

# Reality Management: Risks We Must Take—Changes, Challenges and Choices For Volunteer Administrators—1986 and Onward

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Change is ever with us, and the challenges which come with these changes are therefore a part of our lives. Six major changes and challenges will affect the role of the consultant and trainer during the remainder of this decade. Overriding these changes are at least three threads or threats.

## THREADS AND TRENDS

### 1. *Doing more, better, with less.*

This should concern all of us because we are seeing a tax revolt by citizen voters. The lessening value of the dollar, inflation and economic turmoil must be reflected and considered in the way organizations, communities and individuals do business. At the same time, we have a demand for more services. So, we have to do more with less! We have to provide better services with less materials and monies, in addition to an increasing creative utilization of human resources.

There are opportunities for entrepreneurship—for creative fund development and tapping in collaboration with the business, corporate and private foundation sectors. Money is available, but new funding methods, techniques and relationships must be developed.

### 2. *The fluctuating national mood.*

There is a fluctuating national mood that affects all the changes mentioned in this article. We have been moving from optimism and clarity to cynicism and pessimism, to apathy, to lack of clarity, to what Lord Snow has defined as "holing

in." This optimism/pessimism, faith/cynicism affects the people with whom we work, and the mood changes depending on the value of the dollar, election results, the state of various world crises, and the general state of hostility and violence in local communities. Administrators and volunteer decision makers need to be sensitive to fluctuating international, national, local and personal needs.

### 3. *More rapid and complex changes.*

We are experiencing more rapid and complex changes than ever before. The late Margaret Mead wrote in a major scientific journal that anybody over the age of thirty is an immigrant to those under that age. That was her way to capsule the rapidity and complexity of the changes taking place.

We, too, must keep this in mind as we talk about specific changes and challenges that affect our field. An important piece of the complexity is the information overload, and the constant development of new techniques, new knowledge and new technology which will rapidly become outdated.

Volunteer administrators must be able and willing to take more risks as changes occur and as some of the consequences or dynamics of the changes cannot be predicted.

## CHANGES AND CHALLENGES

### *Change No. 1: Demographic and Population Changes.*

Changes in population are extremely

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important in our business. A variety of dynamics is included here, such as high mobility—persons in and out of cities, in and out of the country and in and out of our rural areas. The population is growing older, and the number of young employees will continue to decrease. Sixty-three percent of the labor force will be between the ages of 25 and 44 by 1990. Thus there will be an increase in the availability of older workers, with "older" being defined as 55 years and older. Older is increasingly younger. There will also be an increase in the number of employed women, with sixty percent of the new jobs likely to be filled by women, and seventy percent of all employable women working by 1990. There are vast groups of new immigrant populations, particularly from Pacific Asian and Spanish speaking countries. This number is dramatically increasing in many urban areas.

We shall see increasing competition for work by employable persons. There are some groups who are particularly concerned about the fact that new immigrants are competing for jobs with native born U.S. citizens.

*Challenges* include:

1. Ways to integrate the new, non-native workers.
2. Decreasing stress of persons working in highly competitive systems.
3. Training people who work with new employees as peers, and the training of supervisors to supervise all employees.
4. The need for persons and systems to understand and utilize the resources of different age and stage, ethnic and racial groups. This is extremely important in a competitive world where different resources could be utilized to advance the process of program and service development.
5. The need to keep current with the changes in population and demography in and around the area in which we work.

6. Learning how to deal creatively with unions and other employee and professional representative organizations.
7. Helping older workers accept and work with younger persons—volunteers and staff.

*Change No. 2: Value Changes.*

Value changes might be looked at as moving from an emphasis on one value to other kinds of values. It is interesting that here is the epitome of the state of transition we are experiencing. Transition is the key to unlocking and understanding our own society at this time. We are moving from:

- An emphasis on one loyalty or a few major loyalties to multiple loyalties, applying to one's personal as well as one's professional life.
- An emphasis on permanent commitments to an understanding and appreciation of "temporariness." This means that heretofore a lifelong relationship with a spouse, or working from the bottom up in a company was considered satisfactory and positive. Now it is also considered permissible to have sequential relationships both with personal partners as well as in the volunteering work and professional worlds.
- Feelings of working to live to living to work, with the term worklife encompassing demands for improved quality of worklife, including volunteer worklife: such things as increased participation in decision making, an increasingly participative structure at work, flexible work hours, part-time work, shared work, etc.
- Little or no emphasis on health to an increased sensitivity and consciousness of the importance of health and a healthy environment.
- Respect for authority to a confronting and questioning of authority and authority figures.
- Much conforming to time and timing

patterns to more situational timing, and a new understanding of how time can be utilized and organized to one's advantage. We are also moving from day and night cities to 24-hour cities and 24-hour services, many of which are already available in larger population centers throughout the world.

*Challenges include:*

1. The need to focus on the individual, and to build meaningful rewards and recognition into people's work-life and volunteer worklife, and to some extent, into their personal life.
2. It becomes increasingly important to develop career ladders and life-goals planning as part of the on-the-job planning development and training programs for staff and volunteers.
3. It may be valuable to offer opportunities for value clarifications, so that persons can look at what values they wish to hold on to, and which they might release.
4. It is important to develop new ways to involve employees and volunteers in decision making, both individually and in groups.
5. There must be incentives to decrease alienation from work and to increase motivation and satisfaction for all employed and volunteer workers.
6. It is also possible to involve volunteers and employees in developing new work patterns and new ways to improve both the conditions of work as well as the product and/or service being produced/provided.
7. There may be a need to develop some new ways for volunteers and staff to relate to each other across functions—a more collaborative mode both horizontally and vertically.

*Change No. 3: Changing Organizations.*

As society changes, as technology revolutionizes the workload, as new information is available and new ways are found to distribute it, organizations will have to change. New organizational structures are developing from the matrix organization to the "flattened-out" organization. Some organizations are becoming more centralized, others more decentralized. But whatever the change, organizations are responding to some of the trends that are now or will be happening in our society and in the world.

Changes included here are the multinational collaborations between either the units of the same system or units of different complexes working toward similar goals and purposes. New collaborations are developing between business, government and private non-profit organizations. Indeed, some interesting networks are developing that utilize human resources, knowledge and time in more creative and "doing more with less" ways. Also, there is more inter-unit competition for good services, or better product, or more units completed in a given amount of time.

There is an increasing emphasis by large systems on their social responsibility. This is evidenced in the participation in community life by large-system people, and in the development in many large companies of a new job category, that of directors of community affairs or directors of volunteer services. There is a trend in business to have employees participate in worthwhile community projects as volunteers.

There is also a clear emphasis on mission, on goal setting clarity, as well as the involvement in planning of as many people as possible.

As the dollar tightens, there is more emphasis on in-house training and upgrading. There will be a decreasing need for outside consultants, or, where outside consultants are used, they will be a part of an inside/outside team for the purposes of strengthening the insider, giving him or her more visibility, more skills, and making them more able to carry on without the use of outside help.

*Challenges* for changing organizations:

1. To help staff members have skills of organizational diagnosis so they not only have a number of alternative methods available, but so they can implement these methods, or know whom to ask for help inside or outside of their system.
2. To help staff and volunteers learn how to handle confrontation and hostility. This becomes extremely important since, in most settings, decision makers do not have the skills to handle confrontations creatively and usefully.
3. To help decision makers and others learn the skills of collaboration. There is a great deal of skill involved in trying to help different persons and organizations work together toward common goals and/or purposes.
4. Volunteer Administrators need to help persons with whom they work learn to understand and manage a matrix organization, if that is what the system is moving toward, or is already involved in.
5. Increased knowledge of general systems theory is helpful.
6. Multi-cultural knowledge and skills. The latter is particularly important in a society where, due to the influx of newcomers as well as equal opportunity legislation, there will be many different people working together in a unit, doing similar jobs. The differences may be nationality, age, sex, race, religion, life style, etc. Also, persons at risk physically, emotionally or socially are increasingly entering the job and volunteer work place. All these different people need to be integrated into the work groups or work teams.
7. People on all levels need to become more sophisticated communicators, with the ability to communicate with a variety of different persons and groups. For instance, the physician must communicate with the patient, the paramedical person, the aide, the volunteer, the social worker, persons representing the religious community, as well as colleagues in the medical community with different specialties.
8. In many systems, it is becoming increasingly important to help appropriate persons learn effective community relations, and the utilization of volunteers within the system, and/or workers who are utilized as volunteers in the community, not only to give service, but to do a public relations job for the system.
9. As available funds for outside consultants decrease, it is vital to develop inside training capacities and to develop volunteers as trainers or co-trainers with staff.
10. On all decision-making levels it is useful to help people learn the skills of goal setting, futuring, and the implementation of plans. There are alternative methods and techniques for doing this. Participants/staff/volunteers who learn how to do futuring and goal planning with action strategy skills become an important asset to their own systems.
11. It becomes increasingly necessary for administrators to be creative on the spot, utilizing all their knowledge, skill, experiences, and sensitivities, as well as their willingness to take risks to develop new ways to work, instruments, methods and techniques.

*Change No. 4: Changes of Complex Communication Technology and Systems.*

Workshops ranging from a few hours to several weeks are being given to introduce persons who had a background in machine technology to the purpose, philosophy and utilization of computer technology.

Computers are but one part of the developing systems revolution, certainly an important part, including large computers in the work world, as well as home computers, and small portable computers. Some old machines are going out of date, and many new ones are or seem to be a great deal more complex. Certainly it is clear that the new machines can do a vast variety of tasks, providing that the human beings guiding them understand their capacities and limitations.

There are multi-media possibilities for in-house training. This means that with fewer dollars and better trained internal trainers, more people can have in-house training opportunities without the cost of travel, lodging and tuition.

The information explosion is exciting and frustrating at the same time. Yet, it is with us, and it is important to develop a priority system to know which information is needed, and which should be eliminated.

There also is rapid change in both staff and volunteer jobs. Old jobs become obsolescent, or need to be done in new and different ways. Indeed, if one wants to keep up with one's job it becomes increasingly necessary to have an ongoing lifelong learning experience, either in-house or elsewhere.

#### *Challenges:*

1. Complex communication technology changes require that all appropriate personnel, staff and volunteer, understand them and become familiar and comfortable with the new socio-technical systems.
2. There should be opportunities to look at and learn about new media possibilities. These include conferencing by computer which will make it possible for units that are geographically separated to consult with each other on a regular basis.
3. It also is important to help clients sort out what they need to know in terms of current information.
4. Administrators must become comfortable with what they don't know,

and be able and willing to tap into and utilize resource experts in addition to themselves.

5. It becomes increasingly important to "footnote"—to give recognition and credit to the colleagues with whom one works and/or from whom one has learned.

#### *Change No. 5: Emphasis on Better Utilization and Development of Human Resources.*

This is perhaps one of the most exciting changes because of the increased emphasis on the more humane tapping, development and utilization of all human resources.

This includes opportunities to develop underutilized human resources, such as women, minority persons, emotionally and physically handicapped persons, newcomers to our shores, low-status persons who have had a minimum of opportunities, volunteers and older citizens in our society. In some cases we can add the very young as part of the underutilized human resource population.

Opportunities for in-house mobility as a motivation for work are being developed. These include in-house, on-the-job training, career counseling, community-service counseling, pre-retirement counseling, and incentives for taking ongoing educational development courses, either internally or elsewhere.

There is concern about the improvement of the quality of work life for all, including professional persons, volunteers, custodial persons, paraprofessional and clerical persons. This permeates all levels, all kinds of work, from the top executive to the newest direct-service employee or volunteer. The exciting part of this change is that it emphasizes the participation of staff and volunteer workers in developing and implementing things that will improve their quality of work life, or recommending implementations and suggestions, when these cannot be done by the workers themselves.

It is becoming clear that it is necessary to utilize many diverse "heads" and specialties to make decisions and solve problems, rather than relying on the capabilities of only one or two people. As the world becomes more complex, a

more complex and diverse group of human beings must be gathered to analyze, diagnose and make decisions in relation to a vast variety of puzzlements and problems.

New human-service teams, made up of volunteers, professionals and paraprofessionals, are being developed. These teams emphasize and utilize different resources and capabilities of its members. Such teams may be found in probation departments, school systems, hospitals, etc.

#### Challenges:

1. In order to uncork human potential, to increase tapping into available human resources, to better utilize what human beings have to offer, it will be necessary to learn a variety of approaches, including: the development of human resources skills banks, temporary task and work forces, and teaming in different ways for a variety of purposes both for short and long term periods.
2. It will also be important to learn and understand the characteristics of different people. These include value and cultural differences, life style, belief systems, child rearing patterns, and differences in family structures. The challenge here is to utilize the beauty of differences.
3. It will be important to learn new communication skills with different communication receivers in mind. For instance, the physician needs to communicate with patients, nursing staff, paramedical persons, social workers, occupational therapists, religious persons, and a variety of volunteers. The physician also needs to communicate with hospital administrators, the court system, insurance systems, the police and even unions.
4. New recognition and reward systems will be needed in addition to the present salary and wage classification and increase patterns. Included here are: skill in verbal and non-verbal recognition, rewards for

innovative ideas, feedback on feedback, etc.

5. Continuing lifelong education must be developed so that all involved persons will not only have the challenge, but also the necessary skills to keep motivated, excited, and productive.
6. Creative, participative, experiential, ever changing training and learning opportunities must be developed for all parts of the system.

#### Change No. 6: Creative Leadership.

More emphasis will be placed on creativity and initiative of leadership persons than ever before. Administrators and other leaders will need both right and left brain functions if they are to do an adequate job of leading. Administrators need to be educators-trainers, as well as managers of persons.

As conflict increases as part of the changing systems, it will become increasingly necessary to learn to utilize conflict in creative and useful ways. Moving with the theme of doing more with less, there will need to be an emphasis on the understanding of the financial perspective and its management.

Leaders will need to continually update their own knowledge and skills, and make sure that the same opportunities are offered to others in the system. It is interesting to note that one of the changes in leadership will continue to be the need for leaders to know when and how to *involve*, as well as whom to involve in decision making and problem solving and/or influencing the planning, decision making and problem solving.

Leaders will have to be conversant with some of the changing combinations that provide opportunity for the functions of leadership to be carried out both in the professional and volunteer arenas. Some of these combinations include:

- *co-leaders*, where the powers of the leadership and tasks are shared fairly equally;
- *shared leadership*, where there is an agreement between leaders on who will do what and how they will share,

- which may or may not be equal;
- *sequential leadership*, where there is an agreement of who will be the leader for what amount of time and who will follow;
- *functional leadership*, where the leader becomes the leader because he or she has some particular knowledge or skill to offer for a particular task, and when that is no longer needed, someone else will take over the leadership role (i.e. a financial expert could be the leader when budget and financial future plans are being settled, but relinquishes that role when future planning of some other kind is done); and
- *temporary combinations of decision-making leaderships*: this may be as temporary as one time, or may take as long as six to eight months, depending on the situation and needs.

#### Challenges:

1. The challenges here include helping persons who have been long-time leaders to change their style, and to understand why such changes are needed, and to help them learn the skills in operational settings of tapping into the resources of other persons working with them.
2. It will be important to help leaders learn how to detect conflict, and to utilize it as a resource, rather than seeing it as a divider or as resistance. Indeed, here it may be important to help the leaders learn that the energy expended by resisters to change is energy that can be harnessed to make the change more creative and more useful. Conflict utilization and resolution will become a very important leadership skill and tool.
3. Another challenge will be to help administrators become more sensitive to the many realities in their systems, and to understand how to communicate these to those with whom they work. Head persons will need to know what style of leadership is needed when, and leaders will need to be comfortable with the

challenges and complexities of change. Of course no leader can know everything, but competent leaders can know where the resources for help are when they are needed.

#### RISK TAKING

*Volunteer administrators will need to take risks, including the following, throughout the '80s, '90s, and beyond:*

1. To increase our knowledge and skills in relation to such things as future trends, trend analysis, and alternative ways to do future planning.
2. To increase our training methodology tool kits. To invent new, creative and individually or organizationally tailored training designs. Each situation has some ingredients different from the last one, and deserves the creative abilities of the administrator/trainer/consultant in designing experiences to fit a particular situation, its purposes, needs, and money and time budgets.
3. To risk the inside/outside team concept, and be willing to team with an insider or outsider, as the case may be, in order to increase our skills, visibility, methodology and ability to influence, as well as to be of real help to the other person or persons.
4. Most volunteer administrators will need to add to what they know already in terms of data collection and resource techniques, including action research methodology and techniques, simulations, multi-media instruments and group interviewing, for example.
5. To selectively utilize or not utilize new technology, packages, machines, etc. All that is new is not necessarily better, nor is all that is old necessarily bad or outdated. Technology must be tailored to the particular situation which includes not only the purposes of training, but also the money, time and human budgets available.
6. To learn more effective ways to involve potential participants in planning and training, and to have experienced participants learn the skills of becoming trainers helping newcomers.
7. To risk the willingness to understand and learn all about the new technologies, and then know how to selectively use

them or not use them.

8. To be able to look at better utilization of our time as well as that of our volunteers and clients.

9. We must learn more skillful ways to confront volunteers and/or staff when they believe there is an honest difference of opinion, of value, or diagnosis. It is important to be able to differ in constructive and creative ways.

10. We must not only talk about temporariness, but be willing to be temporary. There must be willingness to experiment, and to be able to differentiate success from failure in the experiment. It becomes important to be able to risk failure as well as success.

11. The willingness to risk introducing the possibility of volunteer services in and by the systems in new and different ways.

12. Another risk is making plans for ongoing professional and educational development for and with all parts of the system.

13. We must be willing to risk admitting that we do not know something. At this point it is important to be able to recruit additional resources.

14. To help all persons in the system learn modern, participative, productive meeting technologies.

15. To support staff and volunteers in the knowledge and practice that mistakes are part and parcel of being, leading and managing, and that one can learn from and grow as a result of both mistake and success analysis.

It is exciting, interesting and challenging to live in turbulent, and changing times. As volunteer administrators, our professional skills will continuously be confronted, and therefore we must grow and change to produce the best possible programs, products and services for delivery to our members, clients and other participants.

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