Background
Héma-Québec, a non-profit organization, is responsible for managing the blood supply in Quebec (Canada).
- 1,000 donations of blood per day are needed to meet the demand from Quebec's hospitals.
- 20,000 blood donors are held annually, of these: 16% are held on mobile blood drives; 13% in permanent blood donor centers and 1% on a mobile unit (bus).
- Over 36,000 people volunteer in these blood drives every year.

Methods
The research team conducted 64-2 hour long semi-structured interviews with 19 Héma-Québec’s member staff and 85 volunteers. Various selection criteria were used in choosing the informants (volunteers), including age, sex, location, duration and type of involvement.

Objectives
- Describing volunteer profiles and histories of implication
- Understanding volunteer motivations
- Examining their role in the organization of blood drives
- For different volunteer profiles, identify potential future problems for recruitment and retention
- Identify possible solutions to insure long term recruitment and retention of volunteers

Current Volunteer Profiles in Quebec's blood drives

What motivates volunteer implication in the blood donation cause?

- Family background: Parents as models with respect to blood donation.
- In relation to family/local solidarity practices.
- School practices.

What are the triggering factors for volunteer involvement?

- Personal initiative (30%): Choose to become a volunteer after:
  - Having given or received blood.
  - Seeing an advertisement (poster, TV, Internet, etc.).
  - Being introduced through their own volunteer organization.

- External influences (70%): Direct request by a member of their personal network (family member, friend or neighbor).
- Organized activity by an association whose main purpose isn't the organization of blood drives.
- Obligatory stemming from their environment (work, school, etc.).

Why are the volunteers? Are the different types of volunteers increasing or decreasing?

- "Traditional Volunteers": (11%)
  - 1-2 blood drives/yr.
  - Mostly in drives held in businesses, schools, permanent blood centers and mobile unit (bus).
  - Administrative and tele-recruitment work.
  - Suburban and rural areas.

- "Volunteers of communication" (5%): 1% on a mobile unit (bus);
- 13% in permanent blood donor centers and;
- 86% are held on mobile blood drives;

- "Interns and Community-based Rehabilitation Volunteers": (1%)
  - 1-2 blood drives/yr.
  - Most from drive held in communities associations, municipal services and the public sector.
  - Provide support in organizing blood drives and welcomes donors.
  - Suburban and rural areas.

- "Occasional Volunteers": (5%): 1-2 blood drives/yr.
  - In the workplace or as part of the school curriculums.
  - Tele-recruitment work.
  - Urban areas.

- "Students": (10%)
  - 1-2 blood drives/yr.
  - In the workplace or as part of the school curriculums.
  - Tele-recruitment work.
  - Urban areas.

- "Worker": (10%)
  - 1-2 blood drives/yr.
  - In the workplace or as part of the school curriculums.
  - Tele-recruitment work.
  - Urban areas.

- "Housewives": (1%)
  - Duration of implication linked to the length of employment.

Issues Invoking the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

- The aging of current volunteers.
- The "housewives" category is decreasing. Just the "retirees" group is growing.
- Challenges with regards to the recruitment of new retirees in light of either competing volunteer work and leisure activities.
- Volunteers are mainly recruited by their peers (word of mouth).
- Recruitment is limited to the volunteers’ social networks, restricting generational and ethnic plurality.
- Places of initiation to volunteer work have changed (from church to school and to the workplace).
- Decline of traditional community organizations.
- Retention problems in the "student" and "worker" volunteer categories. They get involved in a limited number of blood drives for a limited period of time (for example, as long as they are students).
- Retention problems with school and business blood drive partners.
- Information is lacking on the social aspects of blood donation, reasoned by Héma-Québec.

Conclusions

Issues Involving the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

- Information needs to be improved about the benefits of volunteering.
- Recruitment and retention are major issues for the organization.
- Challenges with regards to the recruitment of new retirees in light of either competing volunteer work and leisure activities.
- Volunteers are mainly recruited by their peers (word of mouth).
- Recruitment is limited to the volunteers’ social networks, restricting generational and ethnic plurality.
- Places of initiation to volunteer work have changed (from church to school and to the workplace).
- Decline of traditional community organizations.
- Retention problems in the "student" and "worker" volunteer categories. They get involved in a limited number of blood drives for a limited period of time (for example, as long as they are students).
- Retention problems with school and business blood drive partners.

Suggested Solutions

- Continuous peer associations in order to advise their workload and keep the volunteers motivated.
- Launch marketing recruitment campaigns based on volunteer motivations.
- Inform volunteers of the importance of their contribution in recruiting new volunteers.
- Encourage volunteers to actively participate in recruiting new volunteers.
- Relate to volunteers who are willing to put in extra effort and show leadership qualities.
- Support those willing to participate in recruitment drives.
- Follow through with continual presence in school and workplace environments (new places).
- Approach new community organizations (urban areas; volunteer action centers and ethnic communities).
- Rewards program.
- Focus on encouraging loyalty with partners (schools and businesses) to insure the continuity of blood drives in spite of volunteer turnover.