

Does the Value Profile of SCORE Volunteers Effect their Productivity in Assisting Small Business Entrepreneurs?

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Abstract

Public policy makers have long argued the need for empirical data as to the relevance and impact of providing management and technical assistance to small business entrepreneurs. The study is based on primary empirical data collected from individual SCORE volunteers who were members of the US based, National SCORE Association. Surveys using Rokeach's Value Survey (1968, 1973, and 1979) were made available using online survey methodology s to over 10,000 SCORE volunteers. Approximately 2,000 or 20 percent of the population responded and their results were cross validated and performance data were paired with each respondent.

The data were analyzed and factor analysis applied to ascertain if there were any value profiles that could predict performance and, hopefully, draw some inferences to the impact on SCORE volunteer performance. This was the first study employed in the public sector designed to measure the effect of values on overall performance of SCORE counselors.

Introduction

Scholars have long been interested in the subject of human values. This interest has ranged from abstract speculation by philosophers and political theoreticians to empirical scrutiny by quantitative psychologists. Since the early seventies, the study of values has grown dramatically, and a number of important conceptual pieces and research studies have appeared (Rokeach 1979). This new interest has been reflected in a growing literature relating values to organizational behavior and to managerial practices (Becker and Connor 1979).

In spite of the increased interest, the subject of values has not received serious attention in human relations management (HR). Values may be discussed briefly in basic management texts in their treatment of changing organizational environments or in courses on business, government, and society. However, to our knowledge no pioneering effort in examining the role of values on the performance of volunteers, and specifically, the US based SCORE program, has ever been undertaken.

Values and Behavior

The examination of human behavior and the ability to predict an individual's performance is usually difficult at best to measure or show any causal relationship because many

behaviorally theories such as motivation, can be easily affected by the environment. As such, values are important for understanding various social-psychological phenomena (see review in Schwartz & Bardi, 2001) and generally, are more difficult to change or easily manipulate. There is considerable research which strongly suggests that the key elements in the understanding of human behavior are values and value systems.

Some researchers hold that values guide behavior and even include this guiding role in their definition of values (e.g., Allport, 1961; Rokeach, 1973). Others conclude that values guide behavior only rarely and not for most people (e.g., Kristiansen & Hotte, 1996; McClelland, 1985). Numerous empirical studies link values to behavior including work performance. Most of these, however, examine single behaviors (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1996) or sets of behaviors presumed to express one content domain of values (such as pro-social behavior or religiosity) (Bond & Chi, 1997; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995).

Rokeach has written that values provide standards that guide behavior. They are multifaceted standards which lead individuals to take particular positions on social issues, predispose a favoring of one particular political or religious ideology over another, guide representations of the self to others, and provide a basis upon which one may evaluate or judge. All persons possess the same values but to different degrees, the antecedents of which can be traced to culture, society, and its institutions. Behavioral differences among individuals, therefore, may be ascribed to the different priorities in which these values are held (Albert, 1968).

Rokeach has defined a *value* as being "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is preferable over any other specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach, 1973). Thus, when it is said that a person has a value, the reference is to his or her beliefs concerning desirable modes of conduct or end-states of existence that is to *means* and *ends*, respectively. These two kinds of values are referred to as *instrumental*, or means-oriented, and *terminal*, or ends-oriented and Rokeach identified 18 values that fall into each category. Instrumental values include such values as *honest, love, responsible, and courageous*. *Examples of terminal values include freedom, equality, a world at peace and inner harmony*.

At the same time, Rokeach has defined a *value system* as being "an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" (Rokeach, 1973). Value systems are assumed to function as general plans employed to resolve conflicts and to make decisions.

Personal Values

Values convey what is important to us in our lives. Each person holds numerous values (e.g., achievement, benevolence) with varying degrees of importance. A particular value may be very important to one person but unimportant to another. Values are a motivational construct. They represent broad goals that apply across contexts and time (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1997; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). For example, giving importance to power values implies striving for power at work, at home, with friends, and so forth. People generally know what is important to them. Hence, when asked about their values, they can usually give reasonably accurate reports. People may act in accordance with their values even when they do not consciously think about them. Thus, values may operate outside of awareness but they are available for retrieval from memory. Values are relatively stable motivational characteristics of persons that change little during adulthood (e.g., Feather, 1971; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1997).

The Measurement of Values

The question of how to assess and measure values has received considerable attention. A review of the literature reveals that few, if any, consistently valid and reliable value measuring instruments exist. The Rokeach Value Survey is the product of many years of research regarding the nature, origins, and consequences of human beliefs, with its final thrust aimed directly at the concept of human values. The survey provides a basis for a systematic value approach to the study of human problems which, in many ways, overcomes deficiencies noted with respect to other value approaches.

The Rokeach Value Survey consists of two lists, one of 18 terminal values and the other of 18 instrumental values. Traditionally, the Value Survey required that each list be ranked in order of importance, with the respondent selecting the one value that is most important to him or her, then the next important value, and so on. Ranking of the two lists of values results in two hierarchies of value importance for each respondent, a terminal value system and an instrumental value system which compared to their productivity/performance can predict whether individual value profiles indicate a better fit between the employee and the organization. However, other approaches to Rokeach Value Survey have been used.

HR and Staffing

For several years staffing experts have been suggesting that an organization's human resource (HR) systems might be instrumental in the staffing decisions made by organizations and the job choice decisions made by applicants (e.g., Olian & Rynes, 1984; Rynes, 1992). Although this thesis is endemic to staffing research, it is particularly salient in discussions of using value profiles to determine individual performance and person-organization fit. Using strategic staffing principles in conjunction with value profiling can assist with recruiting and selection activities (Butler, Ferris & Napier, 1991).

Thus value profiling and strategic staffing activities lead to and better, more long-term human assets, not merely one to fulfill immediate operational objectives (Miller, 1984). Likewise, person-organization fit addresses the suitability or propriety of certain types of people in particular types of organizational environments, with the assumption that this match has long-term implications for organizational effectiveness (Schneider, 1987). Differences in HR systems presumably reflect the underlying nature of organizations, and therefore, in the staffing context, provide an environmental context for determinations of fit. This study examines whether values can predict overall performance in volunteer counselors in an economic development setting.

Methodology

SCORE, under the direction of the Center for Entrepreneurial Excellence (CFEE), conducted a survey of its volunteers using Milton Rokeach's Values Survey (1973). SCORE administered the survey online through Survey Monkey and included accepted performance criteria for ascertaining the effectiveness and efficiency of SCORE volunteer's performance outputs. Volunteers were also asked to provide demographic and descriptive data and evaluate the importance of terminal and instrumental values on scales of 1 (not very important) through 5 (extremely important). Of the 11,266 SCORE volunteers in existence during the fall of 2009, 2,057 (18.3%) responded. After the data were collected, SCORE matched each respondent with his or her performance and demographic information. Data were then analyzed using SPSS PC Plus version 17.0.

Data Analysis

Of the respondents, 87.4% were male, and 94.6% were white. A majority of the volunteers are clustered in the 61-75 age range, with only 8.7% of respondents younger than 55 and 8.5% over the age of 80. The average respondent served 5.7 years as a SCORE volunteer with 20.2% serving for less than one year. Nearly 72% of respondents labeled their employment status as “Retired,” and for these people, they had retired 8.8 years prior to the survey. Of the remaining respondents, 12.1% were still employed full-time and 12.5% were employed part-time. Attesting to their expertise at managing businesses, the average volunteer spent 17.3 years managing a small business and 23.6 years managing a medium to large business. Not that these questions were broadly worded and may reflect time serving in a managerial role rather than as the owner of such a firm. These results are consistent with the overall demographics of SCORE’s volunteers.

We next looked at the average productivity statistics for the respondents. For this study, SCORE defined long-term clients – one of the performance measures – as clients who utilized SCORE’s services for three or more hours. While the typical respondent volunteered 52 hours per month. However, the typical volunteer managed 2.9 long-term clients, largely due to the fact that 48.3% of the volunteers had no long-term clients, and an additional 14.1% had only one. Finally, although SCORE is a government funded organization, it still accepts donations to help promote the organization. Unfortunately for SCORE, the volunteers appear to be a poor source of such funding; the average donation or money raised was only \$13.60.

The Terminal Value Profile of SCORE Volunteers

From the survey results of the SCORE volunteers, we averaged each value. We noted that the overall average value given for all of the values was 4.1; as such, we considered any value with an average score within three-tenths of the overall average to be within normal parameters (3.8 to 4.3). Values beyond this range were considered either of extreme importance or low importance to SCORE volunteers as a group.

The average scores for all terminal values are provided in Table 1. Of all the values, the most important to SCORE volunteers are: family security (4.6), freedom (4.6), and self-respect (4.5), closely followed by a sense of accomplishment (4.4). These values speak to the current life stage of the volunteers, who are largely retired entrepreneurs. For many of them, they started and ran their businesses to support their families. The desire for freedom has been noted as a key motivation for entrepreneurs. A sense of accomplishment is closely related to the task orientation many entrepreneurs have. Self-respect ???

Table 1 – Average Scores for Terminal Values among SCORE Volunteers

| Terminal Value | Average Score |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| A comfortable life | 3.8 |
| A sense of accomplishment | 4.4 |
| A world at peace | 3.9 |
| A world of beauty | 3.6 |
| An exciting life | 3.9 |
| Equality | 4.0 |
| Family security | 4.6 |
| Freedom | 4.6 |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Happiness | 4.3 |
| Inner harmony | 4.1 |
| Mature love | 4.0 |
| National security | 4.2 |
| Pleasure | 3.7 |
| Salvation | 3.3 |
| Self-respect | 4.5 |
| Social recognition | 3.4 |
| True friendship | 4.1 |
| Wisdom | 4.3 |

Table 1 also shows terminal values not of importance to SCORE volunteers are experiencing a world of beauty, pleasure-seeking, salvation, and social recognition. These are in-line with expectations of the mature generation who are self-motivated to do hard work without public reward.

The Instrumental Value Profile of SCORE Volunteers

To analyze the instrumental value profile of SCORE volunteers, we followed a similar procedure. From the survey results of the SCORE volunteers, we averaged each value. We noted that the overall average value given for all of the values was 4.1; as such, we considered any value with an average score within three-tenths of the overall average to be within normal parameters.

The average scores for all instrumental values are provided in Table 2. SCORE volunteers are mostly driven by being honest (4.7) and responsible (4.6) – two values that help explain their motivation to be counselors. Table 2 also shows that only one instrumental value stood out as not being of importance to SCORE volunteers: obedience. This is consistent with entrepreneurs, who often desire independence and handling issues their own way. This is not to say they will not follow direction, but rather entrepreneurs have a preference for being leaders and solving problems.

Table 2 – Average Scores for Instrumental Values among SCORE Volunteers

| Instrumental Value | Average Score |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Ambitious | 4.1 |
| Broad-minded | 4.2 |
| Capable | 4.3 |
| Cheerful | 4.0 |
| Clean | 3.8 |
| Courageous | 4.3 |
| Forgiving | 4.0 |
| Helpful | 4.1 |
| Honest | 4.7 |
| Imaginative | 3.8 |
| Independent | 4.3 |
| Intellectual | 4.1 |
| Logical | 4.3 |

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Loving | 4.0 |
| Obedient | 3.5 |
| Polite | 4.1 |
| Responsible | 4.6 |
| Self-Controlled | 4.1 |

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

While these initial analyses helped define key characteristics of a typical SCORE volunteer value profile, we sought to find the value profiles that would explain the greatest levels of variance in the performance data. As such, we used confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation to create value profiles. The factors that resulted from the analysis names are:

1. Capable, Independent, Intellectual, Logical (“The Professional”) – These values are associated with competent workers, managers, or business owners; people who are able to tackle problems without being flustered; and sources of confidence and stability for a floundering small business.
2. Clean, Obedient, Polite, Self-Controlled (“The Boy/Girl Scout”) – These values indicate a person’s ability to relate to others in a pleasing manner. People with poor hygiene, who are rude, or who make sudden outbursts are less likely to be consulted for assistance
3. A world at peace, A world of beauty, Equality (“The Optimist”) – Counselors need to believe that their efforts are and will continue to make a difference. Pessimistic or defeatist attitudes demoralize clients, driving them away from SCORE.

Using these factors, we conducted a series of regressions with the performance measures as the independent variables and the values in the factors as the dependent variables. Based on our research, generational values take time to change – at least 10 years. As such, we ran the regressions reducing our age groups from five-year spans to the following: under 55, 55-65, 66-75, and older than 76. Our reference group for the discrete variables is a female volunteer under 55 years old, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, who is not employed.

Table 3 – Performance results

| Variable | Number of Long-term Clients | Number of Hours Volunteered per Month | Number of Years as a SCORE Volunteer | Dollars Raised or Donated |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Constant | -0.698 (.667) | 35.712 (0.123) | 6.468 (0.000) | -12.357 (0.689) |
| A world at peace | -0.427 (0.013) | -4.645 (0.058) | 0.166 (0.297) | -4.819 (0.141) |
| A world of beauty | 0.090 (0.629) | -1.731 (0.513) | -0.289 (0.092) | 0.817 (0.817) |
| Equality | 0.331 (0.083) | 3.018 (0.267) | -0.175 (0.324) | -3.112 (0.390) |
| Clean | 0.002 (0.993) | 1.611 (0.558) | 0.282 (0.113) | 0.739 (0.840) |
| Obedient | -0.535 (0.005) | -5.684 (0.037) | 0.205 (0.244) | -5.966 (0.100) |
| Polite | -0.005 (0.985) | -0.316 (0.926) | -0.428 (0.052) | 6.334 (0.162) |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Self-controlled | 0.115 (0.623) | -2.544 (0.446) | 0.317 (0.144) | 1.657 (0.710) |
| Capable | 0.350 (0.177) | 2.477 (0.502) | -0.243 (0.312) | 10.854 (0.027) |
| Independent | -0.087 (0.709) | 2.609 (0.430) | 0.331 (0.123) | -6.169 (0.162) |
| Intellectual | -0.168 (0.471) | -3.141 (0.346) | -0.261 (0.226) | 7.396 (0.096) |
| Logical | 0.642 (0.008) | 6.981 (0.044) | 0.241 (0.285) | -3.824 (0.409) |
| Gender: Male | 0.653 (0.097) | 16.367 (0.004) | 0.058 (0.873) | -2.993 (0.689) |
| Age: 55-65 | -0.438 (0.354) | -9.545 (0.156) | -4.267 (0.000) | -6.007 (0.503) |
| Age: 66-75 | -0.413 (0.244) | -10.195 (0.044) | -4.130 (0.000) | -11.144 (0.098) |
| Age: 76+ | -0.565 (0.092) | -11.534 (0.016) | -3.491 (0.000) | -1.710 (0.788) |
| Race: White | 2.056 (0.026) | 6.487 (0.622) | 0.474 (0.584) | 16.453 (0.348) |
| Race: Black | 0.856 (0.508) | -3.484 (0.850) | -1.134 (0.345) | 10.011 (0.683) |
| Race: Hispanic | 2.206 (0.161) | 8.486 (0.705) | 0.575 (0.693) | 1.593 (0.957) |
| Race: Asian | 0.596 (0.677) | 1.463 (0.943) | -2.105 (0.117) | 3.989 (0.883) |
| Race: Latino | 0.249 (0.891) | 10.666 (0.679) | -0.264 (0.878) | 4.265 (0.901) |
| Retired | -0.117 (0.840) | 5.644 (0.494) | 0.589 (0.275) | -2.319 (0.833) |
| Employed full-time | -1.863 (0.840) | -23.044 (0.016) | -1.795 (0.004) | -16.480 (0.197) |
| Employed part-time | -1.098 (0.006) | -5.072 (0.016) | -0.669 (0.004) | -12.711 (0.314) |
| r ² | 0.033 | 0.035 | 0.156 | 0.014 |
| adjusted r ² | 0.022 | 0.024 | 0.147 | 0.002 |

Key= Data in Bold significant at .05 or better level

For the number of long-term clients, only four values relate significantly. Volunteers who value a world at peace have fewer long-term clients, likely because interacting with people in chaotic and stress-filled lives (i.e., an entrepreneur having trouble with their business, a person attempting to determine whether to start a business, etc.) disrupts the peace the volunteer attempts to build. Obedience-driven volunteers also had fewer long-term clients. Since the SCORE program has little oversight—the volunteers are expected to be largely self-motivated—this result conforms to our expectations. On the other hand, the values with positive correlations are not as easy to explain. Valuing equality and being logical both correlate positively with the number of clients. The former, for example, may be due to the structure of the SCORE program, where clients often expect to be treated as peers seeking older colleagues' advice. Those preferring logical thinking are possibly enticed to interact with more clients by the fact that many problems require logical analysis of the situation and selection of the optimal solution.

Other results of note are that being male results in more long-term clients, white volunteers have more long-term clients than other races, being over 76 years old is correlated

with fewer clients, and working part-time decrease the number of clients by one, compared to an unemployed volunteer. The first two results we attribute to the general make-up of the SCORE volunteer population. In essence, SCORE's volunteer base comprises a large number of white males, meaning other races and female volunteers may feel like outsiders, not participating as much as their counterparts. We would expect to slow down with age, as the data confirm. And working necessarily limits the time available to handle clients.

These conclusions are reinforced in the results for the number of hours volunteered each month. Older volunteers contribute fewer hours than their younger counterparts, and males volunteer over 16 hours more than females. Furthermore, full-time volunteers show a marked decrease in the number of hours volunteered. The value results are also consistent: both seeking a world at peace and valuing obedience decrease the number of hours volunteered, while favoring logic increases the number of hours.

The number of years as a SCORE volunteer called out several interesting facts. The first is that SCORE is doing a good job retaining its younger volunteer base. Compared to volunteers aged 55 or younger, volunteers in all other age categories could not claim as much seniority. Not surprisingly, working volunteers were more likely to have spent less time as a SCORE volunteer, likely because the demands of working and volunteering are too great to allow long-term involvement with both. As noted before, valuing a world of beauty disinclines volunteering with SCORE; in addition, valuing politeness leads to less seniority with SCORE. We theorize that this may be due to the fact that volunteers are regularly dealing with people in high-stress situations—a scenario that may lead to sometimes uncivil behavior.

The final performance criteria we looked at was the amount of money raised or donated by the volunteers. Volunteers valuing both capability and intellectualism contributed more to SCORE, while those who value obedience contributed less. The latter result follows from SCORE not explicitly asking for money from its volunteers; without guidance, obedient people are likely to not provide a given result. On the other hand, volunteers valuing being capable likely recognize the extent to which SCORE builds such ability in its clients, thereby driving their contributions. Intellectual volunteers may be driven to contribute to SCORE by the intense challenges they often face and the in-depth discussions entrepreneurial counseling requires. The only other significant result is that older volunteers, specifically those 66-75 years old, contribute fewer dollars than their counterparts. Given their reduced participation in SCORE and that many of them are living on fixed incomes, such findings are not altogether unexpected.

As interesting as the results of the regressions are, we must note one limitation. All of the regressions have very low adjusted r^2 values, indicating that the hypothesized connection between values and these particular performance criteria is limited. However, this does not invalidate further exploration into the realm of values and volunteer performance; rather it suggests two possible methods by which greater explanatory power may be gained. First, the performance criteria chosen may need to be refined. Many volunteers did not contribute to SCORE—the average contribution per volunteer was only \$13.60—meaning that the criteria of dollars raised or donated may not be the best choice. This conclusion is further reinforced by the adjusted correlation coefficient of .002.

The second area of possible improvement is using an alternative mechanism for measuring value profiles. The survey for this study asked volunteers to rank values on a Likert scale of 1 to 5. However, understanding the relative importance of a given value out of all the values can potentially yield greater insight and explanatory power than a Likert scale, given the large number of values. On the other hand, using a forced ranking of 18 terminal and

instrumental values requires greater time, leading to a lower survey completion rate.

Conclusion

Predicting a volunteer's performance based on examining their value profile shows that more work is needed. Organizations employing volunteers must clearly articulate definitive goals and objectives so that all volunteers are cognizant of what is required. In this study, we examined one of the world's largest volunteer organizations supporting the development and creation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – SCORE. Based on the analysis of the data, SCORE needs to develop training programs designed to encourage counselors to become more active and involved. The goal of this training will be to enhance the counseling the volunteers offer. In addition, it helps standardize the quality of the volunteers, driving up their performance.

Another benefit is that volunteers, upon “graduating” from their training, will feel much more confident in their abilities, meaning they will be more likely to be active participants in SCORE. Current volunteers should be offered the choice between a self-driven program that currently exists and the opportunity to work through the training. Alternatively, under-performing counselors could be encouraged to complete such training.

SCORE also needs to develop clear goals and objectives, which they may already possess, and clearly communicate these regularly to all SCORE volunteers. In order to predict productive SCORE counselors, one needs to have the criteria articulated and reinforce. Annual reviews may yield a more productive group of volunteers.

SCORE should capitalize on tenured counselors by asking them to mentor and assist in the training new counselors. The data indicates that more senior SCORE counselors understand and participate more actively in assisting small businesses. Once the volunteer agrees to counsel for SCORE they remain a counselor an average of 5.7 years. So if SCORE wants to get more diversity among its counselors in terms of age, gender, race and experience, they should target younger individuals

Develop a recognition and incentive program for your volunteers, preferably one centered on the values that match their values profile, both terminal and instrumental like offering more responsibility to highly qualified volunteers.

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