

Motivation of EVS coordinator

I remember few year ago I was asked to run a workshop on the motivation of volunteers at one of the statutory meetings of big international youth NGO.

I dived myself into what can be done around motivation, to figure out, that this one of the most tricky topics I was ever invited to work on.

We started openly with research in SOLE¹ style, where everybody has to bring some new findings, do a small research or anything else around the topic of motivation. I learned that time that sometimes the most important step is to start to think about some topic, donate a little focused time, open it with curiosity, being perfectly open, that you don't know, how to approach such topic.

And then magic happen. We collected so much stuff, I felt the motivation in the group (including my one) raised just by focusing on understanding what motivation means for me, for you, for every single person in that group, what clever books and famous speakers say about motivation... Nowadays I understand that way of working way better, as it is actually one of the first steps of Design Thinking² process or Human Centred Design³ (HCD) approach – To discover.

There is a lot what we can take from HCD into our daily practice. Learn to take the time to discover and understand – your motivation, motivation of the others. The need for EVS in your organisation. The needs of volunteers.

There is nothing more frustrating than creating things, investing time and energy into projects and people and then figuring out, you are alone in that. The sense you see, the others don't see. The frustration of not being appreciated for the hard work you do. So often this frustration rises from creating assumptions instead of making assurance. My former colleague and a good friend used to say, 'assumption is the mother of fuckups...'

Yes, it is! It is actually very liberating to allow ourselves to put it that way!

Especially in that special case when the subject and object of your work is the same – people. Those people.

What can be seen as time-consuming process (taking steps according to HCD) can be actually time and energy saver, a fresh shift of thinking about things.

Don't do it all alone and the motivation will rise just thought taking such process together.

Some other motivation factors and inspirations

Good partnerships – work on good and stable partnerships, they are essential for not wasting your energy and preventing burnouts in a long-term run of EVS sending and receiving. Finding "your people" who will be sharing the same basics you can build on, even they might be physically far away, from different cultures etc. If it is possible to plan some (at least some) physical meetings with the other coordinators you work with.

Seeing the sense – I will repeat myself often, but from practise speaking so often the core issue is having same vision and mission. Not just written somewhere, but understood and lived. Spoken, though. That is motivation booster, time saver and sense of belonging spark – 3in1. It is a pain to step into defining these, re-open the written ones, and give a time for reconfirmation. But it really is this 3in1 once you give it a chance. Part of it is allowing the others to understand my own ones.

Personal mission – in the bad times or in times of hard decisions, when uncertainty is rising, having your very own personal mission (statement) might help a lot. You can imagine it as an answer on why uniquely I am here, what is my purpose, what I am contributing to and how I do it. If you do your daily tasks, small things as well

as a big project in line with such mission, motivation is usually present. It just all makes perfect sense, at least in long-term vision if not at the actual moment.

Priceless Art of Appreciation – I think this should be a life-long training for many of us, to learn to appreciate yourself, the others, volunteers, to be appreciated – it is the ultimate reward that only costs your attention. I heard that so many times from different frustrated volunteers and employees, that the only thing they were longing for was some sort of recognition and appreciation. I think that is one of the few things we really have available towards fighting the de-motivation. The motivation of volunteers would be whole another chapter in this publication but appreciation can be applied anywhere.

The four agreements⁴ – and the fifth one.

1. Be Impeccable With Your Word.
2. Don't Take Anything Personally.
3. Don't Make Assumptions.
4. Always Do Your Best.
5. Be Sceptical but Learn to Listen.

Where motivation comes from? – in literature, we might talk about internal and external factors of motivation. I am not going to spend a time on it here.

One of my friends, colleagues and as well my great inspiration Tomáš Hajzler⁵ is often claiming that you can't motivate people from outside. The context is coming from working environment. An example to this can be all sort of benefits, which only work as motivator once, they are given, but as soon as that happens, they are not motivation anymore, they are just taken for granted, on the other hand, their cancellation serves well as a demotivating factor. The long-term motivation arises from the inside of an individual and has to be fed by the proper nutrition cocktail.

Some of the ingredients needed for proper EVS coordinator motivation cocktail (no virgin versions!) can be hopefully found in this article.

¹ *SOLE* alias *Self-Organised Learning Environment* concept based on field experiments of Sugata Mitra, <https://www.theschoolinthecloud.org/>

² *Design thinking for educators basic kit* available online: <http://www.designthinkingforeducators.com/>

³ For example here: <https://www.ideo.com/by-ideo/human-centered-design-toolkit/>; <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>

⁴ Book from Don Miguel Ruiz; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Don_Miguel_Ruiz

⁵ <http://www.tomashajzler.com/>, *Freedom at work* concept

Lucie Schubert,

*free-lance trainer, long-term experience with topic
of EVS and EVS accreditations, Czech Republic*