

A smiling man with glasses and a striped shirt is the central focus of the image. He is in a workshop or training environment, with other people blurred in the background. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Transactional vs. Transformative Volunteering

Volunteer Leader Training Aid

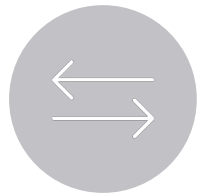


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Transactional vs. Transformative Volunteering

When we apply the **Transformative Approach** to volunteering, our social impact activities have the potential to shift how people think and act, to evolve how we see ourselves and others, and to genuinely experience lasting change.



TRANSACTIONAL VOLUNTEERING

The focus is the **task** (a “transaction”).



Volunteering is a way to “**help**”, “**give back**” and “**make a difference**.”



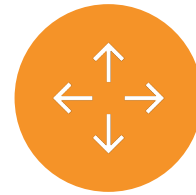
Projects can **divide people** into the “haves” and the “have nots”.



Activities are **unlikely to change lives** of the participants.



vs.



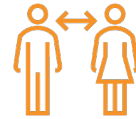
TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING



The focus is change. The focus is **people**.



Volunteering is a way to deepen **empathy**.



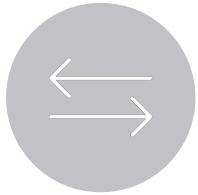
Projects may unlock the potential for **lasting relationships**.



Activities have potential to **shift** how participants **think and act**.

The Problem with Transactional Volunteering

Transactional volunteering focuses on “helping”, “giving back” or “making a difference”. **This is hugely appealing to corporate or organizational volunteering programs** – we want people who participate to feel good. None of these outcomes on their own are bad – in fact, they’re great! **But they are all too often prioritized at the expense of nonprofits and the exclusion of communities.** This is when transactional volunteering becomes a **problem**.



TRANSACTIONAL VOLUNTEERING

There’s nothing wrong with a transaction when it’s what’s needed or wanted.



Sometimes, a transaction in the context of volunteering is an **agreement two valued partners make** between each other.



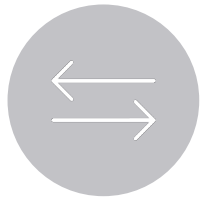
Sometimes, a non-profit just **needs a job done** – quickly and efficiently – without the burden of an ongoing relationship.



But other times, transactions in the context of volunteering are a **problem**.

The Problem with Transactional Volunteering

As Social Impact professionals and employee volunteer leaders, it's important that we internalize our own understanding of the potential problems transactional volunteering can create. **When have you experienced transactional volunteering that does not produce a positive outcome for the community or the participants?**



TRANSACTIONAL VOLUNTEERING

When are transactions in the context of volunteering a problem?



Problem #1: The Helper is in power.

Solution: Our programs must be designed to benefit all participants. When we go into a situation expecting to both give and receive, we take an important step toward equity.

Problem #2: Transactions are labeled as “relationships”.

Solution: Like any healthy relationship, we must prioritize: 1. gaining a shared understanding of needs; 2. agreeing that all parties are comfortable meeting the other's needs.

Problem #3: Events are reported as impact.

Solution: Design programs to achieve societal impact that takes place well beyond the timeframe of volunteer events.

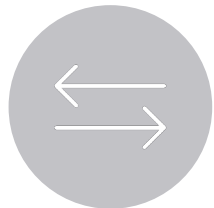


The Problem with Transactional Volunteering

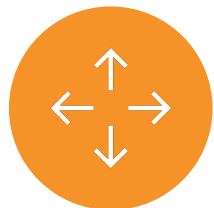
Often, when we become a Social Impact professional, we're so happy to finally have a fulfilling and meaningful job that we expect it to be easy. And really, how hard can it be? Doing good is doing good. But, CSR, ESG, Corporate Citizenship, Community Engagement, Social Impact...they're complicated. **The way to maintain your sanity through all the confusion is to understand the overarching objectives that guides them all.**



CORPORATE
VOLUNTEERING



TRANSACTIONAL
VOLUNTEERING



TRANSFORMATIVE
VOLUNTEERING

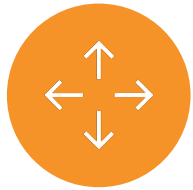
What's the objective?

All companies with Social Impact programs should have a **formal program vision and a clear set of business-aligned objectives**. (See our *Strategic Program Structure Framework* for more.)

All companies with Transformative programs understand that, over and above all other business and community objectives, **the shared objective that we are all working to achieve is *mindset shift***.

The Problem with Transactional Volunteering

It's easy to get caught up in thinking volunteering is transformative as long as it feels good, participation is increasing, and senior leaders are talking about it – but none of that is actually transformation. **Can you think of a time in your life when something happened that changed you forever?** Transformative Volunteering is the same. It changes us. And sometimes it hurts.



TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING

While Transformative Volunteering can be meaningful, joyful, or profound, it can also be hard.



When something is transformative, that means it effects change. But **change is not always easy.**



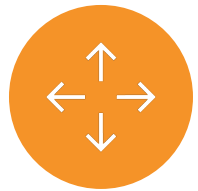
Like the process a caterpillar goes through to transform into a butterfly, **transformation may not always be what we expect.**



Transformation can be tough. But, like the caterpillar, it's a **process that allows us to emerge differently, beautifully.**

The Problem with Transactional Volunteering

When was the last time you attended a volunteer event that changed you? Maybe it taught you a new way to think about your role in social issues. Maybe you learned something that challenged what you thought you understood about a particular community of people. **Read below to understand the steps that make Transformative Volunteer different and see if you can find the parallels that took place at the event that changed you.**



TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEERING

What are the steps that make Transformative Volunteering different?

Step #1: Challenge Assumptions.

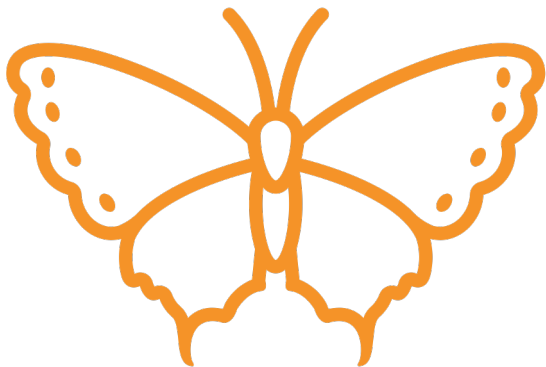
At the start of every social impact activity, a trained leader sets the tone by inviting participants to expand their perspectives on the *who and the why* of this project.

Step #2: Focus on People.

Throughout the activity, participants are guided to think beyond tasks and focus on people. This helps us avoid sacrificing effectiveness to efficiency.

Step #3: Engage in Critical Reflection.

At the conclusion of the activity, a trained leader facilitates a process of critical reflection, helping participants make sense of their experience.



ABOUT REALIZED WORTH

Since 2008, Realized Worth has offered strategic consulting services to some of the most notable companies in the world. We help companies successfully create or evolve their employee social impact strategy through a comprehensive design, transition and implementation process that results in a robust and scalable employee program. It's our mission to help companies curate Transformative Experiences to drive company-wide social movements. We bring meaning to action through our Transformative Volunteering approach, which teaches employees how to practice behaviors that create engaging, effective, and impactful volunteer projects for their peers.

With a wide range of over 100 clients including Abbott Labs, Amazon, Apple, Comcast, Deloitte, Microsoft, Netflix, and others, Realized Worth's specialized expertise is uniquely suited for the corporation seeking meaningful impact through its employee social impact programs.

The co-founders of Realized Worth, Chris Jarvis and Angela Parker, are based in Baltimore, Maryland. The extended team is based throughout the US and Canada. Realized Worth Canada is based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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