

# **‘BOOMNET’**

## **Capturing the Baby Boomer Volunteers** **A 2001 Research Project into Baby Boomers and Volunteering**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**By Judy Esmond, Ph.D.**

PO Box 402 Victoria Park WA 6979  
Phone: (08) 9361 9339 Mobile 0407 191 565  
Fax: (08) 9361 2836 Email: [judy@mtd4u.com](mailto:judy@mtd4u.com)

**‘BOOMNET’**  
**Capturing the Baby Boomer Volunteers**  
**A 2001 Research Project into Baby Boomers and Volunteering**

**Executive Summary**

In 2001, the Department of Premier and Cabinet in partnership with the Office of Seniors Interests in Western Australia, commissioned TEAM CONSULTANTS, under the direction of principal researcher, Judy Esmond, Ph.D. to conduct a research project into ‘Baby Boomers and Volunteering’. The research aimed to identify the ‘motivators and barriers’ to volunteering and strategies to encourage Baby Boomers to volunteer their services in the community.

The research methodology combined a review of the literature, individual interviews, creativity sessions and focus group discussions. The findings highlighted seven strategic focus areas on which organisations would need to concentrate in order to optimise their prospects of recruiting Baby Boomers as volunteers. These are presented in the report under the acronym BOOMNET:

**B - Boomers**  
**O - Organised**  
**O - Openness**  
**M - Meaningful**  
**N - Needs**  
**E - Education**  
**T - Time**

**B** is for understanding the aspirations and characteristics of the Baby Boomers themselves (born between 1946 and 1963) and was the first of the seven strategic focus areas. Baby Boomers do see themselves becoming more involved in volunteering in the future, and have clear ideas about what they expect from their volunteering experiences.

**O** is for organised, professional and well managed organisations. Baby Boomers will re-shape and re-define many organisations in the non-profit sector as they will not volunteer for, or continue with, organisations that cannot provide a professional service not only to their clients, but also to their volunteers.

**O** is for openness and a supportive organisational environment where volunteers are truly valued. This third strategic focus area covered a range of issues regarding ‘openness’, including evaluation and feedback; cliques; support; insurance; occupational health and safety; and the valuing of volunteers. In this regard, the key elements present in successful organisations were: (i) an in-built, planned and on-going process of consultation with and evaluation by their volunteers; and (ii) a real valuing and appreciation of volunteers by everyone in the organisation.

**M** is for meaningful, interesting, creative and challenging volunteering opportunities being offered to Baby Boomer volunteers by organisations.

**N** is for meeting the needs of Baby Boomer volunteers as they are now asking: “Will this volunteering experience meet my own personal needs, not just the organisation’s needs?”

**E** is for education rather than simply ‘traditional’ training, as Baby Boomers are interested in education and learning opportunities that develop their own skills, benefiting themselves and the organisation. Successful organisations need to monitor and evaluate, in consultation with volunteers, whether the training is needed, effective, relevant and above all, well presented.

**T** is for time, as Baby Boomers feel they do not have enough time to volunteer. They are increasingly unlikely to commit for the long term. Organisations need to develop a range of volunteering opportunities that are short term, time specific and flexible.

This research found that for Baby Boomers, if the seven strategic focus areas identified by the acronym BOOMNET are not in place, it does not matter what the initial motivations or needs of the volunteer were, they are unlikely to commence or continue volunteer work for that organisation. This was regardless of the age of the Baby Boomer volunteers or whether they were located in urban or rural areas.

Other concerns were also identified for rural volunteers including issues of: distance and isolation, dwindling numbers and feeling unsupported as they were volunteering across a large number of organisations. Also, it was found that although many indigenous and ethnic community members were involved in voluntary effort, this was of an informal and family focussed nature and was not recorded. Further research using different terminology to define ‘a volunteer’ is required.

Overall, the research found that the time to begin planning to recruit the huge pool of potential Baby Boomer volunteers is now and it is recommended that organisations follow the ‘blueprint’ that emerged from this report in the acronym BOOMNET to ensure their future recruitment success.