

DEVELOPMENT OF SUPERVISORY/ADMINISTRATIVE
VOLUNTEER POSITIONS AT THE BETTER BUSINESS
BUREAU OF EASTERN PENNA.

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The time span of this paper is December 8, 1975, through May 21, 1976. The status of volunteerism at the Better Business Bureau of Eastern Pennsylvania during this time can only be called evolutionary. Change was the constant in every area of the Bureau, from the physical arrangement of the office to personnel, policy and administration.

The new (November 1975) President of the Bureau put increasing the role of volunteers high on his priority list, preceded only by more effective administration of total Bureau efforts and more and better public relations.

As of December 1975, the volunteer roles contained 7 (5) Telephone Consultants, 3 (2) Clerical helpers, 7 (5) Mediators and 162 (6) Arbitrators. The parentheses indicate the number of actively participating persons. By the very nature of their assignments, Mediators and Arbitrators can be considered administrative volunteers, so from this point on we shall only deal with the categories of clerical and telephone consultants, and any new categories which may come into being.

In order to illustrate the evolution within the volunteer structure, a brief summary of monthly progress must be made.

In December, I as the new Volunteer Director, collected the pieces of the previous volunteer "program" from about ten different staff members. These pieces were assorted application forms, some of current volunteers and some of long-gone ones, a large calendar on which were written the names of the volunteers scheduled to appear that day, assorted letters to agencies trying to recruit volunteers, a few outdated PSA's, and a handful of notes about the varied reimbursement rates of different persons.

After sorting out the debris, I developed a program of what jobs needed doing and could be done by volunteers by talking with most of the supervisory staff. The recruitment and training programs were planned, an orientation system developed (which was later dropped for a better plan) and a brush-up system was devised for the Telephone Supervisor to use on currently working Telephone Consultants.

January brought the beginning of time sheets, reimbursement sheets, a new Volunteer Application and Interview and Record form and written notices and instructions for the volunteers. Training began as the PR efforts began to produce recruits.

February saw a continuation of training, twice weekly, and the construction of new booths for the TC's, supplemented by desk top equipment and new reference materials.

By March, the new organizational structure was well established and in April the number of working TC's allowed us to suspend training of more for approximately one month. This step was taken to accommodate the installation of a new telephone system and fortunately, a sufficient number of trained volunteers allowed it to be done without inconveniencing the telephoning public or members of the Bureau.

By this date, evolution had produced, not in name but by genesis, several administrative volunteer positions. These were:

Telephone Consultant-Receptionist: The TC who sat at the reception desk acted as receptionist and functioned as TC at the same time, answering both

the WATS line and usually another local line. This position was rotated among the T's whom the Supervisor felt to be capable.

Sales/Membership Aide: Volunteers who functioned as telephone secretaries - making appointments for a BBB sales representative to call on business firms, or making calls to urge BBB members whose dues were in arrears to bring their membership status up to date.

Secretary to the Director of Volunteers: This position is more accurately described as Executive Secretary and if the volunteer filling the job were with me more than one day a week it would be an Administrative Assistant position. I say this in spite of the fact that she is perfectly happy with the title of Secretary and takes all the pride in this job that she did in her recent paid job. So far, in addition to typing letters, she has made interview dates for PHEAA job applicants, sent out volunteer recruiting information in answer to telephoned requests, partially reorganized my office files and begun for me a new volunteer record keeping system (as suggested by this class), plus a myriad of other chores. The file and record reorganization I expect to be completed in a week or two.

Membership Rosters: Two volunteers, each working two days per week, have nearly completed the typing of alphabetical lists of BBB members which will serve as the basis for our new Roster of members. These two have their own chart on which to mark off the letter of the alphabet they've completed and a permanent place to keep and store their working materials, including card files and completed lists. This project is under the direction and supervision of the Director of Public Relations.

Office Assistant to Director of Volunteers: Because of a combination of Primary Election Day, April 27, and the District I Conference of the Better Business Bureaus in Pittsburgh, April 28-30, I was to be out of the office for four consecutive days. My Secretary minded the office on Tuesday, her regular day, and for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I asked one of the TC's who had expressed an interest in reconditioning the office skills she already possessed and learning others, in preparation for eventually going into the job market. She was happy to mind the office for three days, and answered the phone, mailed out recruitment information and helped the office typists wherever needed.

New Rev-o-file: Two volunteers, one trained as a TC and one not, are proceeding slowly (each works once a week) to copy the index cards in the Rev-o-file used by the TC's in order that we may have a third file. The ten working TC's often create waiting lines at the two existing files.

The development of the above jobs has been fairly smooth, considering the fact that all but one or two were developed on the spot to fit the available talent to the work needing doing. In one way I would feel it would indicate tremendous administrative ability and foresight on my part if I could say that we, in the office, planned these positions around work which was crying to be done, arranged the physical and supervisory details, and then that I went out and recruited persons suited to the work. That is not exactly what happened!

In most cases I was faced with a volunteer at my desk for an interview, who chose not to do TC work but who obviously like us and wanted to help in the office. Assignments were found, as noted above. Luckily for me,

our office is small and weekly staff meetings keep me well informed - too well I sometimes think - about jobs which different departments would like done by volunteers. And, not one of the staff is the least bit reticent about speaking up when they need help and telling me that they'd like to have a volunteer or two to do thus and so by such and such date.

New Supervisory/Administrative volunteer positions which have just begun or are about to begin are:

1) Reviewing call-record sheets to find qualified prospective new BBB member companies. A call record sheet is kept for every inquiry call coming into the Bureau now, and these are reviewed daily by a staff member. One of the volunteers doing the Membership Roster typing will be asked to do this on the two days a week he is in, thereby relieving the staff member of two thirds of this job.

2) Administrative Assistant to the Director of Volunteers. A student has been hired under the PHEAA plan to work full time for three months this summer at this job. A junior psych major, she will be an extension of me.

3) Another PHEAA student has been hired to be AA to the Telephone Supervisor for the summer. If this position works as planned, the Supervisor will have more time to do training of new TC's and supplemental or brush-up training of experienced TC's.

4) A third PHEAA student, who spent a week's work study time with us in January and liked us so well he came back every Friday afternoon as a volunteer is being trained now to supervise the newly begun Advertising Review and Shopping

program. One of our volunteer Mediators was hired part-time for one and one half months to organize the program and train TC's who have qualified (via meeting a time requirement) to move into another volunteer activity. This person will be leaving shortly and the student will be the anchor-man supervisor for the volunteer Ad Reviewers, most of whom will be in and working on Ad Review only one or two part days per week.

5) My Secretary's job will be expanded to include as much as possible of the time, record, and reimbursement paper work which I now do.

Counted among my immediate hopes (dreams) for other administrative jobs are:

Expanding the Referral Directory now used by the TC's. I would like to see one or two currently working TC's do this because they know best where their information gaps lie. I had previously thought of a summer student for this job, but I now feel I'd like to offer it to the TC's first to see if there is any interest.

Volunteer Bulletin Board: one or more volunteers who would maintain the Board, hang new items collected from me, staff and volunteers, clean off outdated notices and file away those which should be saved.

A volunteer newsletter - this sounds like an ambitious project, but it needn't be prohibitive in time, talent or money. We need communication, both laterally and vertically, and this is the way I would like to see it done.

A library: There is so much reference material scattered around the office that everyone would benefit from having it all in one bookshelf with proper labeling. The President agrees we need ^e this, and if we (staff) can find the shelf space to give to it, I know volunteer help here will be welcome. No Dewey Decimal

system needed - merely labels indicating the category of information, sign-out cards and a card file of library contents.

An idea I am approaching slowly is to have experienced TC's train new ones. The current system is that I do the initial orientation and formal training lecture. Following this comes four hours of staff-supervised on the job training with the phones. The first hour or so are usually done with me, and of the second two hours, one is always spent with one of our Trade Practice Persons (staff experts) and one with the Telephone Supervisor.

Our supervisor has not been with us long enough for me to ask her to make a decision on this idea yet. She would be the one who would have to pick and supervise the TC's doing the training and I don't want to force her into an idea she is not yet experienced enough to evaluate. Without her approval, I would not try to initiate such a plan.

Implementation of these hoped-for positions will vary. Having taken, unsuccessfully, step one toward interesting volunteers in maintaining the Volunteer Bulletin Board, I am going to have to approach it another way. I intend to print up HELP WANTED sheets and place them beside the Volunteer Sign-in Book. The Bulletin Board, Library, Newsletter and Referral Directory jobs will be listed with a clear and complete job description. Applicants will be asked to apply to the Director's office.

The time schedule for implementation of the Supervisory/Administrative volunteer positions is like everything else at the BBB -- pressing.

I am currently involved in implementing a non-volunteer related program, and this would involve a lot of time consuming, painstaking work. If successful, however, it will be very profitable to the Bureau. Therefore, the imperative is to get the volunteer program on as solid an organizational basis as soon as possible.

My undertaking of the new project gives me concern about the time I'll not be able to spend on the volunteer program. I am much aware the volunteer system does not run itself. After August 31 I will no longer have a full-time assistant either - but maybe there is an answer. If I can make the new assignment as profitable as its potential indicates, the Bureau will then be able to afford to hire an assistant for me. I shall keep you posted if you'd like.

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