



What to Expect and How to Get Ready

Two landmark books offer insights into the changes to come.

By Terrence Fernsler

Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit

By Peter C. Brinckerhoff. 227 pages. Softcover. Published by Fieldstone Alliance (www.fieldstonealliance.org). Available for a discounted price at www.snpo.org.

Baby boomers are beginning to retire, the greatest generation's numbers are dwindling, generation Xers are maturing, and gen@ers are coming of age. How do these generational shifts affect nonprofits?

Speculation abounds. For example, less than 10 years ago we were hearing that as baby boomers inherited their parents' wealth, much of it would be passed on to nonprofits. However, we now see that a large part of that wealth may actually go to medical care, assisted living, and pharmaceutical companies as boomers retire early and live longer.

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Now that generational shifts have begun, Peter Brinckerhoff can give a thoughtful examination to how these changes are affecting nonprofit organizations. He looks at the impact each generation has on different aspects of nonprofit work, including staffing, fundraising, marketing, volunteering, and dealing with technology. Baby boomers actually have two impacts: As they retire, employees will be leaving organizations, but many retirees will need to become clients or want to become volunteers, and many in the other sectors will look to the nonprofit sector for part-time income.

One key question is: When exactly will baby boomer employees retire? If boomers feel they can't afford to retire, which isn't uncommon in nonprofits that have no or weak retirement packages, they will stay longer. Nonprofits should look at how this will affect their organizations and the genXers and gen@ers. Are there opportunity costs at play?

Brinckerhoff recognizes five current generations, but deals primarily with the three youngest ones: baby boomers (or boomers), generation X (or genX),

Most gen@ers demand a work-life balance.

and gen@ (or genY, generation me, or millennials). He explains the values important to each, and what nonprofits should consider when working with each generation. For example, boomers tend to have a high sense of entitlement, so when dealing with them, focus on what they receive from your organization. Gen@ers value communicating with their peers — a lot — and do it through technology, so explain the good they, along with their peers, can accomplish through your organization, and know how to communicate with them.

Of course, some individuals will diverge from the norm in each generation, but Brinckerhoff is dealing with how organizations can respond to trends. So, for example, if you want gen@ers to work at your organization, be sure you're flexible with schedules, because most demand a work-life balance.

Planning for generational change is critical if nonprofit organizations are to continue to provide high-quality services. This book will help you identify trends, incorporate generational issues into your planning, and make the best of change as you strategize for your organization.

Meeting Generational Needs

What generation are most of the people you serve? What changes do you need to make in your Web site, marketing kit, and other materials to meet the needs of that generation?

If you're weighted down with boomers and older, do you need more white space, bigger typeface? If your service recipients are younger, can you meet their techspectionations by giving them downloadable podcasts and educational material they can use on their iPods?

If you're not sure what people want, ask them! Remember, most service innovations that people really, really like are little improvements around the edges, not wholesale change.

—adapted from *Generations* by Peter Brinckerhoff



Emerging Areas of Volunteering

Edited by Jeffrey L. Brudney. 121 pages. Softcover. Published by Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, www.arnova.org.

How people volunteer is changing as communication methods change.

Volunteering is dynamic. How people volunteer is evolving as communication methods change, as society embraces personal autonomy and choice, and as global awareness increases. This incisive book explores areas of volunteerism that are increasing in importance, including:

Employee volunteer programs. Citing numerous studies, the book describes the many benefits of employee volunteer programs. It also discusses practices that support employee volunteering, such as the use of volunteer teams, ceremonies, fairs, paid time off to volunteer, and other incentives.

Virtual volunteering. To determine how virtual volunteers (those who use the Internet and Web-based technology to volunteer) can best help an organization, the authors examine differences between virtual and traditional volunteers, as well as what is different about organizations that do use virtual volunteers.

Episodic volunteering. A growing number of people prefer to volunteer sporadically or as a one-time event. Organizations that don't address this change will most likely be left behind. The book explores ways to smooth

the transition toward a mix of long-term and episodic volunteering.

Cross-national volunteering. There's a movement toward volunteering across national borders, as well as a growth in short-term "vacation" or "tourism" volunteering, centered primarily on the volunteer.

Board members as volunteers. While board members and volunteers are usually treated differently, many volunteer-management practices apply to board members. The book details how nonprofits can apply nine recommended volunteer-management practices to their boards: (1) regular communication with volunteers; (2) liability coverage; (3) regular collection of information on volunteer hours; (4) screening procedures to identify suitable volunteers; (5) written policies and job descriptions; (6) recognition activities; (7) annual measurement of the impact of volunteers; (8) training and development opportunities for volunteers; and (9) training for paid staff in working with volunteers.

Each of these discussions offers a way to broaden civic engagement but also challenges volunteer coordinators to change the way they approach their jobs. Those prepared to meet volunteer needs will be able to recruit and motivate people to further their organizations' missions. *Emerging Areas of Volunteering* provides enlightening perspectives on important volunteer trends and ways to respond to them. ■

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□ The Other Side of Diversity

In the short run, ethnic diversity tends to reduce cooperation, trust, and generosity, says Robert D. Putnam in a new study. The results, published in *Scandinavian Political Studies* (www.blackwell-synergy.com), show that in the most diverse communities, trust (even of one's own race) is about half what it is in homogeneous environments.

On the plus side, however, this feeling of unease can lead to the most innovative solutions. And, given time, diverse groups can use collaboration to forge an extremely strong solidarity. □

□ For Evaluation Success, Try This Optimistic Approach

Something magical happens when you blend evaluation with appreciative inquiry, as Hallie Preskill and Tessie Tzavaras Catsambas suggest in *Reframing Evaluation through Appreciative Inquiry* (Sage Publications, www.sagepub.com). Appreciative inquiry is optimistic, focusing on an organization's strengths rather than its deficits. It is a way to look at what an organization does well, create a vision for the future, and develop steps to achieve that vision. Its holistic, affirmative approach tends to be energizing, promoting creativity. It has a good chance of succeeding, since it is easier to build on resources you have than obtain those you haven't had success in getting. Using appreciative inquiry in your evaluations will encourage new outcomes, facilitate participation, and assure that evaluation will be a learning exercise, not a negative occurrence. □

—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler