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FORESIGHT TOOL

How can volunteers find out what might happen in the future and help their organisation achieve its goals? Here we have a model and tools to help!

The idea of this tool is to combine information from the organisation's stakeholders, i.e. different groups of people and organisations. This information should set of a discussion, and enables the organisation to draw an action plan. the idea is to find information about what different **people think might happen in the future** to us (i.e. the volunteer's community), and t**hrough a combination of different views get an overview of what** will happen the future.

The volunteer can find out what different stakeholders think stakeholder by stakeholder by using our tools and ideas, or they can use their own ideas. There is also a guideline for facilitating this work and future workshops by using our model. We shall give a couple of practical examples by using a local environmental NGO as an example.

Foresight model

This is how combining ideas from different people works:

| What I think might happen to us

questions volunteers ask from themselves | What other volunteers and our organisation think might happen to us

questions volunteers ask from other volunteers
analysis of trends in our association or organisation (no. of members etc.) | What our clients think might happen to us

questions volunteers ask from the people they work with |
|---|---|---|
| What our community thinks might happen to us

observations of what happens in our city etc. | What society thinks might happen to us

observations from the news on-line searches on terms like 'the future' | What really will happen

analysis
planning for action |

You should start you work by considering who your stakeholders are. there are ways to do this in the guideline.

The environmental NGO thought that its potential clients included local families and schools who need to know how to protect the environment locally. They identified local politicians to represent their community, and the local media to represent society.

Here are tips to find out about the ideas of different stakeholders. you can use them or think about your own questions and methods.

1. **What I think might happen to us**
- What do you think volunteering will look like in 10, 20, 30 years? Write down your ideas
- What will your own future be like?

2. **What other volunteers and our organisation think might happen to us**

- Ask other volunteers what they think volunteering will look like in 10, 20, 30 years.
- Google "the future of volunteering" will get many results and articles about the future of volunteering.
- Look for volunteering centres in your home town and talk to the people who select volunteers. What do they think the future might hold for volunteering?

- Engage with other volunteers on social media (Facebook, twitter, etc). What are some of their thoughts on the future? Are the opinions divisive? Or do most people agree on some common ideas.
- Look for statistics in your organisation. How many members did you have before and now? Who volunteered before and who now? What kinds of things did volunteers do before and now? What does this information say might happen in the future?
- Contact NGOs by email and ask them questions like "Will we have more or fewer volunteers in 10 years?" and "Will volunteering become more prevalent in the future?" then compare the answers from various organisations.
- Based on the research done what are your predictions for the future of volunteering? Are most possible outcomes positive or negative?

In the environmental NGO, volunteers felt that this depends a great deal with people's general views about the environment. If there is concern, there will be more volunteers. They also felt that there will be more micro-volunteering done on line.

3. What our clients think might happen to us

1st question:

Who are our clients?
Can the profile of our clients change in the future?

The answer to this question depends on:
- the organisation's profile, and range - locally, in a specific place or regionally – and the scope opf its work
- how it activates and reaches clients: directly or by using ITs (social networks, websites).

2nd question:

What is the role of volunteers in the relationship with the client of the organisation? What is the nature of volunteer work?

The answer may depend on:

 - volunteer competences: technical competences - - "working with people". Which of these competences will be needed or will we need something else?

 - volunteer preferences: for example, what percentage of volunteers prefers work with people
- how the organisation works in relation to its clients

Will volunteering in the future be related to technological competence?

 Will "work with people" be a permanent element of the work of volunteers?

3rd question:

Who are the volunteers?
What are the main socio-demographic characteristics of volunteers?

Detailed issues:

- are there generational / cultural differences in the resources accessed by volunteers in a given organisation?
- what are the competences of volunteers in various age categories, e.g: what 20+-year-olds or 50+-year olds can do and what they prefer with regard to the clients?
- can the differences generate conflicts?

Where to find such information:

1) review of websites and organisations: - analysis of the content and activities of non-governmental organisations. Identification of the clients of the organisation depending on the profile of the organisation, - analysis of the offer for volunteers - what do volunteer organisations offer? How often is volunteering associated with direct work with the client of the organisation? What kind of people do organisations need? What is the offer of voluntary service? What competences are used in these offers?

2) statistical data, research: - analysis of the volunteers themselves in terms of social / demographic / cultural characteristics? - what are the values and needs of different generational groups?

The environmental NGO thought that their clients are local families and schools. At present they are mainly reached by social media as its existing volunteers are quite young, but that there is little direct contact. Clients' interests depend on environmental attitudes in general.

4. **What our community thinks might happen to us**

Possible ways of collecting information:

- Follow local news or other media Follow the news (on tv or the radio, newspapers, magazines) or on line) for a few days. Pick 1-2 news items that might affect your volunteering or your organisation in the future. Analyse them by answering the following questions:
1. Does this affect my volunteering positively, neutrally or negatively?
2. Does this affect us (our organisation) positively, neutrally or negatively?
3. What does this news item say about the world around us?

- Visit your local library, community centre or other places where people meet. Ask people what they think might happen in the future. What does this say about what might happen to you or your voluntary organisation? You can also ask people: "What do you think might happen in the future?
- When you meet your friends or family at home, over coffee, at birthday parties etc., ask them what they think might happen in the future. Is anything relevant for your volunteering? if you want to find out their specific views, you can also ask them.
- Visit your city council's website and social media channels. is there anything that you feel might be relevant for your organisation in the future? Try answering the following questions:
1. Does this affect my volunteering positively, neutrally or negatively?
2. Does this affect us (our organisation) positively, neutrally or negatively?
3. What does this news item say about the world around us?

The environmental NGO thought that their local politicians were vital players in their local community. they looked up their decision on the city website and decided that there wasn't that much going on that concerns the local environment. It was found to be problematic from a publicity point of view.

4. **What society thinks might happen to us**

Possible ways of collecting information

- Observations from the news: Follow the news (on tv or the radio, in the newspapers or on line) for a few days. Pick 2 news items that might affect your volunteering or your organisation in the future. Analyse them by answering the following questions:
1. Does this affect my volunteering positively, neutrally or negatively?
2. Does this affect us (our organisation) positively, neutrally or negatively?
3. What does this news item say about the world around us?

- Observations from on line searches

Use an on-line search engine. Type in terms like 'the future of volunteering' 'volunteering' or a term that has to do with the field in which you volunteer. Go through the results of your search and select 2 sources that you find interesting or useful. Analyse them by answering the following questions:

1. Does this affect my volunteering positively, neutrally or negatively?
2. Does this affect us (our organisation) positively, neutrally or negatively?
3. What does this text say about the world around us?

- Observations on social media

If you use social media channels like Facebook, twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube or others, take a moment to follow your news stream. What do people talk about and what kind of content do they share? Is there anything that seems relevant from your volunteering point of view? How might this affect your organisation's future?

- Observations at school/university/work

If you work or are a student, listen what people around you have to say. What do people talk about? Is there anything that seems relevant from your volunteering point of view? How might this affect your organisation's future?

- Detecting 'weak signals'

Have you noticed any small things around you that might be changing or that you find disturbing? they might be weak signals that might or might not affect your volunteering. Write these down during a couple of days and share with your friends. You can use these questions to make sense of them:

1. Does this affect my volunteering positively, neutrally or negatively?
2. Does this affect us (our organisation) positively, neutrally or negatively?
3. What does this text say about the world around us?

The local NGO discussed this and thought that local media were their most vital stakeholder. they looked at the local newspaper and found an article on recycling. They thought this could be a positive sign about growing public interest.

5. Analysis. What really will happen?

When analysing the information you have collected, you will need to bring together different viewpoints and relate stakeholder expectations with each other. You can also consider what is similar in the information you have collected from different stakeholders and where they differ from each other.

The facilitation guideline includes ideas on how to do this, and here we explain how stakeholder views could be approached.

Any voluntary organisation has their own stakeholders whose interests and expectations form part of the organisation's mission. The overall aim of an organisation is to achieve its goals (such as improving the local environment) satisfy the perceived needs of these stakeholders. Any misconception about the specific mix of stakeholder expectations could lead to critical situations in the short or medium term or to existential crises in the long term. For this reason, analysing the specific mix of stakeholders is of strategic relevance. It will enable the identification of the specific relationship as follow (Fig.1):

Fig.1

The main stakeholder analysis question is:

HOW DO WE SATISFY THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

In order to answer this question it's important to pose further questions following the process structured in four basic steps:

First step:

WHO EXACTLY ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

Before we even start working, we need to clarify who exactly are the specific stakeholders of our volunteer organisation that can be named under each of the four types represented in Fig.1.

Second step:

The stakeholders named under each type need to be ranked in order of importance to the volunteer organisation. This importance may differ depending on the purpose of the analysis and include (Fig.2). This needs to be done to in order to think about where change can be achieved and to plan for the use of resources.

STAKEHOLDERS	WEAK INFLUENCE	STRONG INFLUENCE
STRONG INTEREST	Helpful if they become supporters of the organisation	Need to be accommodated
WEAK INTEREST	Little or no effect on the organisation	Dangerous or very helpful for the organisation if they become interested

Fig.2

The environmental NGO decides that local politicians are a very important stakeholder in a campaign to encourage recycling, which was considered an important achievement in 5 years' time. The problem is that they have little interest as it costs money. The organisation thinks it should be wise to listen to them and think of ways in which they could help to make this true.

Third step:

HOW IMPORTANT ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

Following the ranking, we need to answer to the question:

What are the expectations of each specific stakeholder with regards to the relationship with our organisation?

This view may influence the initial ranking in step 2 and lead to modifications.

Fourth step:

HOW GOOD ARE WE AT MEETING OUR STAKEHOLDERS' EXPECTATIONS?

For the selected stakeholders we need to identify how to meet their expectations:

What do we do to meet stakeholders' expectations? Do we know how to satisfy ones in our work? What is good? What could be better? What we will do?

6. Planning for action

Once you have analysed and discussed your information, you will have an idea of what lies ahead. To create a plan, you should then ask yourselves the following questions:

- What do we want to achieve? How do the things we see will happen help us or prevent us from achieving this?
- What skills do we need? Do we already have them or do we need something else?
- Who do we need to do this? have we got the right people and enough people?
- Who do we need to network with to achieve our goals, and what can we give to them?
- What resources do we need?

This discussion will lead you to the following result:

➔ **what will our organisation do?**
➔ **How are we going to do it?**

The organisation decided that they need to work with local schools, media and politicians. For this they needed information about decision making, skills to inspire young people at schools and skills in making mobile videos. They saw that they couldn't work on their own because they had limited resources, so they decided to ask the local residents' association to work with them, and to find training in the skills that were missing.