CHANGING THE PARADIGM

Creating More Effective Volunteer Involvement

The Paradigm Organizational Effectiveness Series #1

POINTS OF LIGHT
FOUNDATION

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Creating More Effective
Volunteer Involvement

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Introduction

The Changing the Paradigm Project was created in 1991 by The Points of Light Foundation to learn more about "barriers" to the most effective involvement of volunteers. The Project is an on-going collaborative effort designed to challenge the way in which those engaged in and affected by community service think about the role of volunteers in helping organizations achieve their missions.

This report summarizes the early key research findings of the Paradigm Project, based on intensive examinations of volunteer involvement in selected local organizations across the country.

The Paradigm Project represents some of the most significant research undertaken on volunteering. The project has direct implications not only for organizations which involve volunteers but also those that serve as consultants and resources to those organizations.

In order to maximize the credibility of the research, we selected five communities that were geographically dispersed and demographically diverse: Boston; West Memphis, Arkansas; Minneapolis; Denver; and, Orange County, California. We asked Volunteer Centers in four of those cities and a private foundation in the fifth to identify for us organizations in four fields: health care, education, social services and "grass-roots problem-solving." We asked for organizations that they felt were representative of the breadth of effectiveness in volunteer involvement in their communities. We were looking for those with "opportunities for growth" as well as those of proven excellence. We ultimately selected 20 agencies, one in each field in each community.

We spent a total of about four days with each agency on the telephone and in person. We interviewed a total of over 400 people, both paid staff and volunteers: members of boards and committees, executive directors, senior and mid-level managers, volunteer coordinators, helping professionals (teachers, nurses, social workers, doctors, etc.), and volunteers in a variety of roles (policy-making, advisory, direct service, fund-raising, advocacy, program management and support. We interviewed people of all ages and races, both women and men, and people of varying levels of education and experience. We interviewed people enthusiastic about volunteering, people who were ambivalent and people who were hostile toward volunteers. In short, we had a remarkably representative cross-section of both paid staff and volunteers who reflected the

broadest possible diversity of views about volunteering.

At the same time, it is important to remember that the results of qualitative research are not generalizable to every situation. What we have gained is a series of insights, a picture of the processes of volunteering as they are happening in organizations and a greater understanding of the implications of all of this for how we undertake our work. As we will see, each characteristic needs to be understood in the context of the people with whom we are working; the meaning we give them ultimately will grow from our understanding of ourselves and the assumptions that shape our day-to-day work.

Paradigm Research: Qualitative vs. Quantitative

The Paradigm research was qualitative, not quantitative; thus, the results are presented as text, not as numbers. We were seeking to understand how organizations that involve volunteers "see" volunteering in the context of their overall work and how both paid staff and volunteers behave with regard to volunteering.

Qualitative research deals with perceptions and with how people and organizations create their view of reality. It is based in the recognition that most "truth" is subjective, not objective. Particularly in the "people fields," in this view, we cannot reduce human interactions and organizational dynamics to statistics but need to understand how the participants view what is happening and how they behave.

Characteristics of Successful Volunteer Programs

As with all good qualitative research, the conclusions were drawn out over the entire body of work done in the field as we examined and compared results of interviews from some 400 people in over 20 agencies in 5 communities. It became clear to us that some of the organizations were doing a better job involving volunteers.

As we compared the organizations with one another, we identified eleven characteristics of those that were "more highly effective" in the involvement of volunteers. None of the organizations exhibited all of the characteristics in all of their work. But there was strong evidence to suggest that these characteristics were consistently present. We have grouped these characteristics into four categories which we call the Paradigm Action Principles:

◆ Lay the Foundation through Mission and Vision

◆ Combine Inspiring Leadership with Effective Management

◆ Building Understanding and Collaboration

◆ Learn, Grow, and Change

It is important to note that these characteristics are about effectiveness in involving volunteers, not about overall organizational effectiveness. It was perfectly possible for an organization to be highly effective in achieving its mission and goals and to be less effective in the involvement of volunteers. Similarly, even in organizations which we saw as less effective in their overall involvement of volunteers, they all had some individual volunteers or volunteer projects that in and of themselves were making a significant contribution.

Lay the Foundation through Mission and Vision

> **1. 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.**

Simply put, the people in the organizations that were more effective in the involvement of volunteers – both the paid staff and the volunteers – know what the job of the organization is. When asked to discuss mission and current priorities, they spoke consistently of the core problem or task for which the organization was being operated. The missions they laid out talked about needs or problems and what their organization was doing to respond.

At St. Joseph's Home for Children in Minneapolis, the mission of the organization is "caring for children in a changing world." At the Samaritans in Boston, the mission is "to befriend the lonely, suicidal or despairing." And, at the Lewis Middle School in Roxbury, Massachusetts, it was described as "to educate kids, to celebrate their diversity, to look at how they learn not at what is convenient for adults."

In each case and in others like them, the focus of the mission is on the substantive challenge the organization was created to address, not on day-to-day operational problems. By contrast, for some organizations, coping with the operational problems seems to have become the mission. When asked to discuss their priorities, they begin and too often end with funding, personnel problems, management issues, etc. The work of the organization seems forgotten.

We were surprised to discover that not all organizations talk this way. In some, the emphasis is less on the problem they are there to address and much more on the burdens they are carrying as an organization. Indeed, in some cases, it seemed to us that the immediate problems had become the mission. Often, those problems were expressed in terms of finances or status in the community or demands outstripping resources.

When organizations were "keeping their eye on the prize" – that is, on the core problem or task for which they were created – they also were involving volunteers in more meaningful, in-depth roles. There was a significant relationship between the mission and current priorities on one hand and the work of the volunteers on the other. It was clear that volunteers were directly contributing to the achievement of the organization's mission.

> **2. There is a positive vision – clearly articulated, widely-shared and openly discussed throughout the organization – of the role of volunteers**

In the Paradigm research, effectiveness was defined in terms of the extent to which the work of volunteers directly contributes to the mission and priorities of the organization.

In the organizations that were more effective in the involvement of volunteers, both paid staff and volunteers unselfconsciously discussed the role of volunteers in terms of fundamental organizational values and philosophy – and, then, they "walked their talk" by demonstrating in action the high impact roles volunteers could play in their work. Here are examples of the kinds of things people said:

♦ "We couldn't do our work without them [volunteers]."

♦ "This organization is about helping people to help themselves. Volunteers are most effective at this because they are often close to and relate well to the people we are trying to help."

♦ "This organization was founded by volunteers and volunteers still make the policy and guide the work."

♦ "As things change in our work environment, volunteers are going to have to take on new, expanded roles."

♦ "The staff here understands the importance of the work that we [volunteers] do. An important part of their job is helping us do our jobs."

♦ "One of the basic ways we get our work done is through the involvement of volunteers."

These kinds of comments started at the top of the organization, with the top leaders, both paid and volunteer. But they were heard throughout these "more effective" organizations, from middle managers, paid staff and volunteers themselves.

By contrast, in the organizations that were "less effective," people simply did not talk this way about volunteers. Their contributions were acknowledged but often only in passing. In many cases, it was clear that the consensus was that volunteers were people to be tolerated, that the organization would do just as well without them being around – except, of course, when it comes to raising money the organization needs!

When organizations remain focused on mission, they view the roles of volunteers in more expansive ways. At Family Focus in Denver, the mission is to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect. The work is done primarily through volunteers who are trained and given direction by paid professionals. Sally Holloway, the founder and executive director, describes it this way: "In almost all the staff positions, the expectation is that volunteers are the way the job will get done."

Doug Goke, administrator of St. Joseph's, describes volunteers as being "integrated throughout" the organization, from working directly with youth to serving on the board of directors. He sees volunteers as related to the core mission in two ways: by "bringing outside reality in....that keeps us honest, connected to the outside"; and, by "helping normalize things inside" by helping to prevent or solve problems.

In the "more effective" organizations, the "vision" guiding the involvement of volunteers was either consciously visible for all to see or, at worst, was evident in the consistency of statements among the people interviewed. In some cases, leaders of the organizations spoke in terms of their vision or of the shared vision of the organization with regard to volunteers. But even when they did not, it was clear that there is a positive view of volunteers that is shared throughout the organization.

> ### 3. Volunteers are seen as valuable human resources that can directly contribute to achievement of the organization's mission, not primarily as a means to obtaining financial or other material resources.

When this characteristic was first described, we thought it was one of the most common sensible of all of the characteristics, something that most of us intu-

itively "know." But, as always, perception is largely a result of whose ox is being gored. As a result, some people have read this as saying that they shouldn't involve volunteers in fund-raising activities at a time when more and more organizations are desperate for financial support. "If they don't raise money for us," these folks say, "we'll go out of business."

Before we comment, here is the rest of what we say about this characteristic in the original report

"When organizations saw their problems as primarily financial, they severely limited the roles volunteers were allowed to play, with the primary emphasis being on fund-raising or other resource generation activities. In organizations that focused first on the work to be done, volunteers not only contributed to that work but also contributed to obtaining other needed resources."

Basically, this suggests that there are two ways in which an organization can look at the contribution of volunteers. One is what we might call the instrumental approach: volunteers are primarily fund-raisers, providing the dollars needed to buy the people required to do the work of the organization. This approach was typified in one school we visited. The principal was little interested in the scope of work that volunteers could provide. He wanted them first, foremost and, if possible, exclusively to work through booster clubs, PTO, etc. to raise money to allow him to buy what was needed for the school. Allowing volunteers into classrooms or other direct service volunteer roles seemed to be the price he had to pay to get what he wanted from the volunteers.

The second view we might call the mission-achieving approach. In this one, thinking about volunteers starts with the mission of the organization, with the question, "What is the work we want to get done?" Volunteers are seen as one of a variety of resources available to do the work. When the organization asks, "How do we get the work done?" volunteers are one of the alternatives considered, along with paid staff, money, etc.

Does this mean that volunteers should not be engaged in fund-raising activities? Most emphatically, NO! it does not mean that. Fund-raising is a core task of virtually every organization, key to its survival. The people best qualified to do it should be given that assignment, whether they are paid or volunteer. Similarly, the people best qualified to tutor a child, intervene with a family in crisis, comfort a family in the emergency room waiting area, drive an ambulance, press for changes in public policy or manage a surplus food program should be the ones given those

assignments, whether they are paid or volunteer. The problem comes in when one or both of these assumptions are made:

"Only volunteers can raise money for us."

"The only thing volunteers can do is to raise money for us."

Neither, obviously, are true. It may be that volunteers are the best ones to raise money. It may even be true that the most important thing volunteers can do – and the thing they do best in a particular organizational context – is to raise money. But that determination should come after a conscious process of analysis of mission, work to be done, and resources available to do the work.

Both what we observed in the research and past experience also suggests that when you think more broadly about the potential contribution of volunteers, the fund-raising results are at least as good and often times better than if you restricted them to that work.

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Mimi Forbes, director of curriculum at Lewis Middle School, best captures this approach. Lewis sought a business partner because they believed "industry could give us a lot, not just money, but other resources like management assistance, staff development and volunteers to work in the classroom." Now, their business volunteers from GTE are "involved monthly with planning so that they get to know the flavor of the school." Not only did they have a healthy level of participation but the volunteers are now playing a major role in securing the tangible resources they needed – including money, equipment, and outside space for trainings.

More importantly, they are a real partnership that benefits the children the school serves in a broad variety of ways. "All of us are smarter than one of us," Forbes says. "We share the same concern so we need to figure out together how to do it. You need to include them in all aspects of school life, from meetings with parents to staff development."

At St. Joseph's, one of the greatest residual benefits of volunteer involvement is in their contribution to public awareness about the organization. Doug Goke believes that every volunteer that is happy with St. Joseph's will tell 250 other people about the organization every year. This translates into more volunteers and more financial contributions.

Successful volunteer-utilizing organizations tend to involve volunteers across a wide range of high-impact volunteer jobs, not restricting them into narrow categories and not assuming that the only contribution that volunteers can make is in raising money for the organization.

Combine Inspiring Leadership with Effective Management

> *4. Leaders at all levels – policy-making, executive and middle management – work in concert to encourage and facilitate high impact volunteer involvement.*

There could be no doubt, in any of the agencies we visited, about the role of leadership, both positive and negative, in shaping the nature and scope of volunteering in organizations. But what was most striking in those organizations that were most effective in their involvement of volunteers was the degree of shared leadership responsibility for volunteering.

In the "most effective" organizations, the sense of shared leadership was pervasive. It appeared to be mutually reinforcing. Directors of volunteers would tell us about how the success of their work grew directly from the interest and involvement of their executives. Then, we'd go talk to the executives and they would tell us that the success was totally due to the leadership of the director of volunteers. Or, the director of volunteers and the executive would point to the leadership role played by other managers within the organization. Those managers, in turn, would point back to the director of volunteers and the executive.

What was going on here? We seemed to be seeing a self-perpetuating, mutually reinforcing pattern of leadership built around a shared understanding of the importance of volunteering and of the role of management in integrating volunteering into the work of the organization. Responsibility for the involvement of volunteers was jointly owned by many people throughout the organization. More importantly, that ownership was translated into concrete, collaborative actions that invariably led to an expansion and strengthening of the volunteer program.

Here is one example. At Massachusetts General Hospital, there is a "coordinating committee" for volunteering that includes the hospital administrator and his deputy, the head of nursing, the head of social services, the director of volunteers and the volunteer leadership of the hospital's five auxiliaries. They meet monthly for lunch to discuss issues related to the involvement of volunteers in the hospital. One outcome of their meetings was the creation of a discharge service in the main lobby staffed by volunteers. The need had been identified by volunteers at the information desk; the concept of the discharge service was created by volunteers; the committee reviewed the idea, helped figure out how to make it happen and helped launch it. Leadership was shared throughout.

Clearly, the involvement and support of the top executive leadership of the organization is critical. That person provides the sanction that others need to "make things happen" with volunteering. But, in many ways, that top leader is only like a stone dropped into a tranquil pool: the splash catches your attention but it is the ripples that rock the boat.

Within the organization, the question to ask may be, "Who has leadership responsibility for our volunteer program?" The answer may have to be, "Me." But, the next question then might be, "Can I empower others, either board members, volunteers or paid staff, to assume greater leadership for it?"

Peg O'Neil, executive director of the Samaritans in Boston, says, "The issue is the environment within which you want volunteers to work. Where do volunteers fit? What are you willing to invest to make volunteers work well?" Of herself as a leader, she says, "I have a vision, and others can see it as well, to be the befriending service, to be the organization where everyone can say, 'I called and they were there.' We can feel it and describe it together as a team."

That same kind of visionary leadership that enrolls both paid staff and volunteers in achieving it, can be found throughout organizations that are highly effective in their involvement of volunteers. Doug Goke describes Connie Skillingstad, manager of community resources at St. Joseph's, as "a charismatic leader who is the reason all of this works." She, in turn, stresses that "staff supervision and leadership makes the difference" in the effectiveness of volunteers. She also points quickly to the support that the volunteer program receives from Doug Goke himself. He says, "My role in the process is to demonstrate how much I value volunteers. I probably know the volunteers that stay here over six months as well as I do most of the paid staff."

> **5. 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.**

In the "most effective" organizations there is a clear focal point of leadership for volunteering. One individual is seen as the moving force, the inspiration, the leader for volunteering within the organization. In some cases, that person was the one who also was identified as the "volunteer coordinator." But in other cases, it was not. Rather, it was either a paid staff person or volunteer leader who, for whatever reason, had assumed that leadership role with regard to volunteering.

What we saw was that organizations are no longer relying on a single person, a "volunteer coordinator," to provide leadership and management for their volunteer program. In those organizations that we believed to be "most effective" in their involvement of volunteers, the responsibility for management of volunteers was decentralized and integrated throughout the organization. The role of the "volunteer coordinator," in those organizations, then, was described as that of an "internal consultant" rather than as a manager of volunteers.

In some agencies, virtually all of the typical volunteer management functions are "farmed out" to the various operating components of the organization. In some, even much of the recruitment may be decentralized. According to people within those organizations, doing so increases the "ownership" that people feel for the volunteer program and multiplies the amount of creative energy that flows into the volunteer effort. It also empowers people other than the volunteer coordinator to make decisions about the involvement of volunteers. Those decisions begin to be made as "close to the action" as possible, resulting in a commitment to continuous improvement of the volunteer effort.

Some have expressed concern that by including this characteristic in the findings of our research that we were suggesting that agencies should fire their volunteer coordinators. For them, this has become something of a "betrayal" of what all of us have encouraged over the years, namely the hiring of volunteer coordinators.

Their interpretation of this characteristic is incorrect. First,

it is a reflection of what we found, not what we thought was right. The fact is that in hospitals, schools, social service organizations and grassroots problem-solving organizations, there are a variety of ways in which people stimulate and manage the involvement of volunteers. Having a paid volunteer coordinator, either full- or part-time, is only one of those ways.

Second, even in the organizations that had decentralized the management responsibility for volunteers, it did not mean that there was no need for a volunteer coordinator. It simply means that volunteer coordinators are assuming different roles that require different skills. Indeed, it may be that the skills required are of a higher order than in the past. We saw "volunteer coordinators" who were internal consultants helping to facilitate change, helping to redesign work processes, helping to empower nurses and teachers, helping to build new skills among both paid staff and volunteers. Most importantly, they were acting as leaders, inspiring others with a vision of the contribution of volunteers to the organization.

Third, painfully, we also must confront the reality that in a time of tight resources, agencies may terminate volunteer coordinators. I visited with the director of a Volunteer Center in a major city recently who told me that three of the most important, best-known nonprofits in the community had eliminated their volunteer coordinator positions. Wise decisions? She and I agreed that they were not. Real? Yes. And, unfortunately, wishing cannot change it.

The reality of change means that organizations will constantly be seeking new, better, more cost-effective, more productive ways to do their work. That will extend to the ways in which they manage their volunteer programs. Volunteer Centers face the challenge of not only keeping up with these changes but staying ahead of them, helping to shape the rethinking that is going on rather than responding to it.

At Massachusetts General Hospital, Steve Kauffman, associate general director, describes Pat Rowell, director of volunteers, as a "facilitator and broker." But she is strongly supported by a committee that includes the chief executive officer of the hospital, the head of nursing, the head of social services and volunteer leadership of the hospital's five auxiliaries. One outcome of their meetings was the creation of a discharge service in the main lobby staffed by volunteers. Says Pat Rowell, "The committee had the clout to make it happen."

Without any doubt, there is a clear focal point of leadership for volunteering within these organizations. In some

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places, the person in that role has the title or job description of "manager of volunteers" or "volunteer coordinator." But, in some places, no one officially fills that designated management role. Rather, the volunteer management function is well-integrated throughout the organization.

At Family Focus, for example, there is no volunteer coordinator. The job is "integrated into the staff function." Paid staff are deliberately recruited at least in part on the basis of their past experience with volunteers. They have created a long intake and management process for volunteers that includes intensive interviews, over 25 hours of training, ongoing interaction between paid staff and volunteers and a multi-faceted evaluation of both the organization's and the volunteers' performance.

Similarly, at Lewis Middle School, volunteer management "is a team effort," according to Mimi Forbes. "It is largely informal looking but within both the school and GTE, we are much more structured."

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At St. Joseph's, Connie Skillingstad spends about 60% of her time in the volunteer management role. "My job," she says, "is to help staff work with volunteers." Either supervising or working with volunteers appears "in virtually everyone's job description" and thus is part of their annual performance review. Supervisory level staff also are required to participate in a 21-hour course on working with volunteers. Staff also have become active recruiters of volunteers, a development that Connie Skillingstad sees as an "indicator that staff feels ownership for the volunteer program."

As we moved through the over 400 interviews that we did as part of our "Changing the Paradigm" research, we found a striking difference in the way that organizations were dealing with potential barriers to the involvement of volunteers. Such barriers included confidentiality, liability, hours of operation, and location of the organization.

Let us say at the outset that these are legitimate problems. There is no question that in our litigious society that organizations must be concerned about issues of confidentiality and liability. In fact, all of the agencies we studied were concerned. The difference is in how they dealt with the concern.

Those organizations which we ultimately identified as "less effective" in the involvement of volunteers tended to use such barriers as an excuse not to have volunteers involved. Those excuses tended to be generalizations about volunteers or the barriers based on little or no concrete experience. Thus, we heard, "Volunteers can't be trusted to keep information confidential." Or, "It is too big a risk to have volunteers do such and such a task." Yet rarely could the people saying these things point to actual incidents that would justify their concerns.

Mostly, they seemed to be working from a prejudice that says that only people who work full-time for pay can be trusted. Indeed, when we would ask, "What assurance do you have that paid staff will keep information confidential?" the answer almost invariably was, "None." Yet it was deemed an acceptable (or perhaps unavoidable) risk in the case of paid staff and something to be avoided at all costs with volunteers.

What were particularly striking were the contrasts we encountered. At one hospital, volunteers on the children's ward were neither expected nor encouraged to observe anything about the patients with whom they worked. They had no access to information about the child's illness or treatment program, nor about the child's family. They were expected to come in and "play" with the children.

At another hospital, exactly the opposite was the case. Volunteers were encouraged to be familiar with the patients' cases and were trained to observe the children. They not only were expected to observe but to report their observations to the nursing staff and to enter information into a log kept in each ward. Indeed, paid staff in this hospital often were frustrated by volunteers who did not fulfill this expectation.

Here's another hospital example. In one, volunteers were not allowed to push patients in wheelchairs. In another, volunteers were instrumental in creating a discharge service in which they wheeled exiting patients from their rooms to the discharge area.

While hospitals offer the most immediate examples, we saw the same thing in schools and social service organizations. Some people looked at barriers and saw barriers. Others looked at barriers and saw problems to be solved.

Leaders of organizations which are "more effective" also seek to resolve potential barriers to volunteer involvement – liability, confidentiality, etc. – instead of talking about them. Steve Kauffman of Massachusetts General Hospital calls liability "a smokescreen. What volunteers add to our liability concerns is insignificant and is covered by our insurance." Sally Holloway of Family Focus says that "claims of confidentiality problems are a cop-out for not using volunteers. We deal with it through training. Volunteers need to know what is in the case file in order to do what is best for the family with whom they are working." At St. Joseph's, volunteers have the opportunity to read the main communications log kept in each unit and have the opportunity to record their observations. They also are encouraged to attend staff sessions on particular young people. None of these three organizations is insensitive to issues of confidentiality and liability. Indeed, they have been able to deal with them because they have seen them as solvable problems, not as barriers that prevent volunteer involvement.

Build Understanding and Collaboration

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

The relationship between paid staff and volunteers is a critical element in defining the effectiveness of an organization in involving volunteers.

This characteristic was perhaps the most surprising one – although, instinctively, this is another one that all of us "know" or at least suspect. There seemed to be a direct correlation between the effectiveness with which an organization involves volunteers and the regard in which it holds its paid staff.

In those organizations which were "more effective" with volunteers, the people at the top talked about their paid staff in highly respectful terms. They talked about the skills and knowledge of their paid staff – but, mostly, they talked about the commitment those staff people bring to the mission of the organization. These leaders reflected a high degree of trust in their colleagues and, correspondingly, had invested a great deal of responsibility in them.

Most importantly, it appeared that these leaders actively sought to empower their colleagues to be as effective as they possibly can be by maximizing the amount of control paid staff are able to exert over their own work. In no area was their empowerment clearer than in the involvement of volunteers. Consistently, the "more effective" organizations had driven responsibility for the involvement of volunteers as "close to the action" as possible.

Thus, a school left the ultimate decision about the nature and scope of volunteer involvement in the classroom to the individual teacher within a framework that makes clear the value of volunteers to the overall work of the school. A hospital left that decision to department heads or chief nurses, again within an overall framework. Teachers, nurses, counselors, social workers, even doctors were challenged by their leadership to consider volunteers as key resources – but they also were allowed to make the final decision about how and when or even if volunteers were appropriate in their situation.

By contrast, in organizations which were "less effective" in involving volunteers, leaders tended to disparage their paid staff. There was an atmosphere of distrust, alienation and tension. Paid staff were more concerned about their individual jobs than they were the mission of the organization. Leaders talked about the limitations rather than the potentials of their colleagues – and seemed to be looking for ways to control rather than to empower their staff members.

In such settings, the involvement of volunteers was limited, almost happening in spite of the organization rather than because of it. Volunteer placements tended to be in relatively routine jobs. Decision-making about and management of volunteers seemed to be more centralized and controlling. Staff members did not feel that they had been empowered to decide about volunteer involvement – and, interestingly, they felt as frustrated about not being able to move ahead positively to develop an effective volunteer program as they were about not being able to refuse volunteers or to design their jobs.

Uniformly in the "more effective" organizations, the paid staff and their work were described by executives in positive, respectful terms. They are seen as competent professionals who are able to design and manage much of their own work and to appropriately and effectively incorporate volunteers. By comparison, in less effective organizations, paid staff often were described in negative terms and were not included in decision-making about volunteers.

At Lewis Middle School, says Mimi Forbes, "We let teams thrash out how to use volunteers. The teachers feel empowered, like they are in control." She contrasts this with other situations she has seen where "whoever is bringing in volunteers hasn't worked to expand teachers' thinking about what volunteers can do."

The teaching structure at Lewis, she explains, "is different. There is team teaching in reading and math between the regular and special education teachers. The administrator is in and out of every classroom every day. We also encourage parents to sit in on classes. So, teachers have to learn to be comfortable with it. Volunteers become just another person coming in."

At the Samaritans, the core work is done through a cooperative effort of paid staff, volunteer "home leaders" who are called upon when there is a medical crisis, experienced

volunteers who serve as "shift leaders" and the rank and file volunteers. Experienced volunteers also help with training of incoming volunteers.

Nurses at Massachusetts General Hospital often play the key role in the decision to accept volunteers. On the neo-natal unit, for example, nurses decide which nurses and which volunteers will work on the unit. In the cardiac surgical intensive care unit, nurses take only one in three volunteers offered to them. Pat Rowell says, "It has been a surprise to the nurses that they can own the volunteer program as much as they do."

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

The relationship between paid staff and volunteers is a critical element in defining the effectiveness of an organization in involving volunteers.

Let's begin with the notion of "boundaries." As we were organizing the data that we had collected during the research, we evolved a model that describes volunteering within organizations. We used the word "boundaries" to describe the distance or tension between paid staff and volunteers because it seemed to us to best capture what happens in each group. They draw boundaries around themselves based on how they describe themselves and how they describe the other group. The boundaries, in other words, are based on what they are and on what they are not.

The existence of such boundaries is a fact. We saw not one instance in which there were no boundaries between paid staff and volunteers, even in the case of agencies that claimed that there were no differences. What differentiated organizations from one another was the "thickness" or "thinness" of those boundaries – and, thinking of it in actual physical terms we found helpful to our understanding.

In those organizations that were "more effective" in the engagement of volunteers, the boundaries were "thinner" and more permeable than they were in organizations that were seen as "less effective." What does this mean? Basically, it means that in the more effective organizations, they had made conscious efforts to reduce the differences

between paid staff and volunteers or to increase interaction and cooperation among the two groups.

In one agency, for example, volunteers were treated almost identically with paid staff in terms of the way they are "hired," trained, evaluated and recognized. Volunteers are required to record their observations of clients with whom they work and are encouraged to participate in "case conferences" about specific clients. The agency feels that volunteers have as much capacity to observe and report as their paid staff, particularly given the nature of the training they receive. Indeed, paid staff there make the point that volunteers, coming periodically from the outside, may see things that the staff miss on a day-to-day basis.

By contrast, in another agency doing essentially the same work, volunteers are neither allowed to record their observations nor encouraged to share them with the trained professionals. Neither are they allowed information about the clients as individuals. The agency invests little in the training of volunteers, restricting them largely to "friendly visiting" roles. Paid staff at the agency have little faith in the volunteers to contribute meaningfully to the work that the staff does.

All of us are aware, of course, that these boundaries exist and that they vary from agency to agency. But we rarely understand the precise nature of them and thus tend to do our trainings and consultations around general themes rather than specific situations. It became clear during our research, however, that there are major differences among organizations. Had our purpose been consultation rather than research, it would have been important to understand those differentiations.

Here is one way we might characterize the different kinds of boundaries.

◆ Identity – Based on ways people were identified to one another and publicly – such as by giving volunteers different colored uniforms or different kinds of nametags or proclaiming "VOLUNTEER" on the name tag when on the paid staff it was the person's name that was most prominent.

◆ Control – Based on agency's perceptions of their ability to exert control over paid and unpaid workers. The "you can't fire a volunteer" concern fits here. So do concerns about liability and confidentiality. These are not non-issues. The difference is in whether or not an organization believes they can be resolved and wants to resolve them.

◆ Skills – Based on the demonstrated need for specific competencies that volunteers may not have and that it may not be reasonable for them to gain in the context of their volunteer work. Except for the obvious clinical things, however, every agency executive that I inter viewed over the course of our research said that if I would commit full-time as a volunteer for a year, they could teach me how to do virtually every job in the agency.

◆ Shared Ownership – Based on the extent to which paid staff are willing to share their domains with volunteers and the extent to which volunteers want to be part of those domains. In some cases, agencies expressed great frustrations that volunteers would not accept more responsibility, would not participate in case conferences, etc. Too often, volunteers play the "just a volunteer" game better than staff do.

◆ Form of Payment – At the end of the day, the ultimate distinction remains: paid staff get paid and volunteers do not. Yet, as you talk with paid staff, you sometimes get the idea that they wish that they were getting the same rewards from their work that volunteers do. One nurse in a children's hospital said to me, "Here's why I resent volunteers. The children love them because all the volunteers have to do is play with them. But I'm the one who has to hurt them so they cry when I come around." In all likelihood, no amount of money can make up for what is missing in this person's job.

Organizations which showed success in this characteristic might best be described as eliminating arbitrary distinctions between staff and volunteers. In practice, there were no "staff" or "volunteers," simply "us."

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

A striking difference between the "more effective" and "less effective" organizations was that, in the former, positive stories about the work of volunteers were more numerous and more readily shared. This "hearsay evidence" seemed to have a tremendous impact throughout the organization, as paid staff encouraged their colleagues

to reframe their attitudes about volunteers. That, in turn, led to new opportunities for volunteers to demonstrate their value and impact. Such stories also had the effect of reinforcing for volunteers the value of their contribution to the organization.

In one of the agencies where we conducted research, we were told that the charter of the organization, first written during Colonial times, reflected the concept of neighbor helping neighbor. In another, they told us about the role of volunteers in creating the organization over a 20-year period of planning, development of community support and fundraising. In a third, they related the dramatic increase in volunteer involvement due to a tornado and flood which endangered the community.

As importantly, in all of the "effective" organizations, we were told stories of volunteer heroes and heroines, individuals who had made significant contributions to the life and work of the organization. Our question simply was, "What's the best volunteers story you can tell us?" In response, we received a veritable flood of interesting and energizing responses. We heard stories of volunteers who show up every day, rain or shine or natural disaster, exhibiting more commitment to coming to work than any paid staff member. We heard stories of volunteers whose dedication to the well-being of a client went far beyond the basic requirements of their job description. We heard stories of volunteers whose ingenuity allowed the organization to overcome barriers and restrictions.

In successful volunteer-utilizing organizations these stories were quite common and tended to be shared among all staff and volunteers, clearly indicating that they were regularly passed on to new members of the group.

By contrast, in the "less effective" organizations, the people we interviewed had few if any readily available stories about volunteers, either in terms of their historic role in the organization or their heroic acts. Often, when asked for their "best story," they literally had nothing to relate. In some ways, of course, that is not surprising. The "less effective" organizations, by definition, had fewer compelling examples of volunteer involvement and, thus, less to tell us about.

One simple way to assess your own status on this characteristic is to listen to the way people talk about the work volunteers do for the organization. Here's an example. In a visit to an organization last year, it was clear from the few minutes spent in the reception area that the receptionist, a volunteer, was having difficulty balancing the ringing phones, the visitors and the demands of office staff. After

one particularly exasperating interaction with the phone, she looked at me and said, "That's what you get when you put a volunteer in this job!" I have no doubt that she would have been just as likely to say the same thing to staff or to anyone else who happened to be around at that moment.

Observations, of course, suggested that her relative accomplishments had nothing to do with her status as a volunteer. It had everything to do with matching skills and interests with tasks, with skill training, with clear connection of the value of the task to the overall work of the organization and with appropriate supervision and feedback. Yet, the attitude being expressed, which potentially could take root in the organization's subconscious, was that volunteers could not handle the job. And, that is precisely how it happens in the organizations with which we work.

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Organizations create their own cultures, and part of the process of building a culture is identifying the heroes and almost-mythical figures who exemplify the ideals of the culture.

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In another organization we witnessed an equal lack of positive 'storytelling' about volunteers. This organization gives an annual "Volunteer Leadership" award named after one of the early volunteer leaders of the organization and posts the name of the yearly winner on a plaque prominently displayed in the lobby of the building. The plaque, whose centerpiece is an imposing bronze picture of the award's namesake, is placed between the entrances to the building's only elevators, so that each person entering the organization passes the plaque each day as they go to work. As we interviewed staff and volunteers of the organization we asked them, "Could you tell us about George James?" No one could identify the name, much less remember the significance of this early volunteer, despite having passed by his bronze portrait twice a day.

The significance of this storytelling is simple. Organizations create their own cultures, and part of the process of building a culture is identifying the heroes and almost-mythical figures who exemplify the ideals of the culture. We know that it is through stories since time immemorial people that have passed on their values, cultures, myths and legends.

Oral history far predates written history and, in some cultures, still is the key way in which such information is passed from generation to generation. Through stories, new members of a culture very quickly learn how an organization works, what is valued and what is not. Stories about exemplary volunteers show that volunteers can embody organizational ideals, and can be remembered and recognized as leaders of the organization. Each of these story-figures clearly communicates to new staff and volunteers the possible roles and importance that volunteers can play within the organization. An organization without these stories is an organization in which volunteers have effectively been removed from history, and made invisible and insignificant.

Learn, Grow and Change

> **10. 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.**

Perhaps the best way to describe the agencies which exhibited this characteristic is "never satisfied." No matter how good their engagement of volunteers, they seemed to always be seeking ways of making it better. They were the ones who were anxious to get the results of the research we were doing. One insisted on a debriefing session and promptly set about responding to one of the major observations we made about their work – not by trying to refute it but by trying to fix it! Another asked us to return and meet with the top volunteer and staff leadership of the organization to help them reflect on our observations.

These agencies and many more like them throughout the country are reflecting their own version of "continuous process improvement," the core element of total quality management. They see volunteers as key "customers" and have devised ways to get ongoing feedback on how well they are doing in serving those customers. In other agencies, volunteer coordinators are doing likewise with the line staff in the departments in which volunteers are involved. They, too, are "customers" of the volunteer program and their input is vital to the continuous improvement effort.

The notion of learning is increasingly important to organizations. Indeed, many management and organization development specialists are making the case that an organization's ability to not only thrive but to actually survive in the future is directly proportionate to their capacity to "learn." By that, they mean that the people within organizations, both individually and collectively, need to develop the skill of reflection on their work and the willingness to uncover, understand and reconsider the basic assumptions that underlie the work that they are doing. That means a willingness to consider the possibility that some of those assumptions are no longer valid, that they limit the way we think and, thus, the way we behave.

It was those kind of limitations that became visible to us throughout the Paradigm research. Here is just one example. If you and I were to walk together through a school, a hospital or a human service organization, we would identify a wide variety of jobs that might be undertaken by volunteers. Some would be in direct support of work we saw paid staff doing; some would be to intensify the work we saw on behalf of a single person; some would be to extend the work of the organization to new audiences; some would be to build public understanding and support for the organization. But (and we have done this) if we compared the list we developed with the actual list of volunteer jobs for which the organization was recruiting, we would find that we had created a much longer list.

Why is that? It largely is because the closer we get to the work we are doing, the more narrowly we think about it, the less options we "see," the less able we are to break out of our existing "paradigms." So, an integral part of becoming a "learning organization" is to break free of those paradigms and to open ourselves to a rethinking of the assumptions and thus the limitations that constrain our thinking.

Some of the questions which should be considered in this learning process are:

◆ Is regular attention given to improving the management of volunteers at the organization? Is this a priority?

◆ Are volunteers commonly involved in decisions about the direction of the organization, from the strategic planning process to weekly staff meetings?

◆ Are volunteers regularly asked to evaluate their involvement in the organization, including the way in which they are managed?

◆ Do you do exit interviews with departing volunteers to learn why they are leaving and to get their evaluation of the organization's performance in managing them?

◆ Is there a conscious effort to identify new ways to involve volunteers in the work of the organization?

◆ Is there a conscious recognition, openly discussed, that volunteers can make a greater contribution to the organization than they now are doing?

If you can answer "always" or even "frequently" to these questions, you are doing well on this characteristic. If you can only say "sometimes" or "rarely," you may want to think over new approaches that you might take.

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Organizations that were "more effective" recognized that the world is a turbulent place, that constant change is the norm, and that they must be prepared to adapt to new demands and changing circumstances. They had begun to incorporate in their daily work with volunteers ways of learning about and improving their practices.

At Family Focus, they conduct focus groups with volunteers and with volunteers who are no longer active. Linda Fernbaugh, deputy director, describes the benefits of these sessions as obtaining "validation about what we thought we knew. We got language that became useful in marketing as we clarified our understanding of how volunteers saw us and our work."

Peg O'Neil at the Samaritans describes the motivation for their learning as "a zest to make the volunteer program perfect" that has "provoked a whirl of change." One of those changes was to start asking questions about attrition by asking volunteers for feedback and by doing exit interviews with volunteers. "We are continually looking at how we treat people and looking for ways to improve."

Mimi Forbes at Lewis Middle School puts it most succinctly: "We are learning as we do it."

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11. 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.

This is perhaps the most difficult of all of the characteristics in the sense that any discussion of inclusiveness or diversity seems to be tinged with controversy and, often, defensiveness. But in an increasingly multicultural world in which a variety of lifestyles, cultures, age groups and value orientations seek to co-exist, attention must be given to these issues.

When we were going through the data analysis phase of our research project, we recognized that none of the organizations we had studied had been exemplars in this area. We were quite prepared to conclude that attention to issues of diversity and inclusiveness simply was not a differentiating characteristic of effectiveness in the engagement of volunteers. But, following an animated discussion with our project advisory council, we reviewed the data

once again and reached a slightly different conclusion.

The difference between the "more effective" and "less effective" organizations, we decided, was the extent to which they recognized the importance of these issues and the extent to which they were struggling to find answers appropriate to their community and to their organization. Contrast these situations:

◆ Organization A told us that it was not important for them to have volunteers from the client group with whom they were working, that "anyone" could relate to them appropriately.

◆ Organization B believed that their consumers would be better served if they were interacting with volunteers who shared their cultural values and language.

And these two organizations were providing essentially the same service!

Perhaps the area in which the greatest learning and change is taking place is in the effort to involve the broadest possible diversity of the community as volunteers. The key difference between the "more effective" and the "less effective" organizations was the degree to which they were engaged with this issue. The "more effective" recognized the importance of responding to the increasing diversity of their communities and were actively struggling with how to accomplish it. The "less effective" either denied demographic change, saw no need to respond to it or felt that it would be too difficult to engage "them" as volunteers.

In the "more effective" organizations, the leaders spoke knowledgeably and sensitively about the changing demographics of their communities. They understood the trends toward ethnic and cultural diversity, the aging of the baby boomers, and the emergence of alternative lifestyles. They recognized the inherent importance of engaging people from all of those groups as volunteers if the organization was to remain truly responsive to the total community of which it is a part. Most importantly, they were openly struggling with how they could achieve that broad engagement, given what they saw as their inability to do so to date.

In the "less effective" organizations, both leaders and members generally seemed to be in a state of denial about these issues related to diversity and inclusiveness. They either ignored or passed off as unimportant the changes happening around them. Often, they assumed a "high road" posture, something along the lines of "our services transcend differences among people." Yet, in every case, it was possible to imagine circumstances in which differ-

ences in language, cultural context or values might in fact be a critical factor in the effectiveness of services.

There is ample anecdotal evidence – not just from this study but from the daily experience of all of us – that "majority" organizations, whether in the public or the private sectors, tend not to know how to effectively engage a diversity of people in their work, whether as paid employees, volunteers or customers. But there also is ample evidence that the degree of diversity now present in our society is going to steadily increase. Barring natural disaster or the catastrophe of war, demographic trends are the most predictable aspects of the future. Today's diversity is a precursor to tomorrow's diversity. It is the language of the future, one that all of us will be called upon to learn if we are to be successful in living together.

Many of the civic organizations and fraternal societies that we take for granted are based on models learned from Native Americans. New immigrant groups typically not only survive but thrive because of the voluntary mutual support activities in which their members engage. Volunteering, in some form and under some name, is part of virtually every culture on the face of the earth – indeed, in some Pacific Island nations, it essentially is the way in which people lead their lives.

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There is an unfortunate tendency to think of volunteering as an "American" cultural phenomenon in which "American" is defined as white and European. The reality is far different.

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We live in an increasingly global society with high levels of mobility, with growing ethnic and racial diversity, with greater fragmentation of subcultures and lifestyles. Volunteering has the potential to become the unifying global movement not only of this decade but of the new century that is just before us. To achieve that potential, however, the leadership of our "volunteer community," whether nationally or locally, must continue to wrestle with the kinds of issues we were seeing raised in the organizations which we studied.

It was clear throughout the research that there is no single "perfect model." In those organizations which clearly were "more effective" in the involvement of volunteers, leaders understood their weaknesses, had specific agendas for future improvement and were anticipating growth and change in their programs. While those organizations differed widely in their approach to their volunteer program, they shared a commitment to continuous improvement and to challenging current practice in light of changing conditions. They were seeking to become "learning organizations" by translating their observations of the environment and of their behavior into action and adaptation.

Conclusion

As we have presented the research to literally thousands of people throughout the country, it has seemed to many that there are elements missing, things that, based on our collective experience and common sense, should be part of a "more effective" organization. Here are four such elements, things that most of us assume in our volunteer management practices but which are not borne out by the research as differentiating characteristics of effectiveness.

The first is training. Many people have argued that training is key to the successful engagement of volunteers within organizations. Not only was this not supported by the research but there was ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that the mere presence or absence of training may make no difference at all! Even some of the "least effective" organizations we saw were providing training for volunteers and both paid staff and volunteers acknowledged that the quality of the training was at least acceptable.

The issue was not whether there was training. Rather, it was the content of the training which, in turn, was shaped by such characteristics as extent to which volunteers were seen as valuable resources in achieving mission, thickness of the boundaries between paid staff and volunteers and roles that volunteers were not only allowed but encouraged to play. In the organizations that rated highly on these and other characteristics, the training that was done tended to support the positive way the organization's leaders thought about volunteers. The content was part of a broader set of elements that enabled volunteers to succeed.

There is virtually no disagreement about the importance of helping volunteers develop the knowledge and skills they need to perform the roles to which they are assigned. But training cannot overcome the myriad of barriers that organizations can throw up around volunteers to limit their work, their contribution to mission and their level of satisfaction.

A second "missing element" is recognition. Again, even the "least effective" organizations were doing some kind of recognition events or activities. Indeed, some of them were doing more recognition than some of the "more effective" organizations were. But the latter group were doing the more important kind of recognition. They were empowering their volunteers by respecting their potential contribution, designing roles through which that contribution could be recognized and working actively and consciously to increase the impact and effectiveness of volunteer effort. In such a setting, elaborate recognition ceremonies and superficial presentation of memorabilia become much less important.

Centralized control was a third missing element. As we have discussed before, management of volunteers was pushed as close to the actual work as possible. "Ownership" of the volunteers' work was likewise pushed there. The job of the "volunteer office" became one of external relationship building, internal consulting and trouble-shooting, and provision of those services that cut across other departments, such as orientation and some forms of record-keeping. In the "more effective" organizations, directors of volunteers never referred to volunteers as "my volunteers." Nor did they see themselves as issuing policy statements or policing the volunteer management of other units.

Finally, as we have discussed before, volunteer coordinators were, in a way, a missing element. This is not to say that volunteer coordinators aren't important – indeed, in an earlier piece we argued that the research leads to a more important role of internal consultant and change agent for volunteer coordinators. Rather, it underscores that it is not the mere presence or absence of a staff position with that title that makes the difference. It is the way the person in the position thinks, what he or she does and what the system is prepared to allow him or her to do – those are the critical differences between the "more effective" and "less effective" organizations.

Throughout the research phase of the Changing the Paradigm Project it was clear that some organizations were doing a better job than others at involving volunteers: the work of volunteers was more directly contributing to the mission and priorities of the organization; there were fewer tensions between volunteers and paid staff; there was greater breadth and depth to the volunteers' involvement; there was less resistance to change and innovation in the roles played by volunteers.

This observation is consistent with day-to-day experience. Some organizations simply are more effective in the involvement and management of volunteers. Why is this the case? What are the factors that contribute to their success? What are the barriers that other organizations

encounter and do not fully overcome that hold back their involvement of volunteers?

In part, the answers rest in the complexity of organizational life. Organizations are systems, constantly interacting with their environments, made up of an almost infinite number of forces that constantly interact to shape and reshape how work gets done and, indeed, even what work gets done. There is no single formula, no "magic bullet," that will allow an organization to dramatically transform the nature and scope of volunteer involvement.

But it is clear that some factors are critical: the role played by top leadership and by managers at all levels of the organization; the underlying attitudes, values and beliefs that members of the organization have about the work being done and about the appropriate roles of paid staff and volunteers; the clarity and breadth of acceptance of the mission of the organization; the policies and practices that shape the management of volunteers; the quality of volunteers' performance and the extent to which positive stories about volunteers' achievements are shared throughout the organization.

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The research leads to a more important role of internal consultant and change agent for volunteer coordinators.

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It is equally clear that it is the interaction of all of these factors that is critical. Thus, there must be a focal point of leadership for volunteering within the organization and there must be conscious, deliberate attention to the process and dynamics of volunteer involvement. High impact volunteering does not "just happen"; organizations that are highly effective in the involvement of volunteers do not "just happen." Both are the result of hard work, focused effort and a commitment to excellence in achieving the mission of the organization.

Most important is the combination and interaction of the characteristics and the organizational culture about volunteering. The characteristics should be seen as the starting points for discussions within organizations about the nature of their "volunteer culture" and about how that culture is played out in the day-to-day life of the organization.

There is no "right" in an absolute sense. Thus, the examples which we have given are only that, examples of how some organizations are reaching toward their highest potential in the involvement of volunteers to achieve their mission. It remains for each organization to determine what it wants to become and to challenge itself to excellence. The characteristics are a framework and a set of tools with which organizations can come to understand themselves better. With that understanding can come a change in the way they view and value volunteers, the critical step in "changing the paradigm."

A "paradigm" is simply a framework through which we view the world. When we speak of "changing the paradigm," we are suggesting the need to reconsider the way in which we see the world. In our research, those organizations which were "more effective" clearly saw volunteers in different ways than did those who were "less effective," ways that were more expansive, more accepting, more empowering of both paid staff and volunteers.

Mimi Forbes at Lewis Middle School in Roxbury, Massachusetts perhaps said it best of all of the over 400 people who were interviewed over the course of the research: "You need to understand that the more power that you share, the more powerful you are. You need to be open to help from everyone. Each one can enrich what we do."

The process of changing one's paradigm about volunteering includes awareness of, reflection on and challenge to one's underlying beliefs and attitudes not only about volunteers themselves but also about the nature of the work that is being done in our organizations and the role of paid staff in doing that work. In the end, changing an organization's paradigm is a matter of changing the shared framework that members of the organization have created through their interactions. Thus, efforts to change must be inclusive, open and dynamic. Changing the organizational paradigm must be a shared experience that challenges each member of the organization to better understand his or her own attitudes and all members, collectively, to join in creating a new shared understanding of how they wish to work together.

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.

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.

About the Author

Over the past twenty years, Kenn Allen has worked with a wide range of volunteer organizations throughout the United States and around the world. He served as president of VOLUNTEER, the national leadership and resource organization for volunteering in the United States, and as executive director of the National Center for Voluntary Action. Mr. Allen is currently the Senior Vice President for Human Resources/Organizational Development and Administration at The Points of Light Foundation.

Mr. Allen serves as first vice president and board member of the International Association for Volunteer Effort. He has worked with voluntary organizations and businesses in countries as diverse as Russia, England, India, Korea, Singapore, Australia and Venezuela. He is the co-author of two books on the nature and scope of corporate involvement in community service activities and of numerous papers, articles and monographs.

A native of Illinois, he received his B.A. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and his M.A. in Human Resource Development at George Washington University. He is a fellow in the Executive Doctorate Program in Human Resource Development at George Washington University. Mr. Allen is currently working on his dissertation on the role of community service in the lives of CEOs of major corporations.

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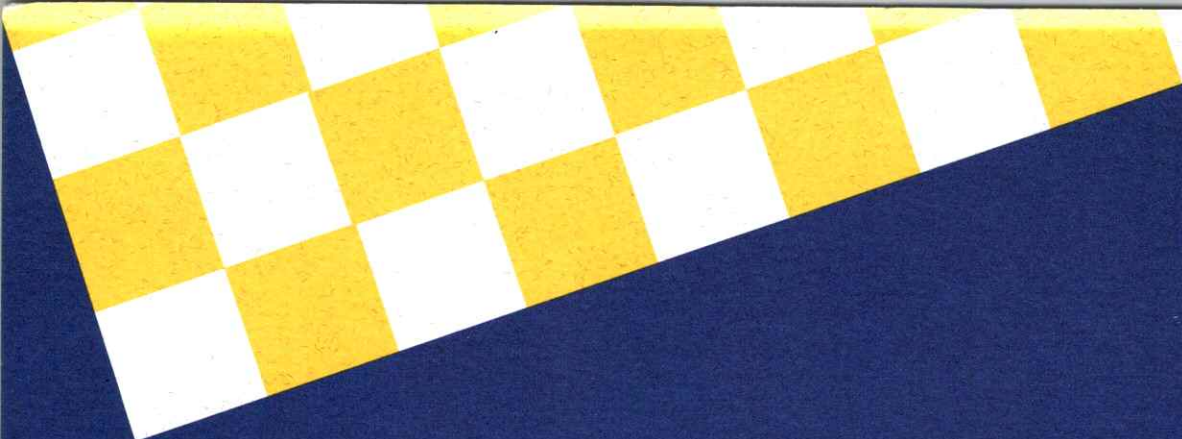
There is a conscious, active effort to reduce the boundaries and increase the teamwork between paid and volunteer staff.

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
F O U N D A T I O N

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