

# CHANGING THE PARADIGM

## Building Understanding and Collaboration:

### Creating Synergistic Relationships Between Staff and Volunteers

The Paradigm Organizational Effectiveness Series #4



POINTS OF LIGHT  
FOUNDATION

The Paradigm  
Organizational Effectiveness Series #4

**Building Understanding and Collaboration:  
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**Contents**

**I. Introduction .....1**

**II. Respecting the Contribution and Talents  
of Organizational Staff .....3**

**III. Increasing Teamwork Between Paid and Volunteer Staff .....6**

**IV. Sharing Stories of Success .....9**

**V. Tools for Building Understanding and Collaboration .....11**



## Introduction

In 1991, The Points of Light Foundation initiated a research project to identify the characteristics of effective volunteer programs. This Changing the Paradigm Project eventually defined eleven such characteristics, of which the following dealing with relationships between staff and volunteers are the subject of this paper:

- ◆ Paid staff are respected and are empowered to fully participate in planning, decision making and management related to volunteer involvement.
- ◆ There is a conscious, active effort to reduce the boundaries and increase the teamwork between paid and volunteer staff.
- ◆ Success breeds success as stories of the contributions of volunteers - both historically and currently - are shared among both paid and volunteer staff.

An effective volunteer program requires cooperation between staff and volunteers and a commitment from both parties to encourage and respect the contributions of the other.

Agencies depend upon the human relationships established by those connected with them, and the success of the agency will depend in part upon whether these connections foster collaboration or create conflict. Agencies are, in many ways, simply the sum of the relationships within them. Positive relationships create an environment in which staff and volunteers are more productive and feel better about what they are doing. Negative relationships may prevent even the most competent from accomplishing their objectives.

Volunteer-involving agencies are inherently more unstable in their relationships than most staff-centered programs. The relatively shorter period of involvement by most volunteers means that, from the perspective of many staff, the volunteers may seem to be disruptions to the established social fabric. They may only appear at separated intervals (and thus seem more like guests than part of the family), and they may begin and end their commitment in short time frames (and thus seem more like tourists). Volunteers may also remain separated because they work outside of normal staff business hours or work outside of the office. The sense of discontinuity felt by staff is not because of any inherent dislike or resentment of the volunteers, it is simply because it is harder to naturally bring the volunteers into the social fabric of the organization when their

involvement happens within a different temporal or physical context than that of the staff.

When an agency makes use of leadership volunteers or volunteers with extensive professional talents or experiences, it adds another level of difficulty to the mix of relationships. Staff who support leadership volunteers face challenges in accommodating their own feelings of professionalism to the leadership role of the volunteer. Staff who deal with very experienced volunteers may feel difficulties in knowing how to relate to an individual who they recognize as having much more expertise than they.

The principles developed by the Paradigm Project reveal the ways to reduce this sense of separation and to create an organizational fabric that makes staff and volunteers feel equally welcome and invited to participate. They target some areas in which staff and volunteer leadership, as well as program managers, can concentrate efforts to reduce friction, build teamwork, and strengthen the bonds of positive relationships within the agency.

## Respecting the Contribution and Talents of Organizational Staff

In our increasingly complex world, the delivery of services by agencies has become more and more dominated by paid staff. This is not a bad thing; rather it is simply a reflection of the increasing difficulty of the work. Most of the paid staff who work in nonprofit organizations do so with the same dedication and commitment to help others that motivates the participation of volunteers. The vast majority of staff welcome the participation of volunteers, at least in principle, yet many of them have experienced difficulties in developing effective working relationships with volunteers. We will discuss two major reasons for this difficulty in this section.

***Paid staff are respected and empowered to fully participate in planning, decision making and management related to volunteer involvement.***

### Staff Relationships with the Agency

One reason for the difficulty of staff in working with volunteers is that in many agencies the staff themselves feel a sense of mistreatment or neglect. The nonprofit sector is often distinguished by an unfortunate tendency to fail to exercise good management toward paid staff, not just toward volunteers. Many nonprofit agencies have no organized personnel system, and no staff development procedures. Staff, faced by years of budgetary cutbacks and mounting pressure for services, may feel stifled in their own professional development and underappreciated by their organizations and their clients.

One of the underrecognized truths of the social service field is that staff and volunteers working within agencies have more similarities than differences. Each has an ethical or religious commitment to helping others. Each has chosen to become involved in agencies addressing community problems. Each cares more about the work they are doing than the surroundings or the perquisites of the work. Staff and volunteers actually share the same basic values about the intrinsic importance of what they are doing. While it is correct to credit volunteers for their decision to serve without pay, it is also wise to remember that social service agency staff are clearly not making their deci-

sion to work within their agency solely on the basis of payment either.

Volunteer participation will be exceedingly difficult in any agency in which the paid staff perceive the following treatment:

- ◆ A lack of involvement in key decision making
- ◆ A lack of trust from leadership
- ◆ A lack of respect for their abilities and uniqueness
- ◆ A lack of recognition for their contributions

A principle learned in the customer service discipline has great relevance when translated to the field of volunteer involvement: "Staff will tend to treat volunteers in the same way that management treats staff." Supervisory styles tend to flow downhill, and an organization in which the leadership fails to empower staff will have great difficulty in encouraging staff to empower volunteers. An organization in which staff feel a lack of respect will also tend not to respect volunteers.



***Staff will tend to treat volunteers in the same way that management treats staff.***



It is equally true that in cases where there is conflict among staff, or between staff and agency leadership, volunteer turnover will be higher. Volunteers will generally decide to avoid this type of war zone atmosphere, preferring to become involved with agencies which are fighting larger and more important battles against the real problems in their communities. Volunteers are freer than staff in making decisions to avoid unpleasant situations, and most volunteers will prefer to invest their time and their talents in organizations where the major effort is devoted to fighting the problems of the world, not fighting each other.

Staff may also have difficulties in agencies which have traditionally been controlled entirely by volunteers and which are just beginning to make a transition to paid employees. In this case, the long-term volunteers who have run the

agency (either as highly active board members or as long-term service providers) can make it difficult for staff to feel as though they have a rightful place within the agency. Highly involved volunteers may have the same difficulty accommodating themselves to paid staff that paid staff in other agencies have to making use of service volunteers. Each may feel that the newcomers lack the necessary commitment or experience to be trusted with their organization.

### **Staff Relationships with the Volunteer Program**

One way to increase the empowerment of staff is to make sure that they participate fully in the development and operation of the volunteer program. Staff will find it difficult to feel supportive or trusting of a program in which they do not share decision making.

There are several key elements for this participation:

1. When a volunteer program is being developed, staff should be fully involved in discussing the program and determining the rationale of the agency for the involvement of volunteers. Volunteer programs which are thrust upon staff simply create confusion and resistance. Staff should be allowed to consider the appropriateness of volunteers and their place in the organizational scheme of things and given time to adopt their own philosophical belief in the utilization of volunteers. A volunteer program which is forced upon staff will create either resentment or indifference. Either attitude will be quickly perceived by volunteers.

2. Staff should also be allowed to discuss their concerns and fears related to the use of volunteers and to help determine what answer there may be to these considerations. Many staff will have legitimate concerns regarding quality of service, liability, organizational readiness or even their own ability to work with volunteers. These perceived difficulties will become real barriers unless they are surfaced and dealt with. Those in charge of volunteer involvement should solicit the opinions of staff about the involvement of volunteers, utilizing tools such as the sample assessment on page 12.

3. Staff should participate fully in all of the key aspects of volunteer program operation: job

design, interviewing and selection, training, supervision, recognition. In many ways, staff are the true customers or end users of the volunteer program, and the more they are involved in designing and developing the volunteer "product" that is provided them, the more likely that this product will meet their needs and serve their purposes. A good volunteer program manager operates as a consultant to their agency staff, tailoring the involvement of volunteers to the needs of the staff person and the clients.

4. One of the great barriers to volunteer effectiveness is the simple lack of knowledge and experience on the part of most staff regarding volunteer management. Almost no staff receive either orientation or training in the effective involvement of volunteers. Managing volunteers is not the same as managing paid staff, and we should not expect untrained staff to know how to work effectively with volunteers or know how to be creative about volunteer involvement. Staff who are to work with volunteers should receive appropriate orientation and training, either in a formal class or through a simple handout such as the *Staff Guide to Planning for Volunteers* on page 10. Knowledge about volunteers can be disseminated through an agency in various ways, of which the simplest is having regular discussions about volunteer involvement problems or achievements at staff meetings.

"We tend to concentrate on instances of discrimination against volunteers which do exist. We need also to consider where volunteers get better treatment than staff: higher quality training, more careful matching to appropriate work, and above all, more recognition. Small wonder staff are sometimes envious."

— Ivan Scheier

5. Staff should participate equally in the success of the volunteer program. This means that staff should be given feedback about the contributions that volunteers are making to the accomplishment of the agency's mission and should be involved in deciding how volunteers can most effectively continue to contribute to achieving that mission. Staff

should also be rewarded for the assistance that they themselves give to enabling volunteer involvement: perhaps an agency should have a "Paid Staff of the Month" as well as a "Volunteer of the Month." Working with volunteers may well require additional effort on the part of staff, and those who are successful deserve recognition for their work.

Encouraging staff participation in the volunteer program can be institutionally encouraged in some simple ways:

- ◆ Giving hiring preference to staff who have volunteer management experience
- ◆ Listing volunteer management responsibilities in staff job descriptions
- ◆ Evaluating staff on their utilization of volunteer resources
- ◆ Seeking volunteer input when evaluating staff who supervise volunteers
- ◆ Giving organizational rewards to staff who most creatively involve volunteers

In all, the volunteer program should work to create two essential feelings in staff who will be working with volunteers:

1. A sense that the benefits of volunteer participation, both to the agency and to the individual staff person, are greater than any difficulties or problems; and
2. A feeling of personal control over the involvement of volunteers, ranging from direct participation in the volunteer program's operation to the ultimate ability to reject the involvement of volunteers within their area of program responsibility.



# Increasing Teamwork Between Paid and Volunteer Staff

Volunteers and staff must work in concert to accomplish the mission of the agency. Often they must work together, sharing responsibilities for the accomplishment of particular tasks and participating as members of a team of paid and unpaid workers. To be successful, this effort requires creating a sense of team participation and then creating mechanisms that allow for rational and efficient allocation of the workload.

## Creating a Sense of Teamwork

To be effective, teams benefit from having the following elements:

- ◆ A shared goal or mission to be accomplished
- ◆ Common values about the world and behavior
- ◆ Mutual respect for the abilities and contributions of other members
- ◆ A belief or trust that other members of the team will help look after them
- ◆ A sense of interdependence, a feeling that your own weaknesses are compensated for by the strengths of another member of the team

These feelings can be strengthened if managers do the following:

1. Work with staff and volunteers to relate all activities back to the mission of the agency, connecting each job and the work done by both staff and volunteers to what the agency is attempting to accomplish in the community. Nothing is as fundamental to a team being effective as a common sense of that which they are trying to achieve together. Both staff and volunteers should see themselves as equal partners in pursuing a goal, and they should see how each contributes to the overarching goal of the agency and to the immediate task being undertaken. One simple way to accomplish this is to have staff and volunteers begin their working relationships by having a discussion about "What are we trying to accomplish?" This discussion will allow them to develop a sense of shared commitment as well as to begin to identify what each has to contribute.

***There is a conscious, active effort to reduce the boundaries and increase the teamwork between paid and volunteer staff.***

2. Both staff and volunteers should participate in an orientation and discussion regarding the values of the agency. Some of these values might represent beliefs about how clients should be treated. One of the expressed values of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, for example, is that "We understand that children and youth need to be heard." Sharing this type of value will give both staff and volunteers a perception of what type of behavior is expected toward clients, and at the same time will give them a sense of what to expect from their fellow team members in working with these same clients. Some values may directly address the behavior of staff and volunteers, such as another value from the Boys and Girls Clubs: "We are committed to volunteerism." If staff do not see and share in the agency vision for the involvement of volunteers they will not be able to actualize this vision in their everyday work.

3. Both volunteers and staff should be selected for and assigned work based on their capability to contribute to its accomplishment. Volunteers should be held to performance standards identical to those of staff. Volunteers should be held accountable for meeting commitments. At the same time, equal recognition and reward should be given for accomplishment, and leaders should celebrate the accomplishments of both volunteers and staff in context of their contribution to the goals of the group. Team accomplishments should be celebrated, giving equal credit to all team members, while noting the unique contribution that each has made.

4. Staff and volunteers should be treated as equals. This includes access to all resources and materials, involvement in decision making and participation in the flow of organizational communication. Leaders should watch out for

inadvertent behavior which makes volunteers feel excluded or ignored. A common example is when volunteers are not invited to staff meetings, not because they are deliberately excluded but simply because no one thought to give them the option to attend. Such a situation can make volunteers feel like second-class citizens, and demonstrates to them that they cannot rely on staff.

5. Irrelevant boundaries between staff and volunteers should be eliminated. These might include distinctions in job titles, uniforms, badges, or other items which create class-like differences between staff and volunteers. The usual result of these mechanisms is the creation of levels of status, with the clear implication that some groups (commonly paid staff) possess more of it than others. Clear levels of status prevent the formation of true teams. Creating effective teams depends upon the elimination of arbitrary distinctions between staff and volunteers.

6. Staff and volunteers should work together to identify how they collaboratively can work more effectively than they can work individually. This means identifying the unique strength that each contributes and then dividing work in such a way that responsibilities are allocated rationally based on ability.

Much of what happens in the creation of teams stems from the intangibles of organizational climate or from the casual use of language which may indicate hidden attitudes. The often-heard phrase "I'm just a volunteer," may actually be an indicator from volunteers that they view themselves to be of lesser status or perceived worth within an agency. It might equally be an attempt by a volunteer to avoid accepting responsibility. Either of these is severely detrimental to real teamwork.

These practices will help to decrease boundaries which may separate staff and volunteers. To be an effective team, both staff and volunteers must be treated in similar fashion, and each must perceive a clear identification with the interests of the agency and of other members of the team.

### **Defining Responsibilities in Staff/Volunteer Teams**

One additional barrier to effective teamwork is confusion about roles and responsibilities. Volunteers who are assigned to work with staff must learn to accommodate themselves to a new situation, acquire new skills and

establish new social relationships. Staff must assess skill levels of new volunteers and determine what sorts of tasks can be entrusted to them. Under normal conditions this is a complex, often trial-and-error process. Under conditions of extreme workload with overlapping responsibilities, it can be rife with misunderstanding.



### ***If you don't know what you want from the volunteers, why should they?***



Staff who work together can often allocate responsibilities as they go along, adjusting through constant communication. In working with volunteers who may often be absent from the office this automatic adjustment process collapses. If a committee only meets once a month, a lot can fall through the cracks in the intervening period. A misunderstanding about who is to do what can reach the critical stage before either party realizes that something has gone wrong. When this happens, the communication process usually deteriorates even further: staff decide that volunteers are unreliable, and volunteers decide that staff are bad managers.

This miscommunication is particularly likely in cases where staff have done little advance thinking about what volunteers might do to help. In this case as the relationships proceed, each side is literally "making it up as they go along," and disaster is common. A simple rule of thumb to remember is: "If you don't know what you want from the volunteers, why should they?"

As staff and volunteers work together they must learn how to allocate work in a shared setting. We have included four worksheets to help accomplish this task. These can be used in the early stages of a shared assignment to better define who will be responsible for what tasks.

Worksheet #1, *Volunteer/Staff Relationships Task Analysis* on page 14, is a simple recording sheet for a brainstorming session for a staff person and volunteer who will be working together on a project. It is used to record as many of the discrete tasks as possible which must be undertaken in the accomplishment of the task. This worksheet not only begins the process of role definition but it provides a structured opportunity for the staff and volunteer to begin the process of communication about the nature of the task and the best ways to go about achieving success. Together they can develop their own vision of what needs to be accomplished.

Worksheet #2, *Volunteer/Staff Relationships Responsibilities Grid* on page 15, continues the planning process by having the staff and volunteer list the designated tasks and then decide which member of the team should be involved in accomplishing them. Some tasks might be entirely undertaken by one party or the other, and some may be shared between the two. Each task can also be identified by which member of the team will take primary responsibility for its completion. In essence it allows the allocation of work to “you,” “me,” and “us.” It also clearly identifies which party will be held accountable if something is not done.

Worksheet #3, *Overlapping Volunteer/Staff Responsibility Task Analysis Sheet* on page 16, allows the definition of who will be responsible for what activities in tasks which will be shared by both the staff and the volunteer. It can be utilized to fine-tune work which is highly interrelated. One interesting side effect of having team members complete this type of worksheet is that it greatly enhances the sense of interdependence since it graphically shows how each member can both help or hinder the work of others.

The *Team Assignment Planning Worksheet* on page 17, is designed to help keep track of responsibilities in a team or committee setting. The first two columns (“Task” and “Due”) are utilized to record the specific task to be undertaken and its estimated completion date. The three columns to the right record role responsibilities:

- ◆ *Responsible* – This column identifies the person who will be doing the task and who will be held accountable for the work. It might be an individual or a group, such as a sub-committee designed to select the site for a planned event. It might be a member of the team or someone on the outside (in which case, a team member would be indicated as being responsible for contacting the outsider and ensuring that the task was completed). This column says, “we are depending upon you to do this job.”
- ◆ *Consulted* – This column indicates to the person responsible that this is someone with whom they should consult before making final decisions about the work. An example of this might be instructions to the person selecting the site for a planned event that they should consult with the Entertainment Sub-committee before signing a contract to ensure that the facilities are suitable for planned events. Correspondingly, in the tasks related to “Entertainment” a similar notation

would be made to the persons planning the entertainment to check with the Site Sub-committee. This column says, “you are depending upon these people in order to do your job.”

- ◆ *Informed* – This indicates to the person responsible for doing the work that they should inform the person listed about what they have done. An example would be an indication to the Entertainment Committee in the example above that they should inform the Budget Sub-committee about any contracts with a financial impact. This column says, “this person is depending upon you in order to do their job.”

The advantage of this system is that it identifies the actual web of interdependent work that needs to be done in order for successful completion of the work of the team. Each team member not only sees what they are responsible for, but they also see how their work both depends upon and supports the work of others. This both clarifies communication and re-inforces the relational bonds between the group members.

Defining tasks can also be undertaken in a less formal manner. One highly effective system is to have an informal discussion about working relationships with each member explaining what they see as the key activities to be accomplished, which activities they see as belonging to them, and how they believe working relationships and communication should be undertaken. For example, a staff person supporting a volunteer committee might have an informal breakfast with each incoming chair to discuss “how we’d like to work together.” A shrewder staff person would also suggest that an informal discussion be held between the out-going and incoming chairs (“how we’ve been doing things around here”) and between the out-going chair and the staff person (“how we did and what we’d do differently”).

In cases where volunteers are regularly involved in work planning sessions on an ongoing basis, the process of defining responsibility is relatively simple. Where volunteers are excluded from organizational communication processes, it should not be surprising that there is a much greater likelihood for confusion and misunderstanding.

## Sharing Stories of Success

Human beings are story-telling creatures, and stories are utilized in tribal, family and organizational structures to communicate many of the intangibles about the true beliefs and values of the culture.

The figures who appear in stories commonly represent the behavior patterns that are representative of the culture, showing examples of good or bad behavior, and, in the case of heroes, exemplifying what the culture considers to be models.

***Success breeds success as stories of the contributions of volunteers – both historically and current – are shared among both paid and volunteer staff.***

These models then serve to orient newcomers to the real values of the culture and to inspire others to emulate their exemplary behavior. The characters in stories represent the culture.

Agencies which are effective in involving volunteers make use of volunteers in representing the culture of the agency by selecting or creating stories about their contributions.

These stories may take a variety of forms:

- ◆ Historical recounting of the founders of the organization who struggled to bring the organization into existence, usually under harsh conditions and against overwhelming odds

These stories serve to indicate the commitment of volunteers.

- ◆ Examples of heroic action, such as the faithful volunteer who struggled through snowdrifts to arrive at work when everyone else was deterred from attending

These stories serve to indicate the reliability of volunteers.

- ◆ Anecdotes of wacky or creative volunteer behavior that added spice, variety or fun to the work environment, such as the old curmudgeon volunteer, helpful but irascible

These stories serve to indicate the basic humanity of volunteers and their inclusion in the interpersonal relationships of the agency. This can also be done through affectionate re-telling of "disastrous volunteers" stories.

- ◆ Recounting of triumphant success against uncaring systems, natural disasters, or particularly difficult clients

These stories indicate the potential of volunteers to help the agency.

Similar stories should exist about staff who have contributed to the agency in similar ways. These stories indicate respect for the contribution of staff in exactly the same way as those above indicate respect for the contribution of volunteers. Even more important, they implicitly recognize that volunteers are a vital part of the culture by holding them out as models of behavior.

An agency which does not tell stories about volunteers, in which staff cannot remember or recall incidents in which volunteers have contributed or even taken part, is an agency in which volunteers do not truly have a place in the culture. An agency which tells stories about neither volunteers or staff is an agency which lacks any depth of culture. An agency which only tells demeaning stories about volunteers is an agency which has relegated volunteers to the roles of enemy or outsider in their culture.



***One good story is worth a thousand statistics.***



Encouraging the use of success stories is relatively simple, as long as you avoid two pitfalls:

1. Many volunteer program managers make the mistake of believing that designating a "volunteer of the year" is the same as creating a story. After all, this is usually a volunteer who has done wonderful things. However, while this mechanism is a useful motivational device for volunteers, it does not at all have the same effect as creating an agency story. The nature of the "volunteer of the year" award is usually based on the overall character or contribution of the volunteer. A good story is best created over some specific behavior or incident. With re-telling and with the addition of other specific stories, a heroic act may grow into legendary proportions, but it is usually not through a single act of anointing, such as a volunteer award. Create small stories around specific incidents, and gradually build a body of work that may eventually confer legendary status.

2. It should be stressed that collecting and distributing stories about volunteers is vastly different from collecting and distributing statistics about what volunteers do. Statistics are important, since they do help demonstrate the worth of volunteers in a different way, but statistics are much less related to the basic culture of organizations. Even accounting organizations don't base their internal stories on numbers. One good story is worth a thousand statistics particularly in indicating the underlying values of the group. Stories will bring a sense of reality to the numbers utilized in the statistics.

It is particularly useful for building good relationships between staff and volunteers to have stories which indicate the potential of the two groups working together. A story, for example, which talks about the work of a team involving both staff and volunteers and which demonstrates that all were involved in dealing with the situation, even while making different contributions, can be invaluable.

Stories can be distributed in a variety of ways: through discussions at staff meetings, through inclusion in orientation and training sessions, through articles in newsletters, through anecdotes recounted in hallways. The more informal and widespread the use of stories, the greater the indication that they have become a true part of the organizational culture.

### **How to Generate Conflict Between Staff and Volunteer**

Don't involve staff in the decisions as to if and how to utilize volunteers within the agency. Everybody loves a surprise.

Don't plan in advance the job descriptions or support and supervision systems for the volunteers. These things will work themselves out if you just give them time.

Accept everyone who volunteers for a position regardless of whether you think they are over-qualified or under-qualified. Quantity is everything.

Assume that anyone who volunteers can pick up whatever skills or knowledge they need as they go along. If you do insist on training volunteers, be sure not to include the staff with whom the volunteers will be working in the design of the training.

Assume that your staff already knows everything it needs about proper volunteer utilization. Why should they receive any better training than you did?

Don't presume to recognize the contributions that volunteers make to the agency. After all, volunteers are simply too valuable for words.

Don't reward staff who work well with volunteers. They are only doing their job.

Don't let staff supervise the volunteers who work with them. As a volunteer director, you should be sure to retain all authority over 'your' volunteers.

Try to suppress any problems that come to your attention. Listening only encourages complaints.

In case of disputes, operate on the principle that "The Staff is Always Right." Or operate on the principle of "My Volunteers, Right or Wrong." This is no time for compromise.

# Tools for Building Understanding and Collaboration

## Staff Guide to Planning for Volunteers

This worksheet is intended to assist you in deciding what types of volunteers could be of assistance to you. We hope that this information will make it easier for you to think of creative ways to involve volunteers and make it easier for us to recruit the right volunteer for you.

### Potential Job Areas

In thinking about how and where volunteers might be involved in your area of responsibility, there are factors that you might want to consider. You might, for example, think about creating volunteer jobs through consideration of the following categories of work:

1. Are there areas of work that staff don't want to do? This may be because they are not skilled in that type of work, or are too skilled for the work or simply have a preference to concentrate their efforts in another area.
  
2. Are there areas in which there is too much work for staff to do alone, and for which we might create volunteer assistants who can extend staff resources? These assistants might work directly with a staff person or could do tasks that benefit all staff.
  
3. Are there areas in which we can extend services because volunteers would allow us to begin work that we cannot now even consider undertaking?

You might also want to consider the creation of volunteer jobs based on the recipients of the service. Consider the following:

- ◆ Jobs that are of direct assistance to an individual client (counseling, visitation, mentoring, etc.)
- ◆ Office administrative help (information services, filing, messengers, etc.)
- ◆ Direct assistance to staff (research, training, computer assistance, etc.)
- ◆ Outreach (speakers bureau, fundraising, client marketing, etc.)

### Volunteer Job Design

Keep the following keys in mind as you think about the specific work you would like the volunteer to do:

1. The work must be meaningful and significant, both to the agency and to our clientele. The work must be needed and should be interesting to someone. This means that your volunteer job must have a goal or a purpose that the volunteer can work to accomplish and can feel good about having achieved.

*continued*



2. The volunteer ought to be able to feel some ownership and responsibility for the job. Volunteers are not robots, but must feel that they have some input into and control over the work they are asked to do. This will mean including the volunteer in the flow of information and decision-making within the office.

3. The work must fit a part-time situation. Either the work must be small enough in scope to be productively approached in a few hours a week, or else it must be designed to be shared among a group of volunteers.

4. Volunteers must be "worked with." They should be assigned to work with staff who are capable of supervising their activities in a productive fashion, and providing on-going direction, evaluation and feedback. What arrangements will you need to make in order to ensure this supervision of the volunteer?

### **Scheduling the Volunteer Job**

The more flexible the timeframe of the volunteer job, the greater the likelihood that we can find someone who will be willing to undertake it. Think about the following as different options for the job:

- ◆ Can the work be done to a totally flexible schedule at the discretion of the volunteer?
- ◆ Are there set hours during the week when we need the volunteer?
- ◆ Could the work be done on evenings or weekends?
- ◆ Must the work be done on-site at our office?

### **Assessing Managerial Readiness**

The following considerations must also be addressed in thinking about a new volunteer position:

- ◆ Do we have adequate assigned workspace for the volunteer?
- ◆ Have we assigned a supervisor for the volunteer?
- ◆ Do we need to provide any orientation or training for our staff before they work with volunteers?
- ◆ Do we have a clear idea of the qualifications we will be looking for in a prospective volunteer?
- ◆ Do we know what training the volunteer will need to do the job the way we want it done?
- ◆ Do we have a firm description of the goals and objectives of the work to be done?
- ◆ Do we have a plan for including the volunteer in our office activities and communications flow?

If you have either ideas or questions, feel free to contact the Volunteer Office and we'll be happy to work with you in developing a plan for including volunteers.

## Assessment Survey on Volunteer Involvement

As part of our agency plan to utilize volunteer assistance, we would like you to complete the following questionnaire. This survey is designed to assess our readiness to use volunteers and to determine what we need to do to ensure continued delivery of high quality services to our clientele. All of the information collected will be kept confidential.

### I. Experience with Volunteers

1. Have you previously worked in an agency which used volunteers?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Don't know

2. Have you previously supervised any volunteers?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Don't know

3. Do you do volunteer work yourself?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ Not currently, but I have previously

### II. Assessment of Volunteer Involvement

1. What is your overall assessment of the desirability of utilizing volunteers at this time?

☐ Very desirable      ☐ Somewhat desirable      ☐ Uncertain  
☐ Not desirable at this time      ☐ Would never be appropriate

2. What is your overall assessment of our current readiness to utilize volunteers?

☐ Very ready      ☐ Somewhat ready      ☐ Uncertain      ☐ Not ready

3. Are there any areas or types of work where you think volunteers are particularly needed and suited in our agency?

*continued*

4. Are there any areas or types of work that you think volunteers should not do in our agency?
5. What issues or concerns would you like to see addressed before we utilize volunteers?
6. What type of training or assistance would you like to receive before you are asked to work with volunteers?
7. Are there any other comments, concerns, or questions that you would like to express about the involvement of volunteers in our agency?

## Worksheet #1

### Volunteer/Staff Relationships Task Analysis

The following worksheet is designed to allow you to better define the working relationships which should exist between volunteers and staff. To complete the worksheet, construct a listing of the tasks involved in the program, project or activity which the volunteer and the staff are working on together. Try to think of all of those things which must be accomplished, from great to small in order for the program, project, or activity to be successful.

#### Task Listing

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

## Worksheet #2

### Volunteer/Staff Relationships Responsibilities Grid

The following worksheet is designed to allow you to better define the working relationships which should exist between volunteers and staff. To complete the worksheet, first identify the tasks which will need to be done in your program area. List these identified tasks in the numbered spaces on the worksheet. Then examine each task and determine whether in your opinion the task is the responsibility of the volunteer or of the staff person. Since most tasks may require some degree of interaction complete this identification in the following fashion:

- ◆ In the space marked "Staff %", give the percentage of the work on the task which you think is the responsibility of the staff person involved. This percentage may range from 0% to 100%.
- ◆ In the space marked "Vol %", give the percentage of the work on the task which you think is the responsibility of the volunteer involved. The total of this figure and the figure in the "Staff" space should equal 100.
- ◆ In the space marked "Responsible", write either "Staff" or "Volunteer," depending on which person you think should be held directly accountable for the accomplishment of this activity.

Task	Staff %	Vol %	Responsible
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
13.			
14.			
15.			

## Worksheet #3

### Overlapping Volunteer/Staff Responsibility Task Analysis Sheet

Use the following sheet to develop clear lines of responsibility and function in areas in which there is an overlap between the job of the staff and of volunteers. At the top of the sheet list the area in which there is overlapping responsibility. In the blanks below, outline the differences in the activities which each party is responsible for within this area.

Area of Overlap: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities for which Staff is responsible	Activities for which Volunteers are responsible
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.
7.	7.
8.	8.



## Team Assignment Planning Worksheet

Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Task	Due	Responsible	Consulted	Informed
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

# Changing the Paradigm Products and Services

**Changing the Paradigm Self-Assessment Kit** – An organizational change management tool that leads staff, leadership, board and other volunteers through a comprehensive volunteer program assessment. Each Kit contains:

- ◆ Paradigm Self-Assessment Surveys
- ◆ A Team Leader's Resource Book and seven Team Members' Workbooks
- ◆ Color transparencies to use in training and presentations
- ◆ Scoring software to tabulate the survey results (PC and Macintosh versions)
- ◆ Paradigm Reports #1 & #2 (Paradigm research design and findings)

**Paradigm Video Kit** – This informational kit contains the first and second Paradigm reports, a 12-minute Changing the Paradigm video and a user's guide of steps for beginning the Paradigm shift in volunteer involvement.

**The Paradigm Organizational Effectiveness Series** – These booklets address organizational development topics that relate to high-impact volunteer engagement:

- ◆ ***Creating More Effective Volunteer Involvement*** by Kenn Allen. This monograph explores the organizational development issues within each of the nationally researched Paradigm characteristics.
- ◆ ***Laying the Foundation with Mission and Vision: Creating a Strategic Volunteer Program*** by Richard Lynch. Translate vision to strategy and equally important, learn how to consider the role volunteers play in accomplishing mission-critical work. This booklet contains worksheets and other concrete tools to help in the strategic planning process as your organization moves from vision to action.
- ◆ ***Combining Inspiring Leadership and Effective Management: The Underpinnings of a Strategic Volunteer Program*** by Mary Merrill. This action-oriented booklet shows how to set up structures necessary to ensure that the volunteer-management function is well-integrated at all levels and in all parts of the organization. The booklet also addresses how organizations can identify and deal with potential barriers to volunteer involvement.
- ◆ ***Building Understanding and Collaboration: Creating Synergistic Relationships Between Staff and Volunteers*** by Steve McCurley. An effective volunteer program requires cooperation between staff and volunteers and a commitment from both parties to respect the contributions of the other. This booklet identifies ways to reduce the sense of separation and to create an organizational fabric that makes staff and volunteers feel equally welcome.
- ◆ ***Learn, Grow and Change: Creating Openness to Change and Inclusive Community Involvement*** by Mary Phillips. This publication provides suggestions for promoting organizational change and steps for becoming more inclusive through diverse volunteer involvement. A comprehensive list of both national and local resources regarding diversity is also contained in the booklet.

**Training** – Individually tailored training including:

- ◆ Changing the Paradigm: Best Practices in Effective Volunteer Engagement
- ◆ Program Assessment: Conducting Paradigm Self-Assessments Within Multiple Program Sites
- ◆ Creating a Paradigm Consulting Practice

**Organization Development Consulting** – Individually tailored organizational development assessment and consultation around organizational needs related to effective volunteer engagement.

For more information contact:  
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 The Points of Light Foundation  
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 Phone: (202) 223-9186 x243, Fax: (202) 223-9256, E-mail: ckuric@aol.com.

## About the Author

Steve McCurley is an internationally-known trainer and speaker in the field of effective volunteer involvement. He is currently a partner with Sue Vineyard in VM Systems, a management consulting firm.

Mr. McCurley has served on advisory groups for the National Rural Development Institute, the Council on Accreditation of Services to Families and Children, the Coalition of Hispanic Mental Health and Social Welfare Organizations, and the American National Red Cross. He is a former national board member of the Association for Volunteer Administration. He has served as a consultant on volunteer program development to the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Association of Partners in Education, the U.S. Tennis Association, Special Olympics International, and the National Park Service. Mr. McCurley is currently working with The Points of Light Foundation and the Delta Service Corps, the largest of the AmeriCorps Projects.

Each year, Mr. McCurley gives workshops to over 15,000 participants from groups as diverse as the American Hospital Association, the Fraternal Congress of America, the Nature Conservancy, and CBS, Inc. He is the author of 8 books, and more than 75 articles on volunteer management, including the bestselling basic text *Essential Volunteer Management*.

Mr. McCurley is a graduate of the University of Georgia and the Northwestern University School of Law, and he now lives in Olympia, Washington.



## About The Points of Light Foundation

The Points of Light Foundation, established in May 1990, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization governed by a diverse board from the corporate, nonprofit and educational sectors. The Foundation's mission is to engage more people more effectively in volunteer community service to help solve serious social problems. The Foundation is achieving this mission in three ways.

First, the Foundation develops and promotes strategies and methods to recruit and engage more volunteers in direct and consequential community service. Second, the Foundation is working with the nationwide network of over 500 Volunteer Centers to help them become the key community resource in applying volunteering to community needs. Third, the Foundation seeks to increase public awareness of how community service helps to build healthier communities.

# The Paradigm Action Principles

## *Lay the Foundation through Mission and Vision*

The mission and priorities of the organization are framed in terms of the problem or issue the organization is addressing, not its short-range institutional concerns.

There is a positive vision – clearly articulated, widely-shared and openly discussed throughout the organization – of the role of volunteers.

Volunteers are seen as valuable human resources than can directly contribute to achievement of the organization's mission, not primarily as a means to obtaining financial or other material resources.

## *Combine Inspiring Leadership with Effective Management*

Leaders at all levels – policy-making, executive and middle management – work in concert to encourage and facilitate high impact volunteer involvement.

There is a clear focal point of leadership for volunteering but the volunteer management function is well-integrated at all levels and in all parts of the organization.

Potential barriers to volunteer involvement – liability, confidentiality, location of the organization, hours of operation, etc. – are identified and are dealt with forthrightly.

## *Build Understanding and Collaboration*

Paid staff are respected and are empowered to fully participate in planning, decision-making and management related to volunteer involvement.

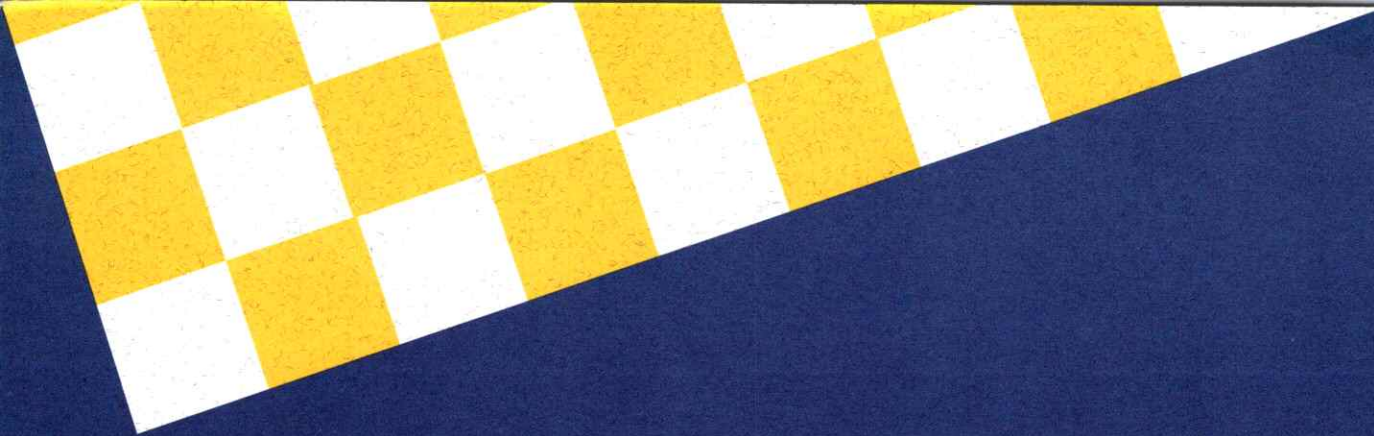
There is a conscious, active effort to reduce the boundaries and increase the teamwork between paid and volunteer staff.

Success breeds success as stories of the contributions of volunteers – both historically and currently – are shared among both paid and volunteer staff.

## *Learn, Grow and Change*

There is an openness to the possibility for change, an eagerness to improve performance and conscious, organized efforts to learn from and about volunteers' experience in the organization.

There is a recognition of the value of involving, as volunteers, people from all segments of the community, including those the organization seeks to serve.



POINTS OF LIGHT  
FOUNDATION

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