

**Executive Summary of all research findings carried out
between July 2008 and July 2009**

Between July 2008 and July 2009 YouthNet carried out research to explore volunteers' and organisations' experiences of [Do-it](#) and [vinspired.com](#).

The National Volunteering Database (NVD) (owned and managed by YouthNet) is a database of volunteering opportunities uploaded by NVD partners such as Volunteer Development Agencies (VDAs) and Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs). This database underpins Do-it, a volunteering website that allows individuals to search and apply for volunteering opportunities and read volunteering related editorial content.

vinspired.com is a website for 16-25 year olds, run by v, the youth volunteering charity. vinspired.com is also underpinned by the NVD, so young people can search volunteering opportunities and apply for these online.

Technically, these two websites are closely linked and they both aim to inspire young people to volunteer by making the process as easy as possible. Therefore, the research undertaken intended to identify areas on the websites, and throughout the application process (both on and offline) where improvements could be made to the volunteers' experience, and how the NVD partners are involved and consulted.

We carried out several methods to research the thoughts of both volunteers and the sector. Please find below the top findings from each part of the research.

'The Volunteer Satisfaction Survey'

This survey was completed by 925 registered users of Do-it between 6th November 2008 and 5th January 2009. The main findings were:

1. More than eight in ten (83%) respondents found the search facilities on Do-it easy to use.
2. Just over half (55%) found the opportunity descriptions inspiring.
3. Almost seven in ten (68%) respondents had applied for an opportunity or requested further information. 44% had started volunteering since they submitted their application.
4. Only 32% of respondents thought it was very clear which organisations would be given access to their personal information.
5. The most popular reasons for volunteering amongst respondents were 'to do something positive with spare time' (71%) and 'to help other people' (71%). Younger respondents were most likely to say they were interested in volunteering 'to gain work experience'.

'The vinspired.com Volunteers Satisfaction Survey'

This was completed by 327 registered users of vinspired.com between 9th December and 28th December 2008. The main findings were:

1. Eight in ten (79%) respondents thought it is important for websites like vinspired.com to have a forum.
2. Seven in ten (68%) respondents said they would like to see more volunteer matching on vinspired.com, where people could browse volunteers' skills and match them to opportunities. At least half would like to see more photos and videos, means of rating projects and articles, and information about who else is working on projects.
3. More than four in ten (42%) respondents thought many opportunity descriptions sounded the same.
4. Three in ten (30%) volunteers thought they would have been unlikely to volunteer if it hadn't been for vinspired.com.
5. 27% thought their search came back with insufficient results as the opportunities displayed did not match their search criteria.

'The Partner Satisfaction Survey'

This was completed by 170 of YouthNet's partners who upload opportunities to the NVD between 8th January and 11th February 2009. The main findings were:

1. Nine in ten (89%) respondents who upload opportunities were aware of vinspired.com but only 69% were aware that the opportunities they upload would be visible on the website.
2. 97% of respondents who had had a form of contact with the Do-it team described the contact as either very helpful (51%) or fairly helpful (46%).
3. 37% of respondents had visited the Partner section of Do-it and 82% of those respondents described the section as either very (13%) or fairly (69%) useful.
4. Nine in ten respondents (90%) said it was either very or fairly important for them to be regularly consulted about Do-it products and services; 72% said they felt adequately consulted.
5. 89% of respondents who had received re@d-it described the monthly partner newsletter as either very (21%) or fairly (68%) useful.

'Focus Groups' - Qualitative research with volunteers

Between March and April 2009 YouthNet conducted focus groups and telephone interviews with 40 participants. This enabled us to build on the data collected in the surveys. The main findings were:

1. Volunteers wished to be contacted promptly and to start their opportunity without too much bureaucracy.
2. Participants felt there is not enough information on volunteering available to people.
3. vinspired.com was seen as vibrant, very easy to use and clearly aimed at young people.
4. Do-it was seen as a useful tool but should have pictures and videos of lots of different types of volunteers in action.
5. People mentioned that they would like to see more blogs giving examples of people volunteering.

'Focus Groups' - Qualitative research with partners

In May 2009 YouthNet conducted focus group discussions with 31 representatives from both VDAs and VIOs to understand their views on their recruitment methods, interaction with volunteers and how YouthNet consults partners of the NVD. The main findings were:

1. Participants described Do-it and vinspired.com as useful tools; however, there was a consensus among participants that both websites did not provide enough information to users about volunteering, what it entails and how to get into it.
2. Participants agreed that there should be more volunteer stories on both websites and photos of volunteers.
3. Some suggested that applications could be sent straight to the VIO offering the opportunity, rather than the broker, with only the statistics being passed on to the VDA, others disagreed with this
4. Most VIOs select volunteers based on their own application form, informal chats and interviews rather than the Do-it application form.
5. Participants were largely unaware of the information available to them in the 'Partners' section' of Do-it.

'Online panels'

In June 2009 YouthNet held three online panels with Do-it, vinspired.com users and VDAs and VIOs, this was the final part of the research. The purpose of these panels was to explore with participants draft recommendations from the research conducted. 26 participants were involved, both volunteers and partner organisations. The main findings were:

1. On Do-it more photos showing the diversity of volunteers are needed to ensure everyone feels welcome.

2. Both Do-it and vinspired.com users felt that the ability to see how other volunteers have rated an opportunity would help when choosing one.
3. It was agreed that encouraging vinspired.com users to volunteer with friends would get more people in to volunteering as it can be intimidating to volunteer by yourself.
4. It was agreed that there should be links on both websites to relevant FAQs giving information on volunteering and how volunteers can search and apply for opportunities online.
5. re@d-it! is a good tool to inform partners, but further articles on the website would help as well.