

Volunteering is changing, and so must we

Special Olympics BC
9 February 2025



Who am I?

- Thirty years working in the volunteer movement
- Global thought leader on volunteer engagement
- Writer, speaker, trainer and consultant
- International client base
- Music collector, book lover, dog owner and former roadie



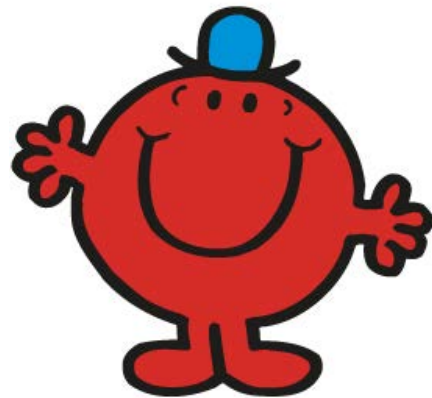
In this session

- Two key global volunteering trends
- People today are different
- Q&A



Two key trends





Why are people
volunteering less
and giving less
time?

I have other things to do with my
spare time



“Many volunteers aren’t going to commit on day one. The organisation needs to make access to volunteering as fast and frictionless as possible, then put the effort into stewarding the relationship and curate the volunteer experience, so people want to keep coming back. That’s building commitment. People today will volunteer on their terms, not ours, and we have to adapt accordingly.”

Rob Jackson, January 2025



Similarly any organisation that wants to involve volunteers needs a different way of thinking about volunteering in the 21st century. A collective re-imagining of the future of volunteering is critical to help us meet the changing environment.

We Need a New Way of Thinking About...
Doug Taylor



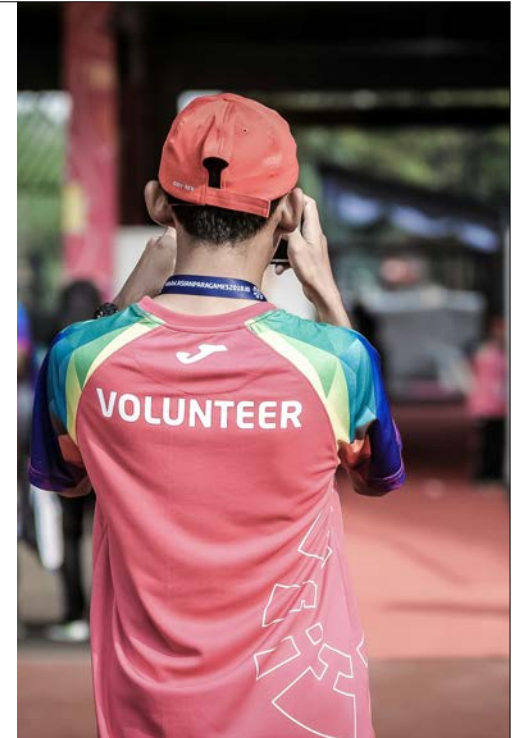
People today...

- Are different from before
- Are more diverse
- Want flexibility
- Are living in a cost-of-living crisis
- Want to see their impact
- Are more tech savvy



People today are different

- More discerning and demanding
- Feel overwhelmed
- Institutional cynicism



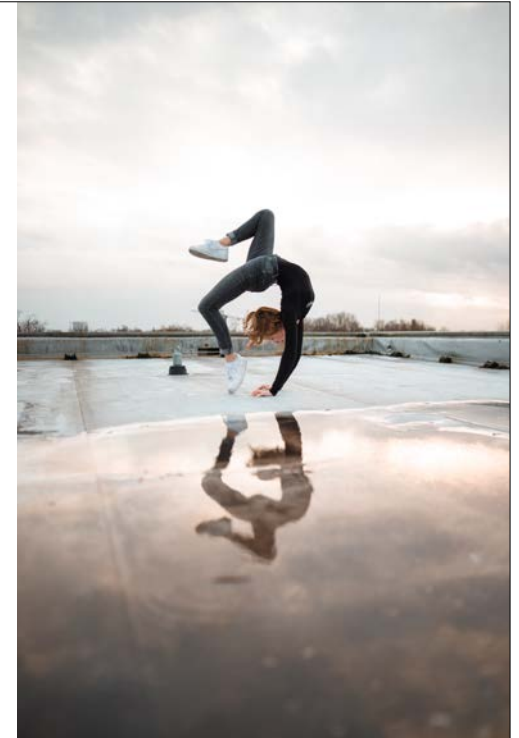
People today are more diverse

- Generations and life stages
- Race, gender, sexuality, disability and so much more



People today want flexibility

- People want their volunteering to fit around their lives, not fit their lives around our volunteering needs
- An issues of perception?
- Frictionless volunteering



People today and cost-of-living

- A financial issue
- A management issue
- An EDI issue



People today want to see their impact

- Two common motivations:
making a difference and not
wasting time
- How do we show impact when
people are giving us less and
less time?

CHANGE



CHANGE

People today are more tech savvy

- More people than ever are using technology as part of their volunteering
- Digital exclusion



Discuss

- How would you rank these for your volunteers / your community?
- What else would you add to the list of how today's volunteers are different?
- Which ones do you need to address and why?



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20th century volunteer leadership was being at the helm of a battleship with all members of the organisation aboard the same ship and going in the same direction; while in the 21st century volunteers are a school of empowered fish, passionate about their beliefs and agendas, and each wanting to swim in their own direction, and the job of the leader of volunteers becomes to mobilise their action with a unifying cause.

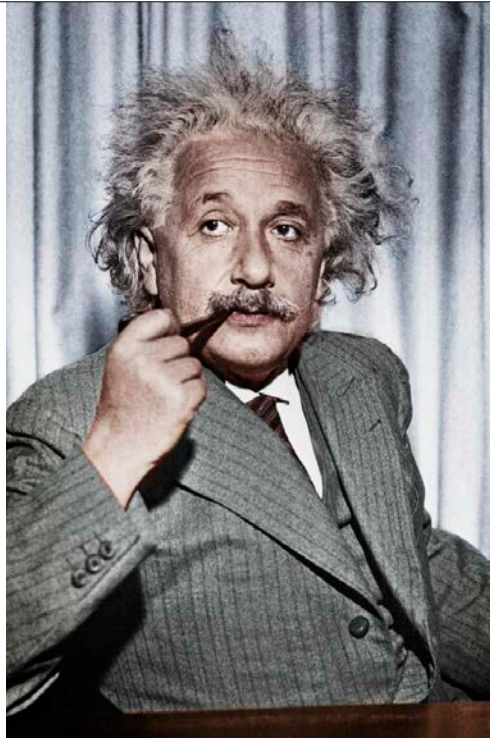
Laura White (Sutherland)'s Post
[linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com)



The last word...

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were are when we created them"

Albert Einstein



QUESTIONS?

Action planning

- What has been the most useful thing we've looked at?
- What has been the topic/issue that has challenged you the most?
- What one thing will you do immediately?
- What will you have done in two months time?

**ACTION
PLAN**



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