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# Vedic Dharma Samaj Fremont Hindu Temple:

## *Volunteer Program*

by

Twinki Mistry

A Thesis Quality Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Masters Degree
in

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Prof. Frances Edwards. Ph.D.

The Graduate School

San Jose State University

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## Introduction

Vedic Dharma Samaj Fremont Hindu Temple-(FHT) is a religious non-profit organization in the City of Fremont, California. Founded in 1985 by a group of Hindu immigrants, FHT serves as a place of worship and a hub for cultural activities for the Hindu community of Fremont and other Bay Area cities (Fremont Hindu Temple, 2011). FHT has sanctums and idols of various Hindu deities. It has four resident priests who perform the daily religious rituals for each of the deities. FHT also offers special devotee ritual and group ritual services for a fee. Besides conducting religious rituals, the temple hosts various cultural events, educational and leisure activities, and festival celebrations on its premises. The temple has a full kitchen and dining hall, and offers free food on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Sundays, and on all Hindu festivals. The temple is open seven days a week from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The number of people visiting the temple per day ranges from 100 on a regular day, to over 1,000 during Hindu festivals (Vedic Sandesh, 2011). All the temple activities are run and managed by volunteers. This research paper aims to investigate how FHT can improve its operations and fulfill its mission with a well-structured volunteer program.

Over the past five years there has been a dramatic physical expansion of the temple. Catering to the religious needs and demands of the Hindu worshippers, new sanctums and idols have been installed at the temple. As a result, the number of activities, ritual services and membership at the temple has dramatically increased over the last five years. Volunteerism has also increased to keep up with the increased activities at the temple. However, the temple still lacks a structured volunteer program. As described on its official website, FHT has a Board of Trustees (BoT), Management Board, and Personnel Team that includes the priests and the administrators. The BoT is made up of volunteers who pay an annual membership fee of $1,500

to be on the board. One of the BoT is elected as the chairman every two years. The members of the Management Board are also volunteers who are elected annually. The priests and the administrators are paid employees of the temple (Vedic Sandesh, 2011).

While informal volunteering is common at the temple during special events and festivals, the routine operational needs of the temple, as an organization, seem to be neglected. For example, the temple has an official website which is managed by volunteers, but there are several broken web links and inconsistent information. The names of the temple priests on the website do not match the names of the currently employed priests at FHT.

On FHT's official website, there is a section for "Volunteer Info" which just provides a basic announcement that volunteers are needed for the following list of tasks. This list of tasks is very vague, without any specific information on tasks or types of volunteers needed. The bottom of the list of tasks, reads the following (Fremont Hindu Temple, 2011):

*Please contact Volunteer coordinator Nidhi Bhatnagar at nidhi@fremonttemple.org or Anita Kapoor at templeadmin@fremonttemple.org*

As part of this research, on October 6, 2011, an email expressing interest in volunteering was sent to both the coordinators mentioned above, but as of October 15, 2011 no reply had been received, indicating ineffectiveness of the current system of volunteer management. On October 10, 2011 a follow-up visit was also made to the temple administrator's office to express interest in volunteering. The young man in the office acknowledged the receipt of the email, and was aware that no response had been sent. In spite of this, his name was not listed in the volunteer information section of the website. As can be seen from this example, there is definitely a lack of communication and lack of structure between temple volunteers and administrators, which may be leading to a loss of willing volunteers.

Certain physical and aesthetic aspects of the temple have failed to receive proper attention, such as the library room, administrators' and priests' office, kitchen pantry, closets that hold the deities' garments and jewelry, priests' daily ritual vessels and elements, and bulletin boards. As part of this research various observation visits were made to the temple between September 2011 and November 2011. It was observed that there are a high number of volunteers present during special events and festivals, but there was no way to identify a volunteer because they did not have name tags or special badges. Therefore if a temple visitor noticed a water spill or had any other emergency needs, he or she had to go on an expedition to find a volunteer amidst hundreds or thousands of people.

During special events and festivals, the volunteering is usually very informal. There are loosely established volunteer schedules, but no sign-in sheets; volunteers come and go at their own convenience. There is no accountability, commitment, or cohesive planning to manage volunteers. Thus, everything seems chaotic at such huge events, and a chaotic environment in a place of worship diminishes the overall blissful experience that devotees wish to experience. It has also been observed that temple events never start and finish on time. For example, an event may have been announced to start at 11 a.m., but it does not start until 1 p.m. Often time during all-day or week-long events, the temple ends up having too many or too few volunteers at the wrong time. For example, during setup and cleanup times there will be very few volunteers, and at other times when there are not that many tasks, the temple will have plenty of volunteers.

As part of this research, in September 2011, a formal request was made to the temple administrators and Management Board to obtain a complete list of currently registered volunteers or the total number of registered volunteers. Based on the varying responses that were received from the administrators and management, it seems that no such complete list exists in the

temple's records. Also there is no practice of collecting "waiver of liability statements" from current volunteers.

### *Purpose and Use of Research*

Through this research project, the researcher plans to study best practices of managing volunteer programs in non-profit organizations and provide recommendations to FHT to improve the way they currently manage their volunteers.

## Literature Review

A volunteer is someone who willingly offers his or her time for the service of others, without any monetary reward (Volunteers, 2011; Cascaval, 2011). Social Science literature states that volunteer motivation and participation is based on five variables: 1) context, 2) social background and personal demographics, 3) personality dispositions, 4) attitudes, and 5) situational conditions (Farmer & Fedor, 2001, as cited in Macduff, Netting, and O'Conner, 2009). People who choose to volunteer for an organization or a cause have different motivations, styles, expectations, and time commitment, which add to the complexity of volunteer coordination (Macduff, Netting, and O'Conner, 2009). According to Light (2002), young people respond better to direct appeals for volunteering and from personal influence from the people they know. General benefits of volunteering include- a higher level of mental and physical health, and fulfillment of social, career, and leisure needs (Li & Ferraro, 2005, Post, 2005, Whiteley, 2004, as cited in Borgonovi, 2008; Sundeen, Garcia, and Raskoff, 2009).

To sustain or grow any of its programs or activities, a volunteer-based organization has to invest in volunteer recruitment, training, coordination, and retention efforts (Macduff, Netting, and O'Conner, 2009). Formalized volunteer programs are also necessary to define parameters within an organization to deal with legal aspects and risk management (Macduff, Netting, and O'Conner, 2009). Structural constraints, such as lack of information, communication, training, and coordination, prevent organizations from running a successful volunteer program (Chang, Fang, Ling, and Tsai, 2011).

Volunteers must feel that they are providing meaningful service; otherwise they do not come back because they value the quality of their volunteer experience (Light, 2002; Deslandes and Rogers, 2008). Therefore, volunteer training and retention efforts are critical for a non-profit

organization (Forsyth, 1999, as cited in Skoglund, 2006; Brudney and Meijs, 2009). The attention given to volunteers during their first six months, and at milestones, such as completion of big projects or activities, as well as new learning opportunities, is a critical factor in volunteer retention (Wymer & Starnes, 2001, Forsyth, 1999, as cited in Skoglund, 2006).

Volunteer coordinators have to match the right volunteer to the right task to make any program or activity successful. Therefore, organizations need to give special attention to the types of volunteer coordinators they have because these coordinators require the skills and knowledge to find the "fit" between the organization's and the volunteers' need (Macduff, Netting, and O'Conner, 2009).

The extent of formal volunteering and informal volunteering is approximately the same, but there is not enough literature available on informal volunteering (Toppe, Kirsch, & Michel, 2002, as cited in Perry, Brudney, Coursey, and Littlepage, 2008).

According to Handy and Mook's research (2011), social accounting techniques, which incorporate volunteer contributions into a non-profit organization's financial statement, are important for two reasons: 1) volunteers' value and scope can be included in decision making, and 2) non-profit organizations' can earn recognition from donors, sponsors, government, and the community as contributing value through their volunteer programs. Through social accounting models, volunteer contributions can be made more visible and can help prevent wastage of volunteer energy (Handy and Mook, 2011). It can also help advocate for more funding for volunteer management, including cost of recruitment, training, coordination, supervision, and retention.

"Almost half of Americans' association memberships are related to religious congregations, and half of Americans' volunteering takes place in a religious context." (Putnam,

2000, as cited in Lichterman, 2008, 4) According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics data of 2005, religious nonprofits received approximately 35 percent of volunteer time (Borgonovi, 2008). Volunteers of religious non-profits and regular non-profits differ in terms of their faith, devotion, and energy because most religions promote ethics and morals of helping others (Borgonovi, 2008). Some literature shows that religiosity is positively related to giving and volunteering (Borgonovi, 2008). Other literature shows weak correlation or no correlation between religiosity and volunteering (Yeung, 2004, Wuthnow 1991, as cited in Perry, Brudney, Coursey, and Littlepage, 2008). However, informal volunteering is positively related to religious activity (Perry, Brudney, Coursey, and Littlepage, 2008). According to Ecklund and Park's research (2007), Hindu Americans are less likely to volunteer compared to the members of other Asian religions. Volunteering provided directly to religious non-profits benefits the overall mission of that religious organization and its members compared to volunteering in non-religious non-profits, which benefits a specific cause or public good.

There is no literature providing the current total number of Hindu temples in the United States, but in 1990 there were approximately 400 Hindu temples in the United States (Warner, 1998, 5, as cited in Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2006). Most of the current Hindu temples in the United States rely heavily on volunteers (Hindu Mandirs in USA, 2011). According to Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2006), temples in the United States are also community centers that provide a place for people to meet and network. Temples are also cultural centers where Hindu music, dance and art activities get hosted (Hindu Temples in USA, 2011).

In addition to volunteer services for its organization and its members, many Hindu temples in United States now offer volunteer services to the larger community by hosting health fairs, community cleaning projects, and offering meals to the homeless (Pais, 2010). Hinduism

teaches that actions have to be louder than words. Thus, many temples that are doing larger community volunteerism projects are not publicizing their efforts. As a result, these temples miss critical opportunities to join hands with mainstream organizations and/or to obtain funding from the government (Pais, 2010).

Whether an organization wants to start using volunteers for the first time or wants to use volunteers more effectively, planning for volunteers is a vital step. Before planning for volunteers, proper assessment of the organization's needs must occur (Mencer, 2006). Mencer recommends the following needs assessment steps (2006):

Step 1: Considering program's need

Step 2: Prioritizing needs

Step 3: Converting needs into goals

Step 4: Setting objectives to measure goal achievement

Step 5: Developing strategies to meet objectives

Step 6: Putting strategies into action

After proper needs assessment, organizations can start developing a volunteer program framework. The Volunteer Management Resource Center (2011) recommends the following steps in developing a volunteer program:

Step 1: Developing the Vision, Mission, Policies, and Procedure

Step 2: Creating Infrastructure: Applications, Agreements, and Position Descriptions

Step 3: Keeping on course: Tracking and Evaluation

Step 4: Training and Orientation for Volunteers and Staff

According to a national research study conducted by The Points of Light Foundation, a well-structured volunteer program directly contributes in the achievement of the mission and

priorities of the organization (Allen, 1995). The research discovered important characteristics of organizations whose volunteer programs/involvement is more effective compared to organizations with less effective volunteer programs/involvement. This is listed below in no particular order:

1) Leaders at all levels of the organization encourage and facilitate volunteer involvement

2) There is a focal point of leadership for volunteering and conscious attention is given to the process and dynamics of volunteer involvement

3) Volunteer management occurs as "close to the action (actual work)" and volunteer management is less centralized and controlling

4) There is a notion of learning and commitment to continuous improvement in managing volunteers

5) There are effective volunteer training and recognition protocols in place

6) Leaders at all levels of the organization recognize the importance of issues of diversity and inclusiveness in volunteering

7) Volunteers are commonly involved in the organization's strategic planning and decision making process

8) Volunteers are involved across a wide range of high impact volunteer jobs, without restricting them into narrow categories or assumptions

9) Volunteers' skills and interests are matched with tasks, with clear connection of the value of the task to the overall work of the organization and with appropriate supervision and feedback

10) Volunteer contribution success stories are openly shared throughout the organization

11) Volunteers are evaluated on a regular basis, including the way in which they are managed

12) Exit interviews are conducted to learn why volunteers are leaving and  get an evaluation of how the organization is managing volunteers

The online resource center of the Corporation of National & Community Service (2011) provides the following before, during, and after tips for managing a volunteer program.

Before: *Make volunteers fill out an application, supply references, and give an interview. Provide job description and set written expectations of the volunteer job and monitoring process*

During: *Introduce volunteers to other members of the organization and make them feel as a part of the team. Invite them to important meetings and events. Schedule regular feedback sessions. Recognize their good work and make them feel appreciated.*

After: *Talk to volunteers about their experience. Conduct exit interviews. Keep good records of volunteers and their work. Provide letters of recommendation.*

## Methodology

This paper utilizes the research method of Monitoring and Improving Internal Process (Sylvia & Sylvia, 2004) which has four phases: 1) Problem Identification, 2) Solution Development, 3) Implementation, and 4) Feedback Evaluation. This paper is focused only on phase two (Solution Development) of this research method, because Phase One was completed as part of the development of the research. The lack of a coherent organization for volunteers at FHT is addressed and suggested solutions developed. In order to produce the recommendations for improving Fremont Hindu Temple's current volunteer program, the following three research methods were used for data collection: 1) online study of best practices for volunteer programs and volunteer program management from one national-level organization, 2) case studies of three religious non-profit organizations' current volunteer programs, and 3) needs assessment of volunteers/volunteer program at Fremont Hindu Temple using interviews and survey.

For online study of best practices, a thorough online research was conducted of *Church Volunteer Central* (CVC), a national-level organization that provides direct services and products for volunteer program administration in a religious or faith-based organization. As published on its official website (2011), CVC provides church leaders innovative and effective tools to identify and equip volunteers in gift-based ministries. In one central online location, CVC offers a variety of resources on volunteer recruitment, training, retention and program administration. CVC has approximately 10,000 members, mainly religious non-profits, and also offers regional networks for like-minded people to connect with each other (Church Volunteer Central, 2011).

For the case studies, three religious non-profits' current volunteer programs were examined. Personal interviews were conducted with any one of their volunteer program administrators or coordinators. An interview questionnaire (Appendix A) was created to learn

about the components of these organizations' current volunteer programs. For the personal interview, the researcher obtained appointments (Appendix D) and traveled to the location of the respective religious non-profit organizations. For each personal interview, the researcher spent between one to two hours. Clearance from the Institutional Research Board (IRB) was obtained for the research design, including the personal interview questionnaire. The researcher selected the following three organizations for the case studies:

1) Hindu Community and Cultural Center (HCCC) Shiva-Vishnu Temple

2) Shreemaya Krishnadham (SK)

3) Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Temple

All three organizations are located in the Bay Area and currently have active volunteer programs. HCCC is based in Livermore and both SK and BAPS are based in Milpitas, California. Similar to the Fremont Hindu Temple, these three organizations have also been catering to the religious needs of the Hindu community of the Bay Area for more than twenty years. HCCC and SK are local religious non-profit organizations, but BAPS is an international non-profit organization with more than 800 temples, and 3,300 centers worldwide. Three Hindu temples were selected, instead of *other* religious non-profits, because the researcher plans to present the findings of this research paper to the Board of Trustees and Management Board of the Fremont Hindu Temple. The organizational similarity and geographic proximity of the three case-study organizations enhances the credibility of this research because the FHT management team will be able to closely identify with the operational similarities and challenges of running a Hindu temple. This potentially increases the likelihood of the FHT management team adopting the recommendations produced through this research paper.

For the needs assessment, a personal interview questionnaire (Appendix C) was created to identify the type of volunteers/volunteer program needed at the Fremont Hindu Temple. The interview questionnaire was created for the Management Board, Administrators, and Priests. Additionally, a needs assessment survey (Appendix B) was created for the members of the temple. For personal interviews, the researcher obtained permission (Appendix F) and appointments from the participants and visited the Fremont Hindu Temple. For the survey of the members, the researcher obtained permission from the temple management board to administer the survey electronically and on-site. The temple has an email subscription with approximately 1000 members, so the survey was administered electronically, as well as on-site with consent (Appendix E) from the participants. The on-site survey was distributed to random attendees of the temple. IRB clearance was obtained for the personal interview questionnaires and survey.

English is the official language of all the organizations included in this research paper. Thus, all interviews and surveys were conducted in English. The data collection period for this paper started in February 2012 and completed in March 2012.

## Findings

### Online Study of Best Practices

The CVC website had a wealth of information on volunteer program management, but there were four overall best practices that stood out/emerged during the online research:

1) Create a volunteer program management database using an appropriate software application, such as Microsoft Excel
2) Hire a paid employee to manage/coordinate the volunteer program
3) Document all the components of the volunteer program
4) Use free online technology, offered by VolunteerSpot, such as online sign-up sheets, online scheduling software and management software to coordinate volunteer activities

All the information, articles, tools, and other resources on the CVC website was presented in five best practice categories: recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect. From these five categories, the best practices that were most common (highly rated), applicable, and useful/beneficial to FHT are listed below in no particular order (Church Volunteer Central, 2011).

*Recruit:* On the CVC website, recruitment was defined as inviting people to join the mission of the organization in such a way that it affirms the value of the organization to them.

1) Create a dream list of volunteers by creating a flowchart and mapping out each volunteer position throughout the organization or in a specific department. Set a time-bound goal to get those positions advertised and filled
2) Create a visual representation of volunteer needs so that all the attendees of the church/organization can see it. Update this visual representation as new volunteers signup. For example, have red and blue balloons, red representing current volunteers and blue representing the volunteers needed
3) Recruit for short-term projects or tasks
4) Create a list of potential volunteers, and send out personal notes or invitations for setting up a meeting to present the organization's activities, and explain how they can benefit by volunteering. Invite them to an event so they can experience firsthand the organization's activities
5) Follow up within three weeks after candidates fill out the volunteer registration form
6) Take time to write up volunteer job descriptions and the skills required for the job

7) Include basic skills assessment questions on volunteer job application forms
8) Take time to interview potential volunteers
9) Utilize three essential components during a volunteer interview- comfortable/private setting, appropriate and meaningful questions, and effective listening
10) Include five essential components on volunteer job descriptions- title, job functions, accountability, terms of service, and acknowledgment
11) Create one-page volunteer job descriptions and keep the language concise and clear
12) Use a Letter of Regret to inform volunteer candidates who did not get the volunteer position they applied for and redirect them to other areas of the organization to find a suitable match
13) Tap into the largest pool of volunteers, people over the age of 55, available today

*Train:* On the CVC website, training is defined as getting volunteers prepared for their

job.

1) Conduct short orientation sessions to familiarize new volunteers with the organization/team
2) Create a volunteer handbook or pamphlet to communicate general policies, expectations, do's and don'ts, establish culture, and empower volunteers
3) Train team leaders on building teams and working with teams
4) Train the volunteers on working in teams
5) Utilize no cost to low cost online training for volunteers offered by several organizations, such as GuideOne and Church Volunteer Central
6) Use email to equip volunteers by emailing relevant articles, documents, and training material to read at their own time
7) Facilitate mentoring by matching a new volunteer with a senior/experienced volunteer
8) Provide your volunteer leaders with a professional magazine subscription, which delivers articles, tips, and most current information/trends on volunteerism and/or religious non-profits
9) Keep the task of equipping and training volunteers quick, simple, and relevant

*Retain:* On the CVC website, retaining is defined as keeping volunteers involved.

1) After every event, collect evaluations about the event and the volunteering experience of every volunteer. Review these evaluations and strive to make timely recommended changes
2) Send a personalized "Letter from God" to motivate the volunteers
3) Electronically or during face-to-face meetings, regularly share success stories of people who are serving
4) During volunteer meetings, have allotted time on the agenda for discussion and listening. Encourage volunteers to engage in the discussion. Be open to new ideas and

listen to what the volunteers have to say. Try to see things from the volunteer's perspective

5) Track volunteer hours and reward them at specific milestones with a gift card or movie ticket. Alternatively, reward with gift card or movie ticket after successful completion of specific events or assignments
6) Give a personalized letter of appreciation and certificate of service
7) Give timely "thank yous" and "sincere word of appreciations" to make the volunteers SMILE, Say it, Mean it, Initiate it, Live it and Encourage it
8) Host an ice cream social to thank the volunteers
9) Use Mother's day and Father's day to honor the moms and dads that volunteer in the organization
10) Use the month of April, the volunteer appreciation month, to recognize and appreciate volunteers
11) Do not allow volunteers to step away without providing feedback. Use online resources to find short and easy volunteer evaluation templates

*Lead:* On the CVC website, leading is defined as investing in people by identifying their

gifts, coaching them in their gifts, and building relationships with the team.

1) Share the organization's vision and mission with volunteers to show them what the organization is trying to achieve and how it is going to achieve it
2) Identify and improve the organization's role and task ratio. The role and task ratio is defined by the number of specific roles and tasks divided by the number of members. CVC recommends this ratio should not be less than 60%. For example, an organization with 1000 members should have 600 roles/tasks available for the members to get involved
3) Check on Google for Nonprofit programs to learn about free technological resources and products available for nonprofit leaders to reach and engage, improve operations, and raise awareness
4) Encourage volunteers to get engaged in discussions during meetings and ask follow up questions
5) Highlight and showcase that God is in action through the people volunteering in the organization
6) Provide written notes from the meeting
7) Have an open door policy and communicate/publicize this policy
8) Be on the same page with your volunteers by communicating frequently and effectively
9) Find and utilize online training resources for volunteers
10) Pair a new volunteer with an experienced/senior volunteer

*Protect:* On the CVC website, protecting is defined as creating a safe environment for

volunteers to carry out their work while reducing the overall risk for the organization. It also

includes protecting the organization by implementing risk management and liability reduction tools, policies and procedures.

1) Make volunteer application forms mandatory
2) Conduct background checks for any volunteer working with children and other vulnerable groups
3) Collect at least 2-3 references from all volunteer applicants. Conduct reference checks on all final candidates
4) Obtain general liability coverage for the volunteer program
5) Include emergency contact information in the volunteer database
6) Include the physical requirements of the position in all volunteer job descriptions
7) Volunteer job descriptions should be non-discriminatory
8) Regularly review volunteer performance and document it
9) Immediately handle complaints and concerns about volunteers' behavior
10) Have a written procedure for terminating volunteers
11) Have a handbook or pamphlet describing volunteering policies and procedures
12) Establish boundaries by creating a list of do's and don'ts for volunteers and volunteer leaders
13) Have volunteers sign their job descriptions, acknowledging that they understand what is expected of them
14) Inform the volunteers about their supervisor names, and whom they are responsible to
15) Post adequate safety warning signs for volunteers throughout the organization
16) Include safety procedures in volunteer training, such as kitchen safety
17) Provide general safety training to all volunteers
18) Have a simple and clear incident reporting process for volunteers
19) Abide by the "Right to Know Act" and provide information about it to the volunteers
20) Have volunteers sign a Confidentiality Agreement to keep private information confidential
21) Include privacy and confidentiality topics in the volunteer orientation and in the handbook
22) Create individual volunteer files, which includes their application, skills/interest profile, training checklist, position description, letters or other records of affirmation/appreciation, background check report, personal references, and emergency contact

The CVC website also had many documents, templates, and forms to help carry out the best practices described in the five categories above. The documents that were most common (highly rated), applicable, and useful/beneficial to FHT are listed below in no particular order

(Church Volunteer Central, 2011).

1) Volunteer Application Form
2) Volunteer Profile Form
3) Checklist and tips for screening and interviewing volunteers
4) Volunteer position descriptions (400+)
5) Volunteer team building template
6) Evaluation Form for volunteers and volunteer leaders
7) Volunteer Leaders Agreement
8) Volunteer Liability Release and Waiver Form
9) Self Evaluation Form for volunteer leaders
10) Spiritual gift reference/assessment chart
11) Team and Personal Evaluation Form
12) Team observation report
13) Volunteer Training Session Evaluation Form
14) Volunteer Time Sheet
15) Volunteer program budgeting template
16) Volunteer Incident Report
17) Exit interview questions
18) Volunteer exist survey
19) Attitude and Behavior survey of church leadership
20) Monthly planner
21) Volunteer Feedback Form
22) Volunteer Handbook template
23) Volunteer certificate templates

**Case Study Temples Interviews**

To protect the identity of the interviewees from the participating temples and their

volunteer programs, the three case study temples are labeled as Temple A, Temple B, and

Temple C, in no particular order. The case study temples' interview (Appendix A) had a total of

22 questions. Twelve of them were open-ended questions and ten were Yes or No question. All

three case study temples participated in this research (100% response rate). From these

interviews, only the relevant and applicable information about these temples' current volunteer

program has been summarized below for analysis.

*Temple A interview summary:*

Volunteer coordination is done centrally at Temple A. New volunteers are required to fill out volunteer registration forms, identifying their interests and skill-set. Temple A has approximately one thousand registered volunteers in their database. Approximately ten administrators are involved in managing and coordinating these volunteers.

Based on individual interests and skills volunteers are assigned roles in one or more functional committees. The chair of the functional committees announces volunteering opportunities to registered volunteers through email or via the temple priest before or after priestly rituals. New volunteers are recruited through direct contact or announcement on the temple's website.

There is no formal orientation program for new volunteers, but the Human Resources Service committee usually orients new volunteers and provides basic introduction at the temple's front office. The new volunteers are usually integrated into the organization by the chair of their respective functional committee and are introduced to other members of their committee. Occasionally, new volunteers are formally introduced during temple events. Senior volunteers of Temple A provide task-based and hands-on training to new volunteers within their functional committees, eventually forming mentor-mentee relationships.

Information about volunteers' jobs and tasks is maintained on paper by several functional committees. However, not all functional committees at Temple A have formal descriptions of volunteer jobs. For example, the decoration committee does not have a job description of a flower garland maker.

High-level information about volunteers' interests and skills is also maintained in Temple A's database. The executive committee of Temple A receives regular feedback from volunteers

through the functional committee chairs. Volunteers are encouraged to provide verbal or written comments about their volunteering experience during their regularly scheduled volunteer meetings.

Temple A has an annual volunteer recognition event during which individual and group volunteers are awarded gifts, certificates, or medals. The temple governance model also motivates volunteers by providing them the ability to run for temple committee/board elections after they have served the required number of years in progressively responsible volunteering roles.

Temple A requires a legal liability form to be filled out by youth and special-task (high risk) volunteers. The temple also has a general 'do and don't' list for devotees/volunteers. The temple does not conduct exit interviews for any volunteers who leave the organization.

The strength of Temple A's current volunteer program is attributed to the following:

1) Wide variety of volunteering opportunities

2) Commitment and support of the executive committee and chairs of functional committees

3) Inner motivation and dedication of volunteers

4) Divine power – volunteers become addicted to service; they keep coming back

*Temple B interview summary:*

Volunteer coordination is done centrally at Temple B for big events, but not for normal day-to-day volunteering tasks. Temple B does not have volunteer registration forms or a formal application process for volunteer jobs. The importance of volunteering and service is introduced at a very young age to all the members of Temple B. The temple has approximately 200 volunteers spread across five functional units and each unit is led by a leader, who also manages

and coordinates the volunteers.

New volunteers are recruited based on their interests and skills. The functional unit leaders announce new volunteering opportunities during the weekly temple assembly or spread the word through the temple administrator. Each of the functional unit leaders calls for monthly or bi-monthly volunteer meetings. Temple B has a computer database for all their general members, but does not have a separate database of volunteers or their interests and skills.

There is no formal orientation program for new volunteers, but new volunteers are formally introduced during the weekly temple assembly. To integrate new volunteers into the organization, the functional unit leaders orient new volunteers into their units, and encourage personal interaction with other volunteers within and across the units. Temple B participates in annual regional volunteer training sessions.

Occasionally, Temple B also hires industry experts to train volunteers in specific functional units. For example, food-carving experts are hired to offer a workshop to the kitchen unit volunteers. Functional unit leaders provide mentoring to all their volunteers.

Each functional unit has many sub-units that maintain in-depth or high-level records and information of their volunteer jobs and tasks. However, there are no formal descriptions of volunteer jobs in any of the functional units at this temple. Temple B's philosophy encourages volunteers to learn as they grow and most volunteers are naturally inclined towards their area of interest.

The functional unit leaders solicit feedback from volunteers during their regularly scheduled volunteer meetings, by informal supervision at big events, or through emails. The main coordinator of the temple receives regular feedback from functional unit leaders, volunteers, or general temple members.

Temple B has no formal volunteer recognition program, but volunteers are recognized during the weekly temple assembly. Volunteers at Temple B are motivated by the religious and spiritual teachings of this temple and their guru.

Depending on the tasks, some functional units require their volunteers to fill out the waiver of liability form. Temple B does not conduct exit interviews for any volunteers who leave the organization.

The strength of Temple B's current volunteer program is attributed to the following:

1) Wide variety of volunteering opportunities

2) Involvement regardless of age or gender

3) Inspiration and blessings of their guru

*Temple C interview summary:*

Volunteer coordination is done centrally at Temple C. New volunteers are required to fill out the volunteer registration form online or submit a hard copy. The registration form includes different functional teams of the temple, so volunteers can select the teams of their interest. The central volunteer coordination team consists of three administrators, who manage and coordinate with all the volunteers. The central volunteer coordination team forwards new volunteers' registration information to applicable functional team leads. Temple C has approximately 450 registered volunteers in their database, but not all of them are currently active.

The functional team leads announce volunteering opportunities to currently registered volunteers via mass mailings. Before any major events, functional leads also setup volunteer information booths or tables at the temple to inform devotees about upcoming volunteering opportunities. New volunteers are recruited through direct contact, announcements during events, or through volunteer information booth/table.

There is no formal orientation program for new volunteers, but Temple C plans to implement this soon. Currently, the central volunteer coordination team sends a welcome email to newly registered volunteers and provides them with basic information about what they can do in their capacity as temple volunteers. In order to integrate new volunteers into the organization the functional team leaders use and encourage personal interaction between them. There is no formal training or mentoring provided to volunteers, but informal mentoring happens all the time within and across the functional teams through personal interactions. All the functional team leads are very efficient about getting new volunteers engaged with the organization.

Information about active volunteers' jobs and tasks for some of the functional teams is maintained in the Temple's database, while for some other jobs and tasks the information is posted on Temple C's website. The teams that have well written jobs and tasks have a large number of registered volunteers. Additionally, the central volunteer coordinators maintain descriptions of event-based volunteer task information, which is sent out to registered volunteers before applicable events. Some functional teams also have detailed descriptions of volunteer jobs, which are maintained by their functional team lead. There are no regularly scheduled volunteer meetings, but such meetings are called on an as-needed basis. Communication to volunteers is mainly done through direct emails or phone calls.

High-level information about volunteers' interests and skills is maintained in Temple C's database. Some volunteers do not attach themselves to particular interest areas or functional teams, so they are part of the general category in the temple's database. The central volunteer coordinators solicit feedback from volunteers through feedback forms, which are mass mailed, after every medium-to-large scale event. Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback within their functional teams or to the temple board members. There is also a general suggestion box at

the temple and the temple website also has an online feedback form.

All the registered volunteers and their families are invited to either lunch or dinner for the 'Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day.' Individual volunteer recognition is encouraged within the functional teams after temple events. As a token of recognition, occasionally volunteers are also invited to perform deity rituals (aarti). The executive committee of Temple C motivates the volunteers by providing committed volunteers with opportunities to become event leads, functional team leads, or program managers. Along with general volunteering, Temple C's volunteers get an opportunity to improve their leadership and people skills.

Temple C has a legal liability waiver form for volunteers, but they currently do not use this form. Since Temple C is radically growing and is involved with many different activities, the central volunteer coordinators plan to enforce the liability form very soon. The temple does not conduct formal exit interviews, but if any volunteer leaves, a personal approach is used to solicit feedback about their volunteering experience at Temple C.

The strength of Temple C's current volunteer program is attributed to the following:

1) Temple's organizational structure

2) Highly educated group of young and talented volunteers

3) Open-minded and enthusiastic attitude of volunteers to performing the duties, while focusing on the betterment of the community

**FHT Needs Assessment Survey**

The needs assessment survey (Appendix B) for the FHT members had a total of 15 questions. Nine of them were 'Yes or No' questions and six were open-ended questions. The temple has approximately 1000 registered members in their database and a total of 113 members

responded to the survey (11% response rate). 54 out of 113 members completed the survey

online and 59 out of 113 members completed the survey face to face.

**Table 1: The tabulation of the nine Yes or No questions:**

| Appendix/ Question# | Survey Question | Yes | No | No Response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| B/ Q1 | Did you know that all the major activities at Fremont Hindu Temple are run and managed by volunteers? | 76 (67%) | 32 (28%) | 5 (4%) |
| B/ Q2 | Did you vote during the last temple elections? | 6 (5%) | 106 (94%) | 1 (1%) |
| B/ Q3 | Do you currently volunteer at the Fremont Hindu Temple? | 32 (28%) | 81 (72%) | 0 |
| B/ Q4 | Have you ever volunteered at the Fremont Hindu Temple in the past? | 60 (53%) | 53 (47%) | 0 |
| B/ Q5 | Do you know someone who currently volunteers at the Fremont Hindu Temple? | 75 (66%) | 37 (33%) | 1 (1%) |
| B/ Q7 | Do you currently volunteer at any other organizations? | 53 (47%) | 57 (50%) | 3 (3%) |
| B/ Q8 | Do you know someone who would like to become a volunteer at the Fremont Hindu Temple? | 32 (28%) | 77 (68%) | 4 (4%) |
| B/ Q10 | If the temple created a well-structured volunteer program, would you be interested to become a volunteer? | 82 (73%) | 16 (14%) | 15 (13%) |
| B/ Q11 | Should the temple continue to run and manage all its | 93 (82%) | 13 (12%) | 7 (6%) |

| | activities using volunteers? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

From the responses received for the six open-ended questions, only the relevant and applicable data for the purpose of the volunteer program needs assessment analysis has been summarized below:

When members were asked whether they are interested to volunteer at FHT (Appendix B, Question 6), 55 (49%) out of 113 members responded with a 'yes,' 37 (33%) members responded with a 'no,' and 21 (18%) members provided no response to this survey question. Those who responded with 'no' used the following common key phrases to describe their reason for not being able to volunteer at FHT:

- No spare time due to kids, family, school, or job
- Live too far away or moving away soon
- Politics at the temple
- Temple management
- No understanding of what help the temple needs
- Busy with other community projects or volunteering at another organization
- Do not drive

When members were asked whether the temple should improve its current volunteer program (Appendix B, Question 9), 40 (approximately. 35%) out of 113 members responded with a 'yes,' 14 (12%) members responded with a 'no,' 51(approximately 45%) members responded they were not aware of the current volunteer program, and 8 (approximately 7%) members responded with a non-applicable response related to the improvements needed in the operations and physical appearance of the temple. Those who responded with a 'yes' used the following common key phrases to describe the volunteer program areas that need improvement:

- Make it more streamlined and visible
- Provide a list of possible volunteer jobs and time requirements

- Program awareness, publicity, management, and organization
- Give more responsibility and freedom to volunteers
- Bulletin board, email announcements, or website postings of a uniform list of volunteer needs/opportunities
- Flow of information between volunteers and management
- Unity and friendliness among volunteers
- Volunteering schedules, communication, and correspondence
- Integrate new volunteers without alienating long time volunteers
- Organize the volunteer group and elect a leader for the group
- Maintain the volunteer database
- Accountability, ownership, and better communication
- Introduce programs for young volunteers, and young and senior joint volunteer programs
- Make all information available online
- Online volunteering opportunities
- Volunteer training on hygiene for handling food in the kitchen
- Volunteer recognition
- Use non-compensatory motivational gestures for volunteers
- Reach out to the community by clearly communicating volunteers need and skills needed

When members were asked how the temple should recruit, train, and retain the best volunteers (Appendix B, Question 12), 57 (approximately 50%) out of 113 members provided a response, 51(approximately 45%) members provided no response, and 5 (approximately 4%) members provided a non-applicable response related to the other improvements needed in the operations and physical appearance of the temple. Those who provided a response used the following common key phrases to describe how the temple should recruit, train, and retain the best volunteers:

- Create overall strategy, roadmap, structure, schedule of the program and execute it
- Choose good reliable persons, encourage and appreciate them
- Give basic expectations for volunteers
- Create a volunteer manual
- Understand the serving motive of volunteers, by proper screening
- Awareness, publicity and marketing of volunteer program and volunteer positions,
- Through temple website and word of mouth (informally)
- Have or follow some best practice
- Discipline, respect, and understanding
- Keep things simple, encourage open communication, manage finances efficiently

- Youth groups will be great volunteers for the temple
- Have role models to lead or channelize efforts
- Recruit teens and adults from Indian communities
- Organize volunteer orientation, information sessions, workshops, meetings, boot camp training, shadowing, and mentoring
- Base the selection and assignment of duties on personal contact, expertise, skills, devotion, and dedication
- Treat volunteers better, listen to them, have faith and trust them
- Lead, unite, and create a sense of community
- Provide volunteer recognition and leadership opportunities to young volunteers
- Provide a uniform look to volunteer groups
- Offer non-monetary, religious incentives to volunteers

When members were asked about the one positive change they would like to see in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers (Appendix B, Question 13), 22 (approximately 19%) out of 113 members provided a response, 75 (approximately 66%) members provided no response, and 16 (approximately 14%) members provided a non-applicable response related to the other improvements needed in the operations and physical appearance of the temple. Those who provided a response used the following common key phrases to describe the one positive change they would like to see in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers:

- More visibility of volunteers and the volunteer program
- Special name tags for volunteers
- Structured training
- Volunteer committee or forum
- Volunteer leader or coordinator,
- Unity among volunteers
- Better organization, planning, information, direction, and communication
- Systematic selection of volunteers, skill based assignment of work, and proper time scheduling
- Pay more attention to volunteers, give them more responsibility and freedom
- Bring in the "cool" factor to volunteering at the temple
- Bring a sense of community
- More volunteers in the kitchen
- Eradicate power hungry individuals
- Transparency regarding ownership and accountability of tasks

When members were asked about the need to allocate a budget for volunteer program management (Appendix B, Question 14), 41(36%) out of 113 members responded with a 'yes,' 18 (16%) members responded with a 'no,' and 54 (48%) members provided no response. Those who responded with a 'yes' used the following common key phrases to describe the need to allocate a budget for volunteer program management:

- Provide a clear picture of the activities, how much money is needed for it, and where to spend that money
- Program management, planning, and organization
- Volunteer training
- Based on overall strategy of the temple
- Allocate money for appreciation and non-cash reward activities
- For accessories, stationary, and refreshments
- Help structure the program
- Procuring materials for volunteering activities
- Reduce liability to the temple
- Get a responsive and responsible full time paid volunteer coordinator at the initial stage of the program

When members were asked about current activities of the temple that can be better performed by a paid employee instead of a volunteer (Appendix B, Question 15), 30 (27%) out of 113 members provided a response, 58 (51%) members provided no response, and 25 (22%) members provided a non-applicable response related to the other improvements needed in the operations and physical appearance of the temple. Those who provided a response used the following key phrases to describe the activities of the temple that can be performed better by a paid employee instead of a volunteer:

- Parking management
- Office and administrative work
- Temple security
- Religious rituals
- Professionals for special activities
- Funds management

- Program management and implementation
- Volunteer program management and volunteer coordination
- Sanitation, cleaning, and housekeeping work
- Raising and securing funds
- Floor planning, interior designing, and aesthetics improvement work
- Building maintenance
- Cultural programs and educational programs
- Managing and running the recently opened temple store

**FHT Needs Assessment Interviews**

The needs assessment interview (Appendix C) for the FHT management board, administrators, and priests had a total of 14 questions. Thirteen of them were open-ended questions and one was a 'yes or no' question. The temple has thirteen people on the management board, three administrators, and four priests. Out of these twenty people, eleven participated in the needs assessment interview (55% response rate).

From these interviews, only the data relevant and applicable to this research has been summarized below for the volunteers/volunteer program needs assessment analysis.

When interviewees were asked to name three day-to-day operational areas of the temple that could utilize good volunteers (Appendix C, Question 1), all of them provided an answer. They used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Prasad distribution
- Deity sanctum cleaning
- Deity ritual preparation, ritual utensils cleaning
- Shoe racks
- Temple gift shop
- Ushering devotees (forming proper lines and maintaining silence)

When interviewees were asked during what activities and events are volunteers needed the

most (Appendix C, Question 2), all of them provided an answer. They used the following

common key phrases in their answer:

- On free meal days - Tuesday evenings, Thursdays evenings and Sundays afternoons
- All Hindu festival and temple celebration days (for set up, wrap up, cooking and serving food, ushering, parking and shoe racks)
- Group ritual days

When interviewees were asked whether the temple should centrally recruit and manage

volunteers (Appendix C, Question 3), all of them provided the same answer: Yes. They used the

following common key phrases in their answer:

- Giving structure enables proper planning, and easy execution
- Every committee does not need to find and manage its own volunteers
- All volunteers should be accounted for, and their time and tasks must be managed effectively and efficiently
- Proper organization of the volunteer operations, and avoiding chaos

When interviewees were asked whether the temple should create a formal database of

volunteers with their interests and skills (Appendix C, Question 4), all of them provided the same

answer: Yes. They used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Streamline areas of interest
- Assigning volunteers best suited for the task
- Motivates volunteers to take up the jobs they like
- Searching volunteers will be quick
- Full and appropriate utilization of volunteers

When interviewees were asked about the type of volunteers needed at the temple, and the

best way to find them (Appendix C, Question 5), all of them provided an answer. They used the

following common key phrases in their answer:

- All types of volunteers are needed

- Religious and devoted people with good interpersonal skills, who are honest, dependable, hard-working, regular, energetic, and humble
- Do not want anything in return, people with a selfless motive to serve
- Have adequate time and are committed to the job
- Close vicinity
- Frequently visit the temple
- Among temple members
- Proper screening process
- Publicity of volunteer positions among temple members

When interviewees were asked what type of volunteers should be recruited and retained (Appendix C, Question 6), ten interviewees provided an answer, while one interviewee provided no answer. Those who provided an answered used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Devotion, selfless service, people skills, resourceful, enthusiastic,
- Works for the temple's benefit
- Retain according to skills and need

When interviewees were asked how the temple could prevent the loss of willing volunteers (Appendix C, Question 7), all of them provided an answer. They used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Treat them with respect, and respect their time and work
- Put them in a roles/tasks where they want to be
- Keep them engaged
- Regular meetings, recognition, and appreciation
- Training and orientation
- Provide mentors, and on-the-job learning opportunities
- Clearly organize tasks, responsibilities, and expectations
- Receptive to new ideas and ways of working
- Provide incentives - free pooja (deity ritual)
- Be prompt in resolving conflict and confusion
- Flexibility
- Empower them with some level of authority and accountability
- Rules and regulations
- Teaching about the benefits of service

When interviewees were asked how the temple should solicit feedback from existing volunteers and their volunteering experience (Appendix C, Question 8), ten interviewees provided an answer, while one interviewee provided no answer. Those who provided an answer used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- During meetings
- Anonymous feedback forms
- Personal emails and calls
- Volunteer organization

When interviewees were asked whether the temple should involve volunteers in strategic decision making processes (Appendix C, Question 9), ten interviewees answered 'yes,' while one interviewee answered 'no.' Those who provided an answer used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- They are in direct touch with the public
- If they have that type of talent/skills
- To keep them in the loop/informed on strategic direction of the temple
- Catch loopholes that management may miss

When interviewees were asked whether the temple should provide volunteer orientation and/or training sessions (Appendix C, Question 10), all interviewees answered 'yes.'

When interviewees were asked whether there is a need to allocate a budget for volunteer program management (Appendix C, Question 11), ten interviewees answered, 'yes,' while one interviewee answered 'no.' Those who answered 'yes' used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Volunteer training

- Program expense
- Expense for volunteer identification badges

When interviewees were asked about current activities of the temple that could be performed better by a paid employee instead of a volunteer (Appendix C, Question 12), all of them provided an answer, but four of them provided a non-applicable answer. Those who provided applicable answers used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Security
- Cooking
- Front office
- Maintenance

When interviewees were asked about one positive change that they would like to see in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers (Appendix C, Question 13), all of them provided an answer, but two of them provided a non-applicable answer. Those who provided applicable answers used the following common key phrases in their answer:

- Formal database of volunteers
- Communication with volunteers
- Committed and motivated volunteers
- Volunteer coordinator
- Regular meetings of volunteers
- Volunteer appreciation and respect
- Volunteer committee

When interviewees were asked how the temple should recruit, train, and retain the best volunteers (Appendix C, Question 14), all of them provided an answer, but three of them provided a non-applicable answer. Those who provided applicable answers used the following key phrases in their answer:

- Skill based work
- Motivation and recognition

- Communication
- Training and mentoring
- Respect for each other
- Regular meetings
- Volunteer coordinator
- Getting volunteers involved in the tasks they love
- Show that 'service to god is service to the community'
- Develop clear policies
- Formalize volunteer activity
- Advertise
- Form volunteer committee

## Analysis

### Online Study of Best Practices

By utilizing the online best practices described in the findings section, firstly, FHT can create a computerized database of volunteers, volunteer positions, and volunteer job descriptions. FHT will be able to discover people's passion/interest, gifts, skills, and abilities by using the invitation, application, assessment, and interview process. Hence FHT will be able to recruit willing and top quality volunteers, and match them to the appropriate volunteer positions.

Secondly, FHT will be able assess its current volunteers' skills/abilities and will be able to fill the gap with appropriate training and orientation. FHT will be able to develop a volunteerism culture that compliments its vision, mission, and operations. Timely and ongoing access to training resources will allow FHT's volunteer leaders to stay updated on the latest and greatest trends/tools for the volunteers.

Thirdly, FHT will be able to develop a culture of appreciation, recognition, motivation, encouragement, feedback, and evaluation. FHT will also be able to understand the needs of the organization from the volunteers' perspective and make necessary changes. Hence FHT will succeed in making the volunteers feel valued by letting them know how their contribution is making a positive difference in the organization and the community.

Fourthly, FHT will be able to connect volunteers to the range of service opportunities available in the organization. FHT will be able to create a strong sense of belongingness between the volunteers and the organization by building teams to create community, support, and energy.

Fifthly, FHT will be able to implement and document necessary risk management and liability reduction tools, policies, processes, and procedures to protect the organization and its members, including the volunteers.

Finally, by hiring a paid volunteer program coordinator, FHT will be able to bring in a committed expert to provide structure and continuity to its volunteer program. An experienced volunteer program coordinator can use the free online resources for scheduling, coordinating, managing volunteers and in turn save FHT a lot of resources, time and energy. Overall, the FHT volunteer program coordinator can use the five best practice categories (recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect) described in the "Online Study of Best Practices" section as a framework to create a highly effective volunteer program that reinforces the joy of service among FHT members.

**Case Study Temples Interviews**

All the three case study temples currently have a large number of committed volunteers. Based on the summarized information in the findings section, this large pool of committed volunteers can be attributed to the following common factors found among all the three temples:

1) Dedicated team to centrally coordinate volunteers
2) Volunteer recruitment and task assignment based on the interests and skills of the volunteers
3) Organizational structure facilitates interest and skill based volunteering
4) Strong functional team leads, who closely work with their volunteers
5) Wide variety of volunteering opportunities
6) Availability of different channels to communicate regularly with current and potential volunteers
7) Formal or informal platforms for volunteers' orientation, training, mentoring, recognition, and motivation
8) Appropriate record keeping of volunteers' job and task information, job descriptions, and contact information
9) Ongoing support of executive board members

Similar to the three case study temples, FHT currently has the organizational structure that can facilitate interest and skill based volunteering. FHT's management board is comprised of different functional committees, but it lacks a critical committee to coordinate volunteers that are needed by other functional committees. If FHT adds a functional committee dedicated to

volunteer program management, it will open up a new channel for existing functional committee chairs to better leverage current and potential volunteers.

The other functional committee chairs can work with the volunteer program management committee to forecast on-going and event-based volunteering needs of the temple. FHT can also benefit by creating a central volunteers' database to track their interests and skills, job and task information, job description, and contact information. The volunteers' database will help FHT get the right volunteers at the right time. It will also help FHT to match up senior volunteers with new volunteers depending on their interests and skill-set; hence facilitating informal training and mentoring within the temple. A dedicated volunteer program management committee can also help establish various communication channels between the functional committees of the temple and the current and potential volunteers. A central point of contact will also prevent the loss of willing volunteers. Therefore, a central volunteer program management committee is essential for FHT to successfully recruit, train, coordinate, and retain volunteers.

**FHT Needs Assessment Survey**

Based on the data in Table 1, approximately twenty-eight percent (28%) of the surveyed members do not know that FHT is a volunteer-based organization (Appendix B, Question 1). Only twenty-eight percent (28%) of the surveyed members currently volunteer at FHT (Appendix B, Question 3). However, fifty-three percent (53%) of the surveyed members have volunteered at FHT in the past (Appendix B, Question 4). This clearly shows that there has been a decrease in the availability of volunteers at FHT in the past few years. But seventy-three percent (73%) of the surveyed members are interested in volunteering at FHT, if a well-structured volunteer program is created (Appendix B, Question 10). Twenty-eight percent (28%)

of the surveyed members know someone who would be interested in becoming an FHT volunteer (Appendix B, Question 8). Eighty-two percent (82%) of the surveyed members agreed that FHT should continue to run and manage all its activities using volunteers (Appendix B, Question 11).

Additionally the percentages of non-applicable survey responses for Appendix B's open-ended Question 9, Question 12, Question 13, and Question 15 indicate a need to allocate more resources, possibly volunteers, for the other improvements needed in the operations and physical appearance of the temple.  Hence, FHT has several needs for volunteers and also has an immediate opportunity to leverage this good number of willing members for volunteerism opportunities at the temple.

The high percentages (44% to 66%) of no responses to the open-ended Question 12, Question 13, Question 14, and Question 15 from Appendix B indicate the possibility that the surveyed members probably did not have enough information to comment on these questions. It could also possibly indicate that there is no general awareness among FHT members about its current volunteer program.  Question 9's forty-five percent (45%) response about "no awareness about the current volunteer program" and Question 6's common key phrases about "no understanding of what help the temple needs" confirms the need for FHT to regularly publicize its volunteer program and volunteer needs to the members of the temple.

The common key phrases summarized for Appendix B Question 9, Question 12, and Question 13 to describe the volunteer program areas that need improvement and how the temple should recruit, train and retain the best volunteers, as well as the one positive change in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers, can be assigned to any of the five best practice categories that were found on the CVC website. For example, "provide a list of possible volunteer jobs and time requirements" from Question 9, "understand the serving motive of

volunteers, by proper screening" from Question 12, and "systematic selection of volunteers, skill based assignment of work, and proper time scheduling" from Question 13 can be assigned to the "recruit" category. Moreover, some of the common key phrases summarized for Question 9, Question 12, and Question 13 overlap and complement each other. For example, the key phrase from Question 12 that says," provide a uniform look to volunteer groups" overlaps and complements the key phrases from Question 9 and Question 13, which talk about volunteer recognition and special name tags for volunteers.

Therefore, the results and the key phrases of the general members' needs assessment survey are directly pointing towards the need to better organize, manage, and lead the volunteers and the volunteer program. As the response rate and the key phrases of Appendix B Question 14 and Question 15 indicate, FHT needs to allocate a small budget for volunteer program management and possibly hire a paid volunteer program coordinator, who can build a core structure for FHT's volunteer program using CVC's five best practice categories: recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect.

**FHT Needs Assessment Interviews**

The key phrases summarized for Appendix C Question 1 and Question 2 indicate that there is a clear need for more volunteers for many of the day-to-day operational areas of the temple, as well as during special events and activities at the temple. The key phrases summarized for Appendix C Question 13 confirms the lack of a structured and coherent organization for volunteers at FHT. In Appendix C Question 3 and 4, all the interviewees agreed that the temple should centrally recruit and manage volunteers and create a formal database of volunteers based on their interests and skills. This indicates that the current management board, administrators,

and priests acknowledge the value of and the need for streamlining volunteer coordination/management and assigning skill-based work to volunteers. On the other hand, the key phrases summarized for Appendix C Question 12 identify the jobs that can be better performed by a paid employee instead of a volunteer at FHT.

The key phrases summarized for Appendix C Question 5 and Question 6 indicate the type of volunteers needed at FHT. Through clear job descriptions, publicity of volunteer jobs, and an appropriate screening process, FHT can recruit and retain the best fitted volunteers for day-to-day operational areas, and special events and activities at the temple. The key phrases summarized for Appendix C Question 7 and Question 14 cover all the five best practice categories described on the CVC website. For example, the key phrases "be prompt in resolving conflict and confusion" from Question 7 and "develop clear policies" from Question 14 can be assigned to the "protect" category. Hence, it can be concluded that FHT has a need to make improvement efforts in all of the five best practice categories: recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect.

The answers received for Appendix C Questions 8, Question 9, Question 10, and Question 11 confirm that there is a general consensus among the interviewees about the importance of volunteer feedback and involvement in the strategic decision making processes, volunteer training and orientation, and the allocation of a budget for the volunteer program management.

Therefore, the results and key phrases from the management board's, administrators', and priests' needs assessment interview are directly pointing towards the need to better organize, manage, and lead the volunteers and the volunteer program. As the key phrases for Appendix C Question 13 and Question 14 indicate, FHT needs to appoint a volunteer program coordinator

and create a volunteer committee to provide strategic direction and advice to the volunteer

program coordinator to build a structured volunteer program using CVC's five best practice

categories: recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect.

# Recommendations

Based on the analysis of FHT's current needs with all the collective best practices that were gathered through the online study of CVC and case studies of three other temples, below is the list of recommendations, in sequential order, for FHT to improve its current volunteer program and the way it currently manages volunteers:

1) Volunteer program management should be made a permanent agenda topic on the weekly FHT management board meetings.

2) Under the above mentioned agenda topic, FHT management board should address the need for allocating budget for volunteer program management, centrally recruiting and managing volunteers, creating a functional committee for volunteer program management, and appointing/employing an experienced volunteer program coordinator.

3) FHT management board should develop a job description for the volunteer program coordinator's position. A paid part-time position for the volunteer program coordinator is highly recommended.

4) All the existing functional committee chairs should actively participate in the recruitment and screening of the volunteer program coordinator because this position is expected to work very closely with all the committee chairs to fulfill the on-going volunteering needs of each functional unit.

5) FHT management board should set a time bound goal to: a) allocate budget for volunteer program management, b) form the volunteer program management committee, and c) appoint the volunteer program coordinator.

6) FHT management board should ask all existing functional committee chairs to create a preliminary list of volunteer jobs and tasks in their respective functional units. This

preliminary list should include the required skill-set, job and task frequency, and time duration.

7) FHT management board should assign one of the three full-time administrators the task of creating a simple database of volunteers in Microsoft Excel. The file should have the following fields: First Name, Last Name, Home Address, Phone Number, Email Address, Area of Interest, Special Skills, and Time Availability for Service.

8) The above mentioned administrator should be temporarily placed in charge of the volunteers' database until a volunteer program coordinator is appointed.

9) To encourage/motivate the currently active FHT volunteers and new volunteers to formally register their names in the newly created volunteers' database, FHT management board should arrange a date and time for a free group ritual just for registered volunteers. FHT management board should schedule one of the four full-time priests to conduct the free group ritual for volunteers.

10) The administrator in-charge of the above mentioned volunteers' database should invite currently active volunteers and new volunteers to register their names in the newly created database and invite them to participate in the free group ritual for volunteers by: a) sending a time-bound announcement on the temple's email subscription list, b) posting flyers on various bulletin boards throughout the temple, and c) making verbal announcements during general assembly.

11) FHT management board should solicit self nominations from registered volunteers to be part of the new functional committee for volunteer program management.

12) Once the volunteer program coordinator is appointed, he/she must immediately work on the following:

a) Fulfill volunteer needs for temple gift shop, ushering, shoe racks, cooking and serving food, and deity ritual preparation and cleanup, especially on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Sundays, Hindu festival days, and group ritual days.

b) Provide a uniform look to all volunteers through name tags or badges, and possibly dress regulations

c) Improve communication between volunteers, management board, and members

13) The volunteer program coordinator should work closely with other functional committee chairs and the volunteer program management committee to plan and streamline all areas of volunteer program management at FHT. Special focus should be given to CVC's five best practice categories: recruit, train, retain, lead, and protect, including use of documentation that is covered in this paper.

14) The volunteer program coordinator should take the ownership of maintaining the newly created volunteers' database and expand it to include volunteer jobs and tasks, position descriptions, training information, and other relevant data.

15) The volunteer program coordinator should form partnerships with other Bay Area temples' volunteer program coordinators for sharing knowledge, experience, expertise, and resources, and creating inter-organization networking, training and mentoring opportunities for volunteers.

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# APPENDIX A

## Case Study Temples' Interview

1) How many registered volunteers do you currently have?

2) Is volunteer coordination done centrally in your organization? Yes or No

3) How many administrators are involved in managing/coordinating volunteers?

4) How and where do you maintain volunteers' contact information?

5) Do you have regularly scheduled meetings with your volunteers? Yes or No

6) How do you solicit feedback from volunteers about their experience in working with your organization?

7) How do you manage and record volunteers' job and/or task information?

8) Do you have formal descriptions for volunteer jobs? If yes, how and where is this data maintained and by whom?

9) Do you have formal applications process for volunteer jobs? Yes or No

10) How do you communicate the availability of a volunteer opportunity to currently registered volunteers?

11) How do you recruit new volunteers?

12) Does your organization have formal volunteer orientations or introductions? Yes or No

13) How are new volunteers introduced and integrated into your organization?

14) Do you provide any training or mentoring to your volunteers? Yes or No

15) Are volunteers matched to jobs and tasks that match their interests and/or skills? Yes or No

16) Do you maintain records or database of volunteers' interest and skills? Yes or No

17) Are there any recognition programs for volunteers? Yes or No

18) How do you motivate and reward volunteers?

19) When volunteers leave, do you conduct exist interviews? Yes or No

20) What are the strengths of your current volunteer program?

21) Do you require volunteers to sign a waiver of liability form or any other legal forms to reduce risk for your organization? Yes or No

22) Name three things that you would recommend to religious non-profits, especially Hindu Temples in the Bay Area, to create a successful volunteer program.

## FHT Members' Survey

*Please read each question carefully and fill in the appropriate answer to each question. The purpose of the research project is to investigate best practices of managing volunteer programs in religious non-profits. This is a needs assessment survey geared towards Fremont Hindu Temple's current volunteer program. The purpose of this research is educational and the details of this anonymous survey will not be shared with the Fremont Hindu Temple. Only generalized recommendations for volunteer program improvement will be shared with Fremont Hindu Temple, if they request such information.*

*Your completion of the survey indicates your willingness of participation. Please keep this information for your records and do not write any information that could identify you on the survey. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.*

1) Did you know that all the major activities at Fremont Hindu Temple are run and managed by volunteers? Yes or No

2) Did you vote at the last temple elections? Yes or No

3) Do you currently volunteer at the Fremont Hindu Temple? Yes or No

4) Have you ever volunteered at the Fremont Hindu Temple in the past? Yes or No

5) Do you know someone who currently volunteers at the Fremont Hindu Temple? Yes or No

6) Are you interested to become a volunteer at the Fremont Hindu Temple? If no, please provide a reason _____

7) Do you currently volunteer at any other organizations? Yes or No

8) Do you know someone who would like to become at volunteer at the Fremont Hindu Temple? Yes or No

9) Should the temple improve its current volunteer program? Please explain which areas need improvement _____

10) If the temple created a well-structured volunteer program, would you be interested to become a volunteer? Yes or No

11) Should the temple continue to run and manage all its activities using volunteers? Yes or No

12) How should the temple recruit, train, and retain the best volunteers? Please explain.

_____

13) What is one positive change you would like to see in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers? Please explain _____

14) Is there a need to allocate budget for volunteer program management? Please explain why or why not _____

15) What current activities of the temple can be performed better by a paid employee instead of a volunteer? Please explain _____

# APPENDIX C
## FHT Interview

1) Name three day-to-day operational areas of the temple that can utilize good volunteers.

2) During what activities and events are volunteers needed the most?

3) Should the temple centrally recruit and manage volunteers? Please explain why or why not.

4) Should the temple create formal database of volunteers with their interests and skills? Please explain why or why not.

5) What types of volunteers does the temple need? Where and how can we find them?

6) What types of volunteers should the temple recruit and retain? Please explain why.

7) How can the temple prevent the loss of willing volunteers?

8) How should the temple solicit feedback from existing volunteers and their volunteering experience?

9) Should the temple involve volunteers in strategic decision making processes at the temple? Please explain why or why not.

10) Should the temple provide volunteer orientation and/or training sessions?

11) Is there a need to allocate budget for volunteer program management? Please explain why or why not.

12) What current activities of the temple can be performed better by a paid employee instead of a volunteer? Please explain why.

13) What is one positive change you would like to see in the way the temple currently manages its volunteers?

14)  How should the temple recruit, train, and retain the best volunteers?

**Email Script Case Study Temples**

Dear Temple Administrator,

I am a graduate student at San Jose State University, pursuing my Masters in Public Administration. As part of my graduate program research project, I would like to set up a personal interview with your organization's volunteer program coordinator/administrator. The purpose of my research project is to investigate best practices of managing volunteer programs in religious non-profits.

The interview questions will be geared towards understanding the basic components of your current volunteer program. Participation in the interview is voluntary and there is no compensation for participation. The approximate duration of the interview is one hour. By participating in this research, you will be contributing to the generalizable knowledge of volunteerism and volunteer program management at Hindu temples in the Bay Area. Please direct me to the appropriate person in your organization who can participate in this research and/or provide me an appointment for in-person interview.

Please feel free to reply back to this email or call me at xxx-xxx-xxxx if you have any questions about this research project.

Thank you,

Twinki Mistry

## APPENDIX E

### Survey Consent Script FHT members

Dear Fremont Temple Member,

This survey is conducted by Twinki Mistry, a graduate student at San Jose State University as part of a research project. The purpose of the research project is to investigate best practices of managing volunteer programs in religious non-profits. This is a needs assessment survey geared towards Fremont Hindu Temple's current volunteer program. The purpose of this research is educational and the details of this anonymous survey will not be shared with the Fremont Hindu Temple. Only generalized recommendations for volunteer program improvement will be shared with Fremont Hindu Temple, if they request such information.

There is no compensation for participating in this survey. There are no direct benefits of this research for you. The indirect benefit of this research is that it will be adding to generalizable knowledge of volunteerism and volunteer program management at Hindu temples in the Bay Area.

Questions about this research may be addressed to Twinki Mistry at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Complaints about this research may be presented to Dr. Frances Edwards, MPA Program Director, Department of Political Science/College of Social Sciences, San Jose State University, at 408-924-5559. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at 408-924-2427.

Your completion of the survey indicates your willingness of participation. Please keep this information for your records and do not write any information that could identify you on the survey.

Thanks,

Twinki Mistry

## Agreement to Participate in Research

**Researcher/Investigator:** Twinki Mistry (MPA student, San Jose State University)

**Title of Study:** Fremont Hindu Temple – Volunteer Program

1. You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the best practices of managing volunteer programs in religious non-profit organizations.
2. In a personal interview format, you will be asked to verbally provide the basic information and components about the current volunteer program at your organization. The researcher will take hand-written notes about your responses. No audio/video recording device will be used in this interview. The estimated time for the interview is 10 to 15 minutes.
3. No risks are anticipated in this research. The purpose of this research is educational and the details of this interview will not be shared with the Fremont Hindu Temple. Only generalized recommendations for volunteer program improvement will be shared with Fremont Hindu Temple, if they request such information. This research will not negatively harm your organization or lure away your existing volunteers.
4. There are no direct benefits of this research for you or your organization. The indirect benefit of this research is that it will be adding to generalizable knowledge of volunteerism and volunteer program management at Hindu temples in the Bay Area.
5. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. The researcher will maintain confidentiality using coding system.
6. There is no compensation for participating in this research.
7. Questions about this research may be addressed to Twinki Mistry at xxx-xxx-xxxx. Complaints about this research may be presented to Dr. Frances Edwards, MPA Program Director, Department of Political Science/College of Social Sciences, San Jose State University, at 408-924-5559. Questions about research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at 408-924-2427.
8. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in this study.
9. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or part of the study. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at anytime without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or with Hindu temples in the Bay Area
10. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the researcher.

- The signature of a subject/participant on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.
- The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the below named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

_____          _____

Participant's Signature                                    Date

_____          _____

Investigator's Signature                                    Date