

Volunteer Administration: New Roles for the Profession to "Make a Difference"

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These are exhilarating, crucial, exciting and challenging times! There are a number of dynamics that have pushed the profession of Volunteer Administration to the forefront. The dynamics and challenges include:

1. Better and more creative utilization of all resources, including human, time, money, space and environmental resources.
2. More creative thinking and challenging confrontation in relation to increasing the philanthropic contributions in the United States of America. Independent Sector makes clear that this is possible, but also adds that it is possible only through initiative taking, creativity and innovative methods.
3. A heavy emphasis on enlarging the volunteer workforce from 48% to 60% of all adults in our country by 1991. This includes involving more teenage volunteers and more older volunteers, but it also encourages the idea that the hours per week spent by volunteers could be increased by at least 10%. Further, if the volunteer workforce diversifies and becomes larger, the decision-making bodies of not-for-profit agencies need re-training so that they can meet documented needs through their mission, and program and service needs with appropriate volunteer jobs and forward-looking recruitment, training, placement, maintenance, recognition and professional supervision.
4. Increasing the ability of not-for-profit systems to raise funds in new, creative and different ways, and to involve the volunteers in more resource finding and fund raising activities. Recent studies show that

volunteers who are dedicated and/or committed to a cause or system will not only raise more moneys but give of their own moneys more easily than persons not connected to the system.

5. Increasing corporate involvement. Not only are corporate foundations interested in implementing their feelings of social responsibility through monetary gifts, but also the corporate world is offering employees the opportunity to volunteer. Some corporations have employee foundations where the workers decide how to spend the moneys they give. Since corporate involvement is relatively new, this is a place for proactive efforts on the part of Volunteer Administrators as well as volunteer decision makers.
6. A concern and a commitment to involve new publics as volunteers. These include un- and under-employed persons; persons who are either mentally or physically at risk; working persons from all kinds of employer systems; multi-ethnic and cultural persons; and more older and more younger people. The multi-cultural challenge is a particularly large one because it includes not only native people, but also persons who have recently come to our country.
7. Humanizing the volunteer work place. Involved here are such things as access to the work place, volunteer personnel policies that include recruitment standards, maintenance goals, as well as conditions for separating a volunteer from the work place. Thought must be given as to how to promote full participation from all parts of the system in in-

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fluencing and/or deciding those plans and decisions that affect persons in the system.

THE ROLE OF THE VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATOR

It is necessary to improve the importance, visibility, education, power and status of the Volunteer Administrator. The Association for Volunteer Administration has done a magnificent job in gaining larger acceptance and visibility for the profession. Each community and each system needs to make sure that the Volunteer Administrator is a person who is valued and known throughout the system, and indeed throughout the community.

It is therefore necessary to look at the functions of the Volunteer Administrator/Leader/Manager and be able to communicate these functions as professional and as essential in systems that have a volunteer population. It is now possible for the Volunteer Administrator to be professionally educated and certified, and there are opportunities to continue lifelong learning through professional education and on-the-job development opportunities.

PRESENT FUNCTIONS

Some of the tasks and functions that Volunteer Administrators regularly carry on include the following:

1. Supervision of employees and volunteers.
2. Consulting with volunteer decision makers.
3. Consulting inside the system as well as outside the system with other persons and groups.
4. Enabling individuals and groups to do their tasks.
5. Writing proposals, reports, letters and memos, etc.
6. Developing budgets and defending those budgets; often helping to raise the money for the budget.
7. Programming activities.
8. Interviewing, both paid persons and volunteers.

9. Planning a large variety of meetings.
10. Doing as well at leading future planning activities.
11. Training staff and volunteers.

In addition to these more common present tasks and functions, there are some emerging functions and roles that will become important as the Volunteer Administrator becomes more active, more elegantly assertive and better known.

EMERGING FUNCTIONS

There are also emerging functions, some of which are already being done by Volunteer Administrators, while others may still be a gleam in the eyes of planners and conceptualizers.

Volunteer Administrators will need to *be able to do action research*. With the heavy emphasis on measurable goal achievement, it is important that the Volunteer Administrator be familiar with and competent in research methodologies that will collect data and gain the kind of information that is needed. Included here may be attitude surveys, leadership and communication profiles, volunteer morale surveys and others. Able and adequate data collection will lead to the possibility of getting more money, such as matching grants, additional paid positions, and making relevant and appropriate organizational changes.

More emphasis needs to be put on *developing in-house volunteer programs*. It is important for the Volunteer Administrator to see the employees in his or her system as potential volunteers. There are many examples of such volunteer corps being organized. One of these is in a telephone company from which a Director of Volunteers has recruited a large group of volunteers to do in-house training. These volunteer trainers have developed their training designs as well as delivering the courses both on company time and after hours.

There is the possibility that *employee foundations might be developed in the not-for-profit sector* just as they have been in the corporate world.

Staff-volunteer teams must be developed. It is no longer possible to worry about impro-

ving relationships between staff and volunteers. Rather the emphasis needs to be on how volunteers and staff together can deliver the product, programs and services of the particular system.

The development of *in-house collaborative training* between disparate units or departments is another thing that the Volunteer Administrator can initiate and spearhead. This is in addition to creatively developing collaborative training and other activities with other agencies or systems in the community.

More than ever before, the modern Volunteer Administrator will be a *linker or connector* to other functions within the system as well as to resources outside the particular system.

Technology Transfer Volunteer Corps must be developed. The frontier work in this was done by the Research and Development Centers of governmental agencies and by the Service Corps of Union Carbide Corporation. Volunteers with specific technological knowledge and expertise offer their services on short-term or temporary bases to civic and not-for-profit agencies. These systems usually have no budget for consultants to select and install a computer, reorganize a building for better use of space, fix leaking roofs and/or improve the productivity and participation in local town meetings, to name but a few. Often the Technology Transfer Volunteer is a person who is about to retire or has just retired but has lost none of her or his technological expertise and is eager to continue to be productive.

Transition Management, a new field, becomes an important one for Volunteer Administrators. Human beings go through mini and maxi transitions, and need help while doing so. Mini transitions might include a transit from living in one part of town to another or moving from one agency or organization to another. Maxi transitions include such things as becoming single, having children grow up and leave home, illness, becoming unemployed, and the death of important others. Volunteering can often serve to help with these transitions if the Administrator is sensitive to such facts and includes getting information on them during the volunteer recruitment interview

or through ongoing feedback sessions either on an individual or group level.

Employee Assistance Programs are being developed in many work places. They began with assisting employees who were suffering from substance abuse problems, but many of these EAPs are becoming a broader kind of helping function and may include transition and transfer counseling, information hotlines, family and health counseling and prevention programs as well as stress reduction programs. The Volunteer Administrator could take a very active role in helping such Employee Assistance Programs deal with the problems of the whole human being and offer volunteer opportunities as one of the ways to help persons with some of the problems they have. In addition, volunteers could be placed as helpers in EAPs.

The Volunteer Administrator must become an *internal consultant* who is seen by members of all departments or units as a necessary human resources development person who has particular expertise in helping to look at how to help people give an important service as well as gain important rewards from that service. These Administrators should be experts in humanizing the work place.

COMPETENCIES NEEDED

There are at least ten competencies that become important if a Volunteer Administrator is to be a member of this new, exciting, and "coming-of-age" profession. These ten competencies will be considered a management function. The persons who first suggested some of these functions were Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book, *Leaders*. Here they are:

1. *Management of attention*, which includes the ability to motivate, get people's attention, to communicate commitment which attracts people to serve. A person able to motivate has vision that others may not have of both goals and directions of the particular service and/or product. The person is artfully assertive and knows what s/he wants. S/he does not waste time, either his or her own or other people's, and is willing to take risks involving the appropriate others in decision making and planning.

2. *Management of the present and the future.* Included here is the ability to have vision and communicate that vision of goals, sources, products, directions and be excited and enthusiastic about the possibilities of the system moving towards this vision.

3. *Management of time, own and others'.* This means that the Administrator has really thought through how to manage his or her time, as well as being sensitive to the time availabilities and the abilities of others. Time management is taught to all as a necessary skill.

4. *Management of meaning,* which includes the ability to communicate clearly so as to be understood. The Administrator must be able to communicate vision, goals and directions so clearly that they become real to others. It is important for the Volunteer Administrator to be upbeat and positive rather than negative and problem oriented. This means an attitude of "we can and shall do it" versus "it will be hard but let us try and see where we get to."

5. *The management and development of trust.* This means that the Administrator encourages trust in the board and throughout the whole system of employees and volunteers. Trust is encouraged when a person is seen as reliable and constant in word and action. It may be said of such a person that "you always know where he or she is coming from." Such persons are open, can be counted on and are not constantly changeable. Also, they know and utilize the resources of others and appreciate and give credit to those others. It might also be said that they believe in and tap into the collective wisdom.

6. *The creative management of traditions* is another competency that is needed for most of the not-for-profit systems as well as some of the systems in which Volunteer Administrators work other than those, which have long, valued and important traditions. A modern Volunteer Administrator learns to deal creatively with these traditions, valuing those things that should be kept, and finding elegant ways to deal with those things that are no longer viable.

7. *The management and knowledge of self* is important. The person is comfortable with his or her abilities as well as limitations.

She or he can deploy these skills effectively, is self-critical but not deprecating, and enjoys doing, winning and succeeding. Persons who know themselves are not worried about failure, for they feel that a mistake is just another way of doing things and can be a learning tool.

8. *The management of others.* The effective Volunteer Administrator believes in empowering others and has the skill to do so. This Administrator gives pace, energy and encouragement to the work of others and delegates effectively. Other persons are made to feel significant and that they make a difference. Empowerment has to be believed in for everyone, up and down and sideways in the system, staff and volunteers, if it is to work and uncork the creative resources of all persons. This means that people are pulled toward a goal rather than pushed. It also includes that the goal of successor leadership is built in by the Administrator.

9. *The management of a multi-cultural, diverse work team.* This is becoming more and more important, and it focuses on the ability to celebrate difference. It is important to build on the beauty of difference rather than seeing conformity as the foremost value. All work teams are becoming more diverse as people bring a variety of lifestyles, values, understandings, sensitivities and abilities to them. Appreciation of difference as a way of producing a better product and as a way of learning from one another becomes necessary.

10. *The management of power and influence* is based on the belief that administrators of voluntary programs have both power and influence and that they need to become more comfortable and more facile in using these assets. Both power and influence go with any management job, but the proof of effective leadership is how these two dynamics are understood and utilized.

Thus the excellent Volunteer Administrator challenges others, envisions superb products, programs and services; feels and communicates pride, enthusiasm and commitment; detects, selects and keeps able co-workers, members, staff and volunteers; gives credit to others easily; develops a family or team of different persons to participate in the delivery of the

services; is dedicated to the work and may even love it; embodies and articulates his or her own values

It is a time of choice, challenge, creativity, complexity and change—a wonderful time to be a “difference maker” in the volunteer world!

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