

Volunteer Survey Report 2019

Keeping in touch with our volunteers' views is important to us. It helps us to work better together and make sure we provide the best support possible. One way to do this is through our regular Volunteer Survey. This year (2018/19) 487 volunteers responded to our survey – that's 11.6% of those that it reached¹.

A wide range of volunteer roles are included and there is a representative spread across our regions (Americas 3%, Asia Pacific 10%, EMEA 6%, South Asia 3% and UK 78%)².

In addition to our Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and other tracking questions, this survey explored motivation, barriers to volunteering, awareness of volunteering opportunities, views on our communications, support for volunteer leaders, and effectiveness of our recognition programmes.

Motivation

This year we wanted to explore motivation, as it is an important factor in engaging new volunteers, retaining existing ones, and in helping us to develop appropriate recognition schemes.

It is clear that there are many things that motivate our volunteers. Overall the top answers were: a feeling of giving back (83.4%), contributing to the growth of the profession (74.3%), promoting the IET (57.9%), meeting other members/volunteers (56.5%), and sharing knowledge (54.4%). While these are broadly similar across our different volunteering roles, we can see differences across age groups – where 'developing my own skills' is important to 83.3% of 18 to 30-year olds³ and 78.7% of 31 – 40⁴ year olds (compared to 45% at an overall level) - demonstrating the value of volunteering to personal and professional development. Regionally, the results are also broadly similar, but it is interesting to see the top two in reverse order in the Asia Pacific region² (contributing to the growth of the profession 85.7% and a feeling of giving back 63.3%) perhaps reflecting positive growth in both the IET and engineering in that region.

"The IET values and shows its appreciation of volunteers. It feels like we are part of a team and respected. The IET trains us professionally and hears our opinions."

We are also aware that there can be barriers to volunteering for some people and wanted to understand how much these have impacted our colleagues' ability to volunteer for the IET. Overall, almost two thirds of volunteers (59.7%) are impacted by work commitments, and almost half (49.9%) by lack of time. It is also interesting that almost one third (32%) are limited by other volunteering commitments. We know from previous research⁵ that 65.3% of IET volunteers give their time to other organisations – a truly generous group!

Areas where we see variations in this are:

- Lack of time affects more volunteers in Communities (57.3%) and Accreditation (50%)⁶.

¹ Of 4,203 who received the email

² Caution low base – Americas 14; Asia Pacific 49; EMEA 31; South Asia 15

³ Caution low base - 18

⁴ Caution low base - 47

⁵ IET Volunteer Survey 2015

⁶ Caution low base - 26

- Other volunteering commitments affects more volunteers in our Governance (43.8%)⁷.
- Lack awareness of available opportunities is a problem for those in Professional Development roles (27.9%)⁸.

It is no surprise to see that 87.5% of those aged 18 – 30 years struggle with work commitments (and a lack of time 62.5%)⁹ and this declines as age increases; whilst other volunteering commitments increase. We were unsure if cultural issues would present a barrier to volunteering – overall this is the case for 6.8% volunteers, and this is highest in the South Asia region (30.8%)¹⁰. We will be working to understand how this affects volunteers and what can be done to help overcome these barriers. However, it is pleasing to note that there is no evidence to suggest that these barriers impact satisfaction with volunteering.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

The importance of volunteers at the IET is reflected in one of our KPIs – measuring how many volunteers agree that they and staff work as one team towards common goals.

‘Do you agree that volunteers and staff work effectively as one team, with shared values towards common goals?’ (% stating yes)

This year the percentage agreeing was 80.1% with a further 10.7% being unsure. (Agreeing = 80.8% in 2018.)

We also continue to measure volunteers’ satisfaction with their experiences, and this has continued its upward trend with a very slight improvement from last year.

‘Are you satisfied with your volunteer experiences?’ (% stating yes)

85.2% stated they are satisfied with their volunteer experience in this year’s survey, compared to 84.9% in 2018.

Awareness and interest in other roles

We wanted to explore the extent to which our volunteers were aware of, or interested in, other volunteering roles at the IET. This will help us better promote our opportunities and make sure we are helping those that want to get more involved.

Roles that show particularly low awareness are: IET Connect (64.4%), Sector Team or Steering Committee (63%), Policy Panel (57.3%) and the Young Professionals Team (55.8%).

Areas that our current volunteers are most interested in finding out more about are: Council (54.5%), Accreditation (53.5%), Main Boards and Committees (52.7%) and Professional Registration (52.4%).

This data provides information to help us target communications and support to those who are most interested in additional roles and we will be looking at this to make sure we get information to the right people.

“Volunteering is a generally positive experience. Things happen slower than I would normally like, but as we are a volunteer force, many with full time day jobs, there is a time issue.”

⁷ Caution low base - 16

⁸ Caution low base - 43

⁹ Caution low base - 16

¹⁰ Caution low base - 13

Communication

Asking for your views on our communications has helped us understand where we could improve the amount and effectiveness of these. Overall, volunteers think the volume of communications is about right (82.8%) with small numbers thinking there is too little (9.8%) and too much (4.6%). This is broadly the same across groups and regions.

We asked you to rate the effectiveness of our communications on a scale of 0 – 10, and overall 50.5% of you scored it between 8 and 10. This is great news; but looking at the breakdown across roles it seems we can do more to improve communications for some of our teams, particularly Communities (where scores were slightly lower and only 32.8% rated it 8 – 10) and Professional Development (30.6% rating 8 - 10¹¹). Areas that we can learn from are Professional Registration, Accreditation¹² and the Fellowship team¹³ (with ratings of 8 – 10 being given by 63.1%, 75.9% and 76.9% respectively).

It is also important to us that communication isn't just one way. Again, on a scale of 0 – 10 we asked "how easy do you find it to communicate with the IET in relation to your volunteering role" and overall 66.7% of you rated this 8 – 10. This is encouraging, as we really want to make sure you can easily get in touch when you need to, and we will be looking at ways to improve further.

"I think it's very good. Generally I get very prompt and helpful responses from Stevenage or London Staff."

With this type of question, it is the additional comments that reveal the important information. There was no surprise that the most common topic (14 people) was the web site and on-line systems – something we are already working to improve. Many other topics were raised and some themes could be seen in requests for more face-to-face and virtual meetings, better use of social media and other digital applications, more tailored content and the need to send updates during slow periods when not much else is happening. We are working through these to see how these themes can be addressed in future developments.

One common request is for a list of contacts. This can be a challenge to keep both secure and updated but the Volunteer Support Unit will forward anything sent into volunteer@theiet.org and you can ask us to help you find the right person when you need to.

Support for Volunteer Leaders

The Volunteer Engagement Board has a special interest in supporting those in a position of leadership amongst volunteers. This is just under a third of those responding to the survey (29.6%). To help the Board, we asked what could be done to improve support for leaders. The most common request (8 people) was for training and induction/support with handovers, followed by more networking with others in similar roles, and help with recruiting new volunteers (both 4 people). All the comments will be reviewed by the Board when it next meets.

"It would be good to have more connect opportunities with other volunteers performing the same roles. There are so many divisions in the IET, that it is often hard to get in touch with the right people."

¹¹ Caution low base - 49

¹² Caution low base - 29

¹³ Caution low base - 13

Recognition Programmes

We are proud of the many ways we thank and recognise our volunteers – most of which were introduced because of your feedback. However, they can only be effective if people are aware of them, so we asked which ones you knew about. Overall there is good awareness of our thank you cards which are sent annually to all active volunteers (67.6%) and thank you letters (43.5%). There is some awareness of the Volunteer Achievement Medal (29.7%) and Core Values Awards (19.6%), but only 8% knew about the Paul Fletcher Award for Young Professional volunteers. Sadly, one fifth of those responding (20.6%) said they were aware of none of these.

“To be honest, the nicest and most personal thing is a thank you card from a few IET Staff, with whom I work and interact, signed personally. What a job that must be for staff though - perhaps realising that makes it all the more valued.”

Clearly, we need to do more to raise awareness of – and support for – these schemes. We will be looking across the regional and role breakdowns to understand if there are specific groups that we need to focus promotion towards. You can find out more about these schemes on the [Volunteer Hub](#).

Volunteer Support Team
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