

At New York Cares, volunteering is our business. As New York City's largest volunteer organization, we develop and run 16,000 projects a year — putting more than 50,000 volunteers to work making the Big Apple the best it can be.

OUR THEORY

For years, we have known that thanking our volunteers is the right thing to do, but one of our theories was that if we thanked volunteers and let them know we appreciated them, they'd feel even better about their experience and be more likely to do it again. We wanted proof that saying thank you really matters, so in 2009, we decided to measure it.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

We tracked 4,600 volunteers who hit a range of service milestones over the course of a year. We regularly and personally thanked them after their 5th project; after 25 and 50 projects; on anniversaries of their years of service; and more. In the end, we thanked 4,000 people individually one or more times and let them know we not only noticed, but also appreciated, their efforts.

At the same time, we randomly selected a control group of 600 volunteers from this same pool — 13% of the total — who reached the same milestones. We didn't thank these volunteers for their generosity at all. We communicated via standard newsletters and other mass correspondence, but not one received individual, personalized thanks.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

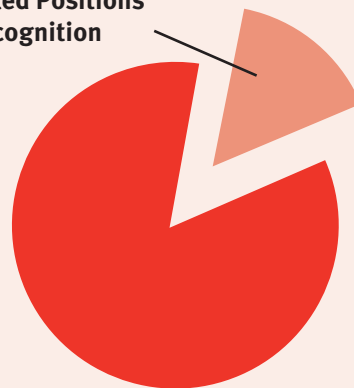
The result? We proved conclusively that when we said thank you people volunteered more. Thanked volunteers completed four more projects during the year, on average, than people we left alone. Leaders in the recognition group volunteered 15 times during the year; unrecognized individuals just 11 times. Sixteen percent of our total 97,000 volunteer opportunities filled just because we said thanks.

The recognized group also became volunteer leaders at a faster rate: 8% versus 6% for the non-recognized group. This generated 50 additional leaders ready to help start new projects, which is critical to our ability to meet the needs of our Community Partners throughout the city.



FILLED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**16% of Filled Positions
Due to Recognition**



Sixteen percent of our total 97,000 volunteer opportunities filled just because we thanked our volunteers.

VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT SCALE

In 2009, we launched the New York Cares Volunteer Engagement Scale to track volunteers' overall level of engagement over time. This new study added a baseline for measuring the impact of recognition itself.

We also measured the impact on our bottom line. Previous cost-analysis work, undertaken with the help of a team from Morgan Stanley, allowed us to calculate the cost of recruiting and training new volunteers. We found out that we saved \$40,000 in incremental staff time by filling that 16% of our volunteer inventory with people already in our community.

In a year when funding was tight, 80% of our growth came from saying thank you.

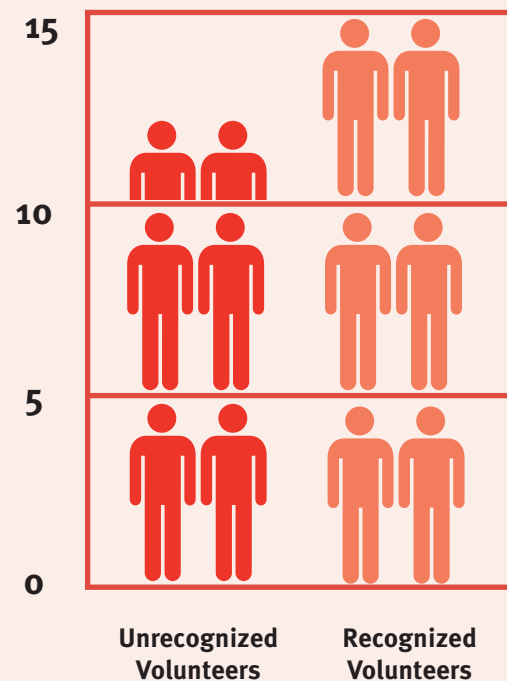
Of course, there are additional factors at play – such as the quality of a volunteer's experience, personal passion for the cause, whether someone is employed and more. And saying thank you is not exactly revolutionary. But what is new is being able to prove conclusively that recognition has a tangible impact on volunteer engagement and has implications for nonprofit management.

New York Cares has used findings from this study and other work to expand our programs by 15 to 20% annually to better serve New Yorkers during a difficult economic time.

ABOUT NEW YORK CARES

New York Cares is New York City's largest volunteer organization. Founded in 1987, New York Cares runs volunteer programs for 1,200 nonprofits, public schools and city agencies citywide. New York Cares volunteers help children learn to read; prepare meals for homeless and housebound people; help low-income students get into college; revitalize public parks; and schools; and much more. Last year, 54,000 New York Cares volunteers helped more than 400,000 New Yorkers in need. For more information, visit newyorkcares.org or call 212.228.5000.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PROJECTS



Volunteers in the recognition group volunteered 15 times during the year; unrecognized individuals just 11 times.