

Time to give and take



Once upon a time I was in a coffee shop in Westminster. I met a man who asked me if I knew anything about fundraising. The next thing I remember was sitting in a small meeting room in Vauxhall at my first board meeting.

Now eight years later I've just resigned. No longer chair, no longer a trustee. My time has come. Time to let go and cheer from the sidelines.

It's time to reflect on what I have done to achieve the TimeBanking UK (www.timebanking.org) mission which is to 'cultivate an environment for time banking to flourish'. And also to reflect on what I've got out of the experience. My personal pondering has a special resonance as timebanking is all about 'give and take'.

In the last year or so I haven't done much. I noticed that it somehow had become a bit of an effort, and it had become harder and harder to give. My cup was no longer running over.

"Our currency is Quid Pro Quo"



I was surprised to notice this as my enthusiasm for the time banking tool (give one hour and have this recognised by receiving a time credit which can be exchanged later) remains undiminished. As a tool to facilitate service exchange it can and does make a major contribution to creating genuine community. But I'd given enough. Time to go.

I think what I was experiencing is that whilst as trustees we give freely, there is an implicit exchange going on. We give and we take. We put in hours to

read papers, attend meetings, speak with fellow trustees, speak at events, meet users. And also we get returns, both tangible and intangible.

For me there have been many tangible benefits. For example being a trustee put me in contact with TimeBanking UK's sister organisation in the US and that led to several memorable trips to the East Coast to support their strategic planning processes. Becoming TimeBanking UK chair opened up the opportunity to start writing (in 2005) for *Governance* about my experiences of being a new chair and for the last three years about my 'Under the boardtalk' take on trusteeship.

Also I feel a warm glow from knowing that I did my bit to help the UK time banking movement to get into shape. When I think that I have played my small part in its continuing expansion and contribution I feel good.

When our giving and receiving over time is more or less in balance all is well. But when, over time, we give too much or take too much things get out of balance and go wrong. Watch for that.

I remember having the job many years ago of trying to placate 'members' of a large national UK charity who had volunteered for many decades and who felt that they owned the organisation and that they had thereby earned the right to run their local centre exactly as they wanted. Which they didn't. Give and take was out of balance.

I have got a lot and given a lot. The account is balanced. I see equal debits and credits. All's well. ●

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