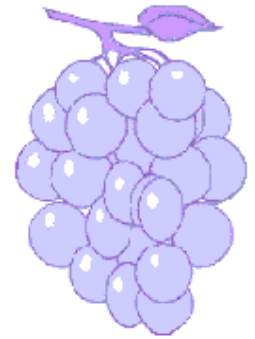

Grapevine



VAT: Sept/Oct

Volunteerism's Newsletter

Vintage: 1997

This article is being re-printed for non-commercial use as approved by *GRAPEVINE*, A Volunteerism Newsletter.
To subscribe -- \$25.00 per year --
via Volunteer Sales Center, CAHHS, P. O. Box 340100, Sacramento, CA 95834-0100.
Credit card orders: (800) 272-8306.

Creating a New Career Path for Yourself and for the Profession: Some Starting Steps

Dr. Ivan Scheier

Last issue I called this role *Consultant/Producer* to Entirely Volunteer Groups (who's got a better name?) and described it as follows: "paid part-time for each (of a set of such groups), this professional would offer services such as occasional on-call troubleshooting, technical assistance in planning or other program functions, and actual operation of certain program pieces such as newsletter production, membership campaigns, or educational events..."

The article ended with the hope to learn of precedent, partial or full, and that hope has been fulfilled by a *Grapevine* reader. So here are some suggestions:

1. **Don't Quit Your Day Job** -- Keep whatever financial base you need elsewhere while you ease into this new role. In fact, you can test the waters gradually without risking financial suicide
2. **Define Potential Clientele as Broadly as Possible** -- Everything that has been said about the need for this service by entirely volunteer groups (e.g., non-staffed groups) can also be said about under-staffed groups, small non-profits or small groups that aren't incorporated in any way. If, as estimated, there are about six million entirely volunteer groups in North America, there could well be fifteen million small community groups as potential clientele - which means there might be one such group for every 20 individuals in your community!
3. **Think Carefully about the Services Such Groups Might Need** -- Your final list should include results of actually talking to a sample of such groups. Barbara Bradley, CVA, who considered something like the new role before she ever heard about it from me, has the following provisional list:
 - Administrative Services: development of mission, goals and objectives; development of policy and procedures manuals; development of board, staff, and volunteer position descriptions; development of record-keeping systems; development of program evaluation systems; and development of Bylaws and Standing Rules.
 - Computer Services: word processing; mail merge; membership records; invitations or fliers; award certificates; and presentation materials.

This is far from final in Barbara's planning (nor does she plan to implement the role in a big way), but the list does indicate potential services a distinguished and experienced volunteer administration professional can come up with as a starter. Your list would, of course, be different. In terms of small group needs, the services provided by the association manager (secretariat) firms should give you some suggestions. However, discussion of the emerging role with volunteer coordinators suggests that many of them feel it's an uncomfortable step backwards professionally to get into the business of providing such basic administrative services. As you wish; my own view is that this would develop trust and credibility enough so that the groups would then be ready for more professional services such as board training, long-range planning, membership development, and the like. Moreover, insofar as basic services were a necessary part of

the package, you could associate with others willing to provide such services; indeed, you might become on-calling consulting staff for an association management firm.

4. *Don't Go Global in Developing a List of Potential Clients* -- It's not just that 15 million is a very long list; it's that even locally you don't need, and are unlikely to find, anything like a complete list of small under-staffed or non- staff groups, which tend to be invisible in service directories. At the pilot test stage you'll probably need no more than an initial list of perhaps 50-75 potential client groups. Barbara Bradley wisely sees Volunteer Centers and net- working with colleagues as a good source for such a list. On the latter, start with the small groups you belong to who might need your services and be able to afford modest fees for them. You can then approach each of these groups individually.