, (March-April 1977), p. 25
5. Carla P. McLendon, "Volunteers in Corrections," Paper for Policy Review Committee, National Institute of Corrections, (March 30, 1977, p. 1)
6. Paul L. Weston, "Volunteers in Justice, Observations On A Movement," National Association on Volunteers in Criminal Justice, Inc. (July, 1977), p. 2
7. Paul L. Weston, "Volunteers in Justice, Observations On A Movement," National Association On Volunteers in Criminal Justice, Inc. (July, 1977), p. 1
8. Classification Office, Richmond City Jail, January 3, 1978

Appendix 1

OAR MARKETING MIX

<u>Target Group</u>	<u>Product Offering</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Promotion</u>	<u>Price</u>
Black male and female volunteers	Service to community; ability to help an offender; opportunity for self-actualization; gain exposure in correctional field;	City jail and courts	Black oriented, radio, newspapers, direct mail to middle class, black neighborhoods; black oriented TV and radio talk shows	Short training session; one hour a week contact with offender
White male and female volunteers	Same	Same	Television and radio, newspapers; group presentations; church groups, civic associations; television and radio talk shows	Same
Well-educated volunteers	Same	Same	House organs; CPA firms; businesses; direct mail to corporation presidents asking for help in recruiting volunteers.	Same

Appendix 2

PROMOTIONAL TECHNIQUES USED BY OAR, FREQUENCY OF USE, AND RESULTS OVER THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF

<u>Technique</u>	<u>Frequency of Use</u>	<u>Results by response</u>	
		<u>Recruitment</u>	<u>Image</u>
Television	6	Very Good	Good
Radio	8	Very Good	Good
Newspapers	7	Good	Very Good
House Organs	5	Fair	Good
Church Bulletins	2	Fair	Good
Group Presentations	12	Good	Very Good
Direct Mail	5	Fair to Good	Very Good
Guest Appearances:			
Television	3	Good	Very Good
Radio	8	Good	Very Good

Appendix 3

OAR RECRUITMENT SYSTEM

<u>One to Six Weeks</u>			<u>One to Five Weeks</u>		<u>One Week (2 Nights)</u>	<u>Two Weeks</u>
Potential volunteer contacts OAR	OAR sends information chart pro- gram and orientation meeting dates	Potential volunteer phones to inform OAR which meeting will be attended	Potential volunteer attends one of five meetings	Potential volunteer completes at home training in volunteer manual	Volunteer completes training	Volunteer assigned to offender

If volunteer
appears not
suited to
OAR program
then special
interview with
staff is
arranged

Individuals
screened out
are asked to
serve with
OAR in another
way or referred
to more suitable
volunteer work