

Volunteerism Tool Kit

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Commitment to Volunteers

Commitment

Successful volunteer management depends upon a classic three part plan:

- Recruit
- Manage
- Reward

And, a critical fourth component -- commitment.

Commitment makes a difference because it:

- Gives value to volunteer assignments
- Recognizes volunteering as professional development
- Provides leadership training/exposure for members
- Lets volunteers “control” their commitment
- Provides opportunities & eliminates begging

Our Challenge to Commit Contract

INASMUCH AS we, the chapter board of directors for _____ (name of chapter) recognize the need for an effective Volunteerism program; and

INASMUCH AS we as an IABC chapter board of directors believe that professional development is the first and foremost reason our members have committed to this chapter;

WE DO hold each and all members of this board responsible for developing our Volunteerism program as a professional development opportunity.

The Small Print

Based on leadership surveys and research conducted by the IABC Task Force on Volunteerism, almost every chapter has a small core of individuals who will volunteer without being asked. However, if this small group is not supported by a larger pool of volunteers who have been informed about the opportunities available and the benefits and time commitment of each opportunity, the core group will soon burn out, chapter related efforts will go undone, programming will suffer, membership retention will decline and membership satisfaction will erode.

On the other hand, a best practices survey of the leadership in some of the top IABC chapters in the world shows that Volunteerism is the key to success in all phases of their chapters' efforts. They know that

success will breed success:

- When volunteering is seen by leaders and members as a professional development opportunity;
- When leaders are committed to increasing the value of membership through volunteer

management;

- When members know in advance what volunteer positions are available, what the time commitment

will be and what the benefits are;

- When members are asked what type of volunteer opportunity they are seeking and what they would

like to learn from a volunteer professional development opportunity; and

- When volunteers are appropriately recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

Therefore

BE IT KNOWN that for the term of this board, we will practice good Volunteerism techniques.

We will

use tools described in this tool kit to provide outstanding volunteer professional development opportunities. We will never beg our members to volunteer; instead, we will match our members' interests with chapter needs.

WE PROMISE over the next 12 months to involve _____ percent of our members in our

volunteer

professional development opportunities.

Assigned by _____ this ____ day of _____, 199__ .

(Chapter president)

Recruiting Volunteers

Date _____

Dear Friend and

Colleague and

Dependable One and

Volunteer Phonathon Caller:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a caller for the first IABC/Minnesota Volunteer Phonathon. We hope to generate a lot of interest in our organization and the benefits of volunteering.

You, along with all other IABC members, will receive a letter and list of volunteer opportunities. This letter serves as the introduction to the phonathon. Enclosed you will find the following information to assist you with this project:

Pledge cards for 20 members to call (Please fill out a card for each member you speak with)
List of volunteer opportunities (please familiarize yourself with this list before calling)
1994-95 volunteer roster (Please refer to it before contacting members)
Tip sheet

All phone calls should be completed between August 1 and August 15. After you have completed your phone calls, you may forward your cards to _____ . _____ will compile all of the cards.

If you have any questions, please contact me at _____. Thank you so much for your time and talent and friendship!

Sincerely,

Co-Chair
Volunteer Recruitment

IABC/Minnesota Volunteer Phonathon Tip Sheet

Introduction:

- State your name and your affiliation with IABC and this project.
- Mention that he or she is one of 420 members being contacted this month to ask them to volunteer for “their” organization
- Mention that the goal of this phonathon is to make sure every member is asked.
- Ask them about their previous volunteer experience and note that on the pledge card

Contacting members:

- Call at a time convenient to you, but don’t call too late in the day, when changes are greater than many people have left for the day
- If you cannot reach the member, leave a message. If they do not contact you in 24 hours, call them back. The goal is to make a personal connection with each member, not their voice mail.
- This is strictly a volunteer recruitment call. If they offer any additional information, please note it in the comments area on the pledge card.

Identify the volunteer area which best suits each member:

- It will be easier if each member has had a chance to review the letter and list of opportunities that accompanied the membership directory mailing. If they have not, please review the major categories with them. You do not have to explain everything -- just enough so they can name their area of interest.
- Guide the member in making the right choice for them. Every area is on equal footing. The board of directors will handle making sure there are enough volunteers for each area. You do not have to worry about that.

Closing:

- Mention that members who have expressed an interest will be contacted by the board member or director responsible for that area
 - Thank each person for their time and interest.
-

Volunteer Phonathon Pledge Card

Name:

Company

Phone/fax/e-mail

Received mailing

Did not return phone call

Did not receive mailing

Not interested in volunteering

Previous IABC/Minnesota volunteer experience:

Volunteer pledge (*Please indicate member interested in any area with an "x."*)

Communication

Treasurer/Finance

Media relations committee

Development committee

News & Views (Newsletter)

Membership directory

Leadership/Membership

Leadership development

Community Relations

Membership

Non-profit communicator workshops

Links to Literacy

Student Relations

Meet the Pros

Professional Development

Writing workshop

Awards program

Shadow day

Diversity

Buddy system

Programming (regular meetings)

Internship program

Networking

Career Development

IABC after five

Job Mart

IABC unplugged

Accreditation

Special Projects

IABC District Symposium

Other

Use the following space for additional information:

Caller's name:

Date of call:

Letter to chapter members -- accompanied membership directory

July _____

Dear IABC member:

Ask anyone who volunteers in IABC, and they'll tell you it's helped them get more out of their membership.

Ask anyone who has not been an IABC volunteer, and they may well say it's because no one ever asked them.

Because we believe in point number one, we're going to work on point number two. Later this

month,
you'll be receiving a phone call from an IABC member, asking you if you'd like to volunteer,
and, if so,
in which area. It's our way of making sure everyone gets asked and everyone has the opportunity
to
maximize their membership benefits.

To give you an idea of how an IABC volunteer position can help you, beginning on the back of
this
page we've listed many of the opportunities available. Volunteering with IABC is a great way to
round
out your skill set. For example, if you'd like to beef up your media relations skills, but don't get
a
chance with your current job, we can help. Volunteering also gives you many opportunities to
network
with other members for professional development, friendship and business contacts.

Please take a few minutes to review our "help wanted" ads and see which position appeals to
you. We
have opportunities for all skill levels, all commitment levels, and all busy schedules. We hope
you'll
pencil us in on your schedule when we call later this month.

Take to you soon --

Volunteer Recruitment co-chair

Volunteer Recruitment co-chair

Managing Volunteers

10 Ways to Keep Volunteers Volunteering

(Prepared by Wilma Mathews, ABC)

1. Let them know where you're going. Volunteers, just like you and your staff members, like to know what the game plan is. They want to know the goals and objectives of the committee and of the organization. Tell them, and repeat it periodically.

2. Let them know specifically what they are supposed to do. You do this by making sure they have a job description. The description can be as simple as a one-sentence directive. ("Your job is to issue a set of membership labels to the secretary no later than the 10th of each month.") Or, your description may have to be longer. The position of programming chair may include everything from selecting the programming to finding sites, to getting speakers, picking out menus, writing thank-you letters, and measuring the results of each meeting. Whatever the job, make sure there is a description.

3. Keep them informed of the committee's progress. It isn't always easy to meet in person, but there's nothing to prevent you from sending out a one-page wrap-up of the latest happenings to help keep all committee members current. You can fax or send by mail. The point is, keep them informed.

4. Insist that committee members keep you informed. Again, this doesn't have to be a formal structure, but you need to have reports from your volunteers on how they are progressing and if they are experiencing any problems. For example, let's take that volunteer who has to supply the labels. You need to know if he or she is getting those labels to the secretary two days before the deadline or two seconds before the deadline. You need to know if something is causing that committee member to always be late with the labels. And, you need to know if these labels are coming out too soon, making them out of date by the time they reach the secretary. Only then can you correct the course. If your committee is large, you should insist on a report each month or even every two weeks if there is a time constraint connected with the assignment. Reports should be to you before the board meeting so you

can report accurately and currently.

5. Delegate, delegate, delegate. Your role as a board member or committee chair is to manage. It is not your role to do everything in the committee's charter. Your volunteers will cease being supportive and functional if they see you doing their jobs. You manage. They perform the functions.

6. Have set times each week to work on IABC and make sure your volunteers know you are reachable during that time. This gives them the freedom to call you without worrying that they are interrupting your real work. Also, this gives you the freedom to check in with them without the same worry. As an aside, this also helps you and your secretary plan your time.

7. Have periodic appraisal sessions with volunteers. After a few months on the job, call or meet with each volunteer to review his or her performance. You need to ask if the job description is clear, if there are hindrances to getting the job done, if the volunteer is overloaded or underworked.

8. Tell volunteers when they've done a good job. Too often we think that praising our peers is awkward or embarrassing. I've never yet seen a volunteer who didn't like to be praised for a job well done. Conversely, tell volunteers when they've not done a good job. It is your job as the supervisor or manager to tell a volunteer when he or she isn't meeting the expectations outlined in the job description. It may be that the volunteer simply isn't equipped to handle that job, but could take on another one. Or, it may be that the volunteer didn't understand the time it would take to complete a job and didn't want to tell you. Or, it may be that you have a "yes" person who will volunteer for everything but produce nothing. It is your role to find out.

9. Fire some volunteers. If you had an employee who wasn't fulfilling the job description, didn't show up for meetings, didn't send in reports, didn't return your phone calls and clearly wasn't helping the team achieve stated goals and objectives, would you keep that employee? No. You'd do your best to get that person replaced with someone who wants to do the job and can do the job. The same is true with volunteers. Often, firing a volunteer is the nicest thing you can do for them. Many volunteers don't

like to say "no" and get tangled in a web of accepting assignments they can't fulfill. Yet, they are too awkward or embarrassed to tell you (their boss and probably their friend) about it. It's up to you to make the tough decision.

10. Say "thank you." A lot. I can tell you, after almost 20 years' involvement in IABC that the companies I worked for probably donated a couple of years' salary to IABC, not to mention an enormous amount of subsidized travel and expenses. What kept me going personally was knowing that I made a difference in some peoples' lives. I knew that through letters and phone calls. I can't keep phone calls, but I have kept the letters. And my companies saw those letters and saw the benefit I was bringing to them, as well. So, write little notes throughout the year and write a thank-you letter at the end of a volunteer's term. Even write thank-yous to the people you fired. After all, their intent was good and they should be thanked for that.

Nothing I've said here is much different than the rules you use in supervising people or in managing a program. We have put on our own blinders, thinking that managing volunteers is somehow different from managing employees. How can it be when what we're talking about is how to work with people?

Good luck to you.

Bill of Rights for Volunteers

The right to be treated as a co-worker

- not just free help

The right to a suitable assignment

- with consideration for personal preferences, temperament, life experience, education and employment background

The right to know as much as possible about the agency or service

- its policies
- its people
- its programs

The right to training for the job

- training that is thoughtfully planned and effectively presented

The right to continuing education on the job

- follow-up to initial training; information about new developments and training for greater responsibility

The right to sound guidance and direction

- by someone who is experienced, patient, well-informed and thoughtful, and who has the time to vest in giving guidance

The right to a place to work

- an orderly, designated place, conducive to work and worthy of the job to be done

The right to promotion and a variety of experiences

- through advancement of assignments of more responsibility
- through transfer from one activity to another
- through special assignment

The right to be heard

- to have a part in planning
- to feel free to make suggestions
- to have respect shown for an honest opinion

The right of recognition

- in the form of promotion and awards
- through day-by-day expressions of appreciation
-

and, most important, by being treated as a bona fide worker

Volunteer Viewpoint

If you want my loyalty, interests and best efforts, remember that...

I need a sense of belonging, a feeling that I am honestly needed for my total self, not just for my hands,
and not because I take orders well.

I need to have a sense of sharing in planning our objectives. My need will be satisfied only when I feel
that my ideas have had a fair hearing.

I need to feel that the goals and objectives arrived at are within reach and that they make sense to me.

I need to share in making the rules by which, together, we shall live and work toward our goals.

I need to feel that what I'm doing has real purpose or contributes to human welfare - that its value extends even beyond my personal gain, or hours.

I need to know in some clear detail just what is expected of me - one only my detailed task but where

I have opportunities to make personal and final decisions.

I need to have some responsibilities that challenge, that are within range of my abilities and interest, and

that contribute toward reaching my goal, and that cover all goals.

I need to see that progress is being made toward the goals we have set.

I need to be informed. What I'm not up on, I may be down on. (Keeping me informed is one way to

give me status as an individual.)

I need to have confidence in my superiors - confidence based upon assurance of consistent fair treatment, or recognition when it is due, and trust that loyalty will bring increased security.

Rewarding Volunteers

Sample boss's letter

(underlines represent custom features)

Dear _____:

I am writing to thank you for allowing _____ to volunteer his/her services this year to the Kansas City chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators. The support and encouragement that you give in his/her involvement with our organization is appreciated.

One of the benefits of Kansas City/IABC volunteer service is that it develops and strengthens communication and management skills. We strongly believe _____ brings these skills back to her work at the _____.

We need the participation of some _____ volunteers to make Kansas City/IABC function with the kind of excellence that it took to be IABC's 1991-92 District 5 Chapter of the Year. We couldn't reach milestones like this without the efforts of volunteers like _____.

Again, many thanks for _____ volunteer efforts and your support of his/her Kansas City/IABC participation.

Sincerely,

Director of Volunteer Services

101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

(By Vern Lake, Volunteer Services Consultant, Minnesota Department of Public Works)

1. Smile
38. Have a wine and cheese tasting party
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box
39. Ask others to evaluate their work
3. Treat to a soda
40. Say "good afternoon"
4. Reimburse for related expenses
41. Honor their preferences
5. Ask for a report
42. Create pleasant surroundings
6. Send a birthday card
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks

7. Arrange for discounts
44. Enlist them to train other volunteers
8. Give service stripes
45. Have a public reception
9. Maintain a coffee bar
46. Take time to talk
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions
47. Defend against hostile remarks
11. Invite to a staff meeting
48. Make good plans
12. Recognize personal needs
49. Comment to others
13. Accommodate personal needs
50. Send a valentine
14. Be pleasant
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements
15. Use in an emergency situation
52. Equate volunteer and work experience
16. Provide a baby sitter
53. Make them a "full partner"
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area
54. Recommend to prospective employer
18. Respect their wishes
55. Give scholarships to conferences
19. Give informal teas
56. Offer advocacy roles
20. Keep challenging them
57. Use as consultants
21. Send a card to the volunteer's family
58. Write them thank you notes
22. Provide a nursery
59. Invite participation in policy setting
23. Say "good morning"
60. Surprise with coffee and cake
24. Greet by name
61. Celebrate outstanding achievements
25. Provide good pre-service training
62. Nominate for volunteer awards
26. Help develop self-confidence
63. Recognize sponsors' presidents
27. Award plaques to sponsoring groups
64. Carefully match volunteers and jobs
28. Take time to explain fully
65. Praise them to their friends
29. Be verbal
66. Provide relevant in-service training

30. Motivate VIPs to talk to them
 67. Provide tools in good condition
 31. Hold rap sessions
 68. Say "good night"
 32. Give them more responsibility
 69. Plan staff and volunteer social events
 33. Encourage participation in planning
 70. Be a *real* person
 34. Respect sensitivities
 71. Rent a billboard
 35. Help them "grow on the job"
 72. Accept their individuality
 36. Help they "grow outside the job"
 73. Hold conferences and evaluations
 37. Send information to the media
 74. Identify age groups
 75. Maintain meaningful files
 76. Send impromptu fun cards
 77. Plan occasional extravaganzas
 78. Recognize a "volunteer of the month"
 81. Send letters to employers
 82. Plan newsletter "recognition"
 85. Say "we missed you"
 89. Distinguish groups and individuals
 91. Adequately orient
 92. Award extraordinary achievements
 93. Fully indoctrinate to the organization
 94. Send holiday cards
 95. Be familiar with assignment details
 99. Have a picnic
 100. Say "thank you"
-
-

Background Information

How to Get and Keep Good Volunteers

(Mike Heron, National Vice President, Public Affairs, American Cancer Society, and past chairman, IABC executive board)

Who volunteers?

- About 50% of adults have done some volunteer work
- Average amount is three hours per week
- On average, 10% of membership are active volunteers

Why do people volunteer?

- Self improvement
- Professional development
- Power motivated
- Want to influence the organization
- Recognition
- Networking
- Fun
- Gain new skills in a non-threatening environment
- Personal interest
- Career planning
- Want to achieve something/growth
- Need to be challenged
- Sense of duty
- Thinks no one else will volunteer to do the job

Why people don't volunteer

- NEVER WAS ASKED TO VOLUNTEER (60 - 70 percent of potential volunteers are never asked)
- Lack of time
- Unclear expectations
- Little or no recognition
- Mismatched skills
- Burnout
- Didn't seem important enough

Motivation: What turns people on and off

When we understand motivation, we can better predict:

- Behavior

-
- Success
 - Appropriate recognition

Three motivation types

1. Affiliation motivated (need to affiliate)

- Needs constant feedback, assurance
- Craves personal interaction
- Works to make friends
- Likes group projects
- Needs to be liked
- Seeks socialization opportunities

2. Achievement motivated

- Needs specific goals
- Works well alone
- Sticks to a task until completion
- Seeks responsibility
- Likes problem-solving
- Loves challenge
- Respects authority
- Needs parameters/fences -- needs to know what needs to be done so s/he knows if the task has been (is being) accomplished
- Needs tangible rewards

3. Power motivated

- Sees the "whole" picture
- Prefers strategic vs. tactical assignments
- Wants to make an impact
- Needs to impact/influence others
- Enjoys teaching others
- Will seek/accept position of authority
- Responds to titles
- Enjoys being persuasive

How to help motivate people

- Everyone should have a specific assignment with a deadline
- Everyone must report at each meeting (creates subtle peer pressure)
- Reporting gives opportunity for recognition/expressions of appreciation (and builds peer pressure on those who are behind in their tasks/responsibilities)

Recognition -- should match a person's motivation type

Ideas for recognizing/thanking volunteers (based on motivation type)

1. Affiliation motivated (need to affiliate)

Banquets

Name/photo in newsletter

Note of thanks

Social gathering/party

Personalized gift

Smile at them

2. Achievement motivated

- Tangible items (plaque or other memento)
- Letter of praise from you to their employer/in newsletter
- Nomination for an international award
- Smile at them

3. Power motivated

- Give them an impressive title
- Award named after them
- Donation in their name
- Give them a job with increased authority
- Introduce them to "key" people
- Smile at them

« The people we seek to recognize are our most priceless resources and therefore deserve our most creative and sensitive thinking

« From sensitive creativity will come meaningful recognition

« If the proper psychic rewards flow from appropriate recognition, we can harness irresistible energy.

Recruiting volunteers

1. Narrow the field -- don't ask everyone

2. Recruit your best prospect first

- Ask people who would do the best job versus who is most likely to say "yes"
- Don't assume they'll say "no"
- People like to be asked -- flatters, empowers, shows respect

3. Prepare a written job description

4. Anticipate objections (and be willing to be flexible)

5. Gang up if necessary (bring along another person whom they respect)

6. Ask the person and shut up! (pressure now goes to the person who is asked)

7. If "no" is the final answer, ask them if they would recommend anyone

8.

Keep asking -- someone out there wants the job!

FOUR BASIC CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

SATISFIED

OLIGARCHY (10%)

UNAMBITIOUS (30%)

- Know the system
- Priorities outside association
- Endorse the leadership
- Latently happy
- Help manage committees
- Perceive organization as democratic
- Help dispense rewards and punishments
- Association voyeurs
- Assume power prerogatives
- Willing to let others do it
- Future and existing leadership
- Believe association will work without them

(Government by a few)

HIGH INVOLVEMENT

LOW INVOLVEMENT

DISSIDENTS (10%)

INDIFFERENT (50%)

- Ambivalent about the association
- Send a check
- Disagree with role, philosophy and program • Perceive themselves as too busy to be of the association involved
- Antagonistic to leaders
- Rather pay than go themselves
- Seek recognition through adversity
- Usually have not been asked to participate
- Play to a limited and specific audience

- A large pool waiting to be tapped
- Place unrealistic trust in association to solve personal problems; relish the role of underdog; or looking for martyrdom

UNSATISFIED

Painting the Picket Fence: Motivating Members to Volunteer

Remember what happened when Tom Sawyer's aunt "charged" young Tom with the responsibility of getting her fence painted? Tom, being Tom, wanted to do anything but spend his Saturday applying whitewash to board, so he recruited a group of volunteers to help get the job done. Tom not only generated a pool of volunteers, he had them waiting in line for the chance to be of service. There's a lesson for member driven associations in how Tom handled a tough volunteer need.

We all know that associations cannot thrive or even survive without a strong volunteer base. Volunteers are the association's most active owner/stakeholders, primary customers, and strongest promoters. Chapters seldom have paid staff support, so they must depend on volunteers to create and manage all of the programs and services offered at the local level.

The implications of a narrow or weak volunteer base are grim:

- Leaders have to beg for help
- All the work is done by the same small group
- Leader development is retarded
- Members question the value of membership
- Professional development is reduced

In Tom's case, it's going to be a long Saturday.

By contrast, when volunteer programs are strong:

- A high percentage of members volunteer in some capacity
 - A pool of volunteers are "waiting" for assignments
 - Leaders are developed for key positions
 - Professional development is "linked" to volunteering
- Now young Tom is learning leadership skills and has a pool of "volunteers" ready to start painting that picket fence. Tom's Saturday turned out to be pretty good.

The choice is clear -- a strong volunteer program translates into a healthy organization. The challenge is breaking the 20-80 rule (the long-accepted idea that no more than 20 percent of an organization's members are active and involved while the other 80 percent simply pay their dues). Expanding volunteer involvement is vital to chapter viability. There's always a chance that the 80 percent of members who are uninvolved may, at any time, decide NOT to pay their dues. If that should happen, membership falls dramatically.

Meeting the 20-80 challenge doesn't require magic. Leaders from a number of IABC chapters, large and small, have done so successfully. The remainder of this paper examines a model developed by one chapter's leaders to expand its volunteer base and looks at how they implemented their plan. The same concepts have been successfully used by chapters of various sizes.

A Four Part Volunteer Approach

Volunteer programs are traditionally built around a three-part approach:

- Assess needs and recruit
- Manage
- Reward

The successful programs in IABC chapters add a critical fourth component:

- Commitment to creating viable volunteer programs

Commitment makes a difference because it:

- Gives value to volunteer assignments
- Recognizes volunteering as professional development
- Provides leadership training/exposure
- Provides opportunities
- Lets each volunteer control commitment
- Eliminates begging

Let's examine these elements in more detail, and see how they dovetail into more traditional

volunteer
programs.

Add value to volunteer assignments

Chapter leaders who value and are committed to volunteer involvement make sure those assignments mean something to the members who accept them. Each assignment has a complete job description, including clear responsibilities and reporting lines, a list of the benefits for the person volunteering, an estimate of the time required to do the job, and a time frame for completion. It takes time and thought and planning to create value for volunteer work.

The time to add value to volunteer positions is when the chapter board meets to plan for the coming year. Every board member should come to the meeting prepared to discuss the programs and services they want to continue, change or add -- and how they recommend implementing their plans. Once the chapter plans are in place, leaders know what jobs must be done to accomplish them. Writing job descriptions that work is relatively straight forward. Remember, the description shouldn't include "how" to do the job -- only what needs to be done.

Here's a simple formula for any job description:

Title

+ *Number of people needed*

+ *Reporting relationship*

+ *Brief description of work to be done (what, not how)*

+ *Time required*

+ *Duration of project*

+ *Resources available (people & budget)*

+ *Background (skills) needed*

+ *Benefits (new skills learned, new contacts made)*

EQUALS

A "winning" job description

IABC chapter leaders have found that planning ahead pays dividends. This is especially true during times of scarce financial and human resources when the chapter is competing for volunteer time with work, family, recreation and other professional and volunteer interests. If you must choose between two jobs (any job, not just volunteer work), are you more likely to choose one that's undefined -- or one that includes specific parameters like the ones listed above? Given the choice, we'd choose the latter.

Volunteering as professional development

IABC members volunteer for many reasons. You've no doubt heard them all. But there's one reason for volunteering that chapters with strong volunteer programs promote very successfully. It can be best summed up with this IABC adage: "Never ask a newsletter editor to edit the chapter newsletter."

Editors already know how to edit.

Ask members to volunteer in areas outside their usual professional responsibilities, so they can learn new skills (editors plan a meeting; public affairs specialists write the chapter marketing materials; a video specialist edits the newsletter). The first draft or initial product may not be as polished as you'd like -- but that's the idea. Volunteers can learn by doing in a safe environment, where experts are readily available to mentor volunteers trying new projects, to provide advice, critiques, and check-points -- long before a finished product makes a public appearance. That's why it's crucial that every job description includes a list of available resources, human and financial.

Leadership training and exposure

Why does a chapter need volunteers? There is, of course, one obvious reason -- jobs must be

done

and there is no staff to do them. But our chapter leaders have found another, even more important

reason: To develop a pool of future leaders for the chapter and for other levels of the association.

IABC chapter leaders identify leader burnout as one of their most serious concerns. If the same small group of members hold leadership positions year after year, motivation drops, fresh ideas are scarce, and, quite frankly, they get tired. In extreme cases, they simply quit. A strong volunteer program provides an ideal two-way street for a leader development program which encourages up-and-coming members to participate. Volunteers learn more about the organization, its programs and services and its leaders.

If the "fit" is right, they stay interested and involved long after their first volunteer assignment is over. At the same time, chapter leaders assess first-hand the capabilities and potential of a wide variety of volunteers. There's no need to rely on second or third hand recommendations -- they've seen members at work within the chapter. Burnout is also reduced when the pool of volunteers is large enough to allow members to move in and out and back in to leadership positions. When it's time to recommend a slate of board officers for the next year, or to find a chair for a new committee the chapter has not only a pool, but an experienced pool of leaders waiting to serve.

Opportunities

This is what volunteering is all about, the opportunity to learn, to grow and to develop leadership and management skills. But there's a catch. Chapter leaders have to give members the "opportunity" to volunteer. How? Ask!

Chapter leaders, who are committed to a strong volunteer program, create opportunities for members to volunteer and to ask members to volunteer. If all the volunteer opportunities within the chapter are filled, these leaders look for chapter coordinated or sponsored community programs that will give members opportunities to use and expand their professional expertise. New members are asked to volunteer when they join the association. Leaders also announce openings and new projects at

chapter

meetings; include information in the chapter newsletter for members who weren't at the last meeting; or

ask members to volunteer privately, because the member has been recommended to take on a particular responsibility.

Volunteers control commitment

Strong programs offer members a variety of opportunities to volunteer. Each member can choose the

job that fits best with other professional and personal commitments. There are projects that require a

lot of energy and involvement for a short period of time. There are year-long commitments that require

only an hour or two a month. There are high-visibility and heavy work-load positions, like treasurer or

president. And, believe it or not, there are high-visibility light work-load positions, like senior advisor to

the board (this is the position to which ambitious volunteers aspire).

Successful programs offer members a choice of volunteer career paths -- some are perfect for those

with leadership aspirations, and others, more project-oriented, are best suited to members who have

neither the time for or interest in long term volunteer commitments. And, most important, members can

change from one type of volunteer job to another -- as long as they complete the tasks they've agreed

to do.

Eliminates begging

When the pieces of a volunteer plan fall into place there's a wonderful reward for leaders. They don't

have to beg members to work on chapter projects. And, since members can move in and out of volunteer positions at their convenience, they are more likely to remain part of the volunteer pool.

Writing the Plan

Developing a strong volunteer plan means going back to the basics of volunteer management.

Leaders

need to assess organizational needs, offer members the opportunity to serve, develop a system to manage the volunteer process, and reward volunteers. Here are some critical issues to consider at

each

step along the way.

Assess chapter needs -- What do members know? How do they behave? What do we want them to know? How do we want them to behave? Develop a plan to close the gap between the former and the latter. Measure your success.

Here's an example: Attendance at monthly meetings is down. The board member(s) and committee chairs responsible for monthly meetings clarifies the situation, identifies problem areas, determines what they want to happen (higher attendance), and then develop strategies to make their wishes come true. Last, but certainly not least, they keep statistics on their progress. And they may have created some additional volunteer positions to implement the plan.

Recruit (offer the opportunity to serve) -- Write job descriptions that emphasize opportunities for professional development, leadership training and networking, and a chance to "control" volunteer commitment, as well as benefits, time lines and time demands. Make sure that there are volunteer opportunities at a variety of levels, so members can take on a volunteer job that meets their current interests, schedule and need for involvement. Ask members to volunteer at every opportunity.

Manage the volunteer process -- Create a system that evaluates whether the program successfully provides professional development, leadership training and networking, and a chance for volunteers to control their commitment. Keep in touch by talking to chapter leaders to see if they're getting the volunteer help they need, and to members to see if the volunteer job they took on has lived up to their expectations. Develop a simple mail or phone survey to measure the results, and report them to the board. Many chapters create a "director of Volunteerism" position to centralize and coordinate volunteer programs.

Recognize volunteers -- Recognize volunteers' professional development, leadership training and networking, and need to control their commitment. Successful programs recognize volunteers often, make "grand" gestures, and make certain they provide recognition in both work and community settings. These programs also take into account that there are many appropriate ways to recognize volunteers, and tailor recognition to each volunteer's needs. For example, never write a letter praising a

volunteer to
a boss without first checking with the volunteer.

Results Count

Chapters that have instituted volunteer programs similar to the one we've described break the old 20-80 rule quickly. Within a year of beginning the program one large chapter (200-plus members) had more than half of their members volunteer for one or more chapter projects. The results for smaller chapters have been equally impressive; one reported that every member had volunteered at least once during the year.

The payoff is enormous. A chapter's membership base grows because active, involved, committed volunteers are active, involved, committed members. The energy and creativity of a large pool of enthusiastic volunteers leads to improved and expanded chapter programs and services -- adding benefits for all members. And, to close the circle, these benefits attract new members, who are potential volunteers.

Tom Sawyer's picket fence experience was really nothing more than applying the commitment component to an otherwise unattractive need. He found a way to give value to the job, sell it as professional development, provide some leadership exposure, let his "volunteers" control their time and he never had to beg. In fact, Tom had them paying him for the chance just to get brush in hand.

The "picket fence" approach can bring similar results to your association.

(Based on presentations by Wally Renfro, Director, Constituent Communication, National Collegiate Athletic Association, at IABC's 1994 Chapter Leaders Forum, Boston, and Pamela Arnold, Head, IABC Service Centres at the 1994 Mangement Conference of the American Society of Association Executives, Washington, DC.)

Additional Resources
