Behind the Scenes of
Security Pacific's Volunteer Programs

Gayle Jasso

Security Pacific National Bank has been involved in corporate volunteerism formally since 1981, when its program proposal was approved by President and Chief Executive Officer George F. Moody. In a few short years, Security Pacific has experienced much success in the volunteer arena.

SecuriTeam, the bank's largest volunteer program, officially began in April, 1982, when eight employees attended the first meeting. Since then, the program has grown significantly: nine chapters throughout California, nearly 3,000 members, service of over 50,000 hours to over 200 community organizations, and over 160 projects a year. SecuriTeam is managed and funded by the Community Affairs Division, located in Security Pacific's world headquarters in Los Angeles.

SecuriTeam did not just happen. It was carefully planned, molded and implemented. The planning methods and reasons for developing SecuriTeam in the manner selected may be helpful to other corporations that already have existing programs or that are considering beginning a formal program. In addition, these strategies may also help community organizations understand the thought and operational processes behind large corporate volunteer programs.

HISTORY

Security Pacific had been reviewing corporate volunteerism for approximately five years, but it did not begin a formal program until 1982. For over a decade, the bank had been focusing its extensive community involvement in its California communities through its vocational and economic education programs serving over 200 school districts. Still operating today, these programs involve employ-

ees in volunteerism to a degree as integral parts of the educational programs, but volunteerism is not the primary focus of the programs.

Some ways the bank's community education programs involve employees both as volunteers and as special paid workers are:

1) As volunteer teachers who supervise on-the-job training of high school and adult students in 55 percent of the bank's 630 offices.

2) As 80 Saturday and evening job skills training teachers credentialed by the state (and paid by local school districts) to teach 130 bank sponsored classes which train 2,500 students each school year in partnership with over 12 California Regional Occupational programs; and

3) As with over 50 Junior Achievement (JA) advisors of bank-sponsored JA companies.

TIMING

As with so many things, timing is often important to success. About the time Security Pacific decided to explore the establishment of a formal volunteer program, President Reagan asked America's corporations to become involved in their communities through volunteerism. The proposers of the bank's volunteer program capitalized on this Presidential request and submitted a proposal to President Moody which contained the following segments:

I.   What is employee volunteerism?
II. Why should the bank begin an employee volunteer program now?
III. What kind of programs should the bank sponsor?

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IV. What are the benefits of employee volunteerism?
V. Where to begin?
VI. What are the costs?
VII. Conclusion.

The proposal, copies of which are available upon request, was wholeheartedly approved by Mr. Moody, and permission was granted to hire an additional staff member to help implement the volunteer programs. From the beginning, the bank committed the necessary resources, making success possible.

RESEARCH

SecuriTeam was born and has lived life at a rapid, successful pace because Security Pacific spent the initial time to learn from the best programs in the country instead of reinventing the wheel. For six months, over 30 corporations were contacted and their programs studied. Only then were the program designers able to custom-tailor SecuriTeam to Security Pacific.

The lesson to be learned is that each corporation is unique and has different needs, interests and abilities. A successful volunteer program must meet the motives and needs of all concerned: the community, the company, the volunteers, and the program managers. If it can satisfy all of its constituents most of the time, then a volunteer program can truly be called successful.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

If there is one key element that has contributed to the success of SecuriTeam, it has been the advisory committee. Every chapter, especially the Greater Los Angeles pilot, has begun with an internal advisory committee. Members are carefully selected and represent each and every department whose support and cooperation are needed, e.g., Public Relations, Employee Relations, Personnel, Legal, Research, the Banking Office System, subsidiaries and retirees.

The role of the first advisory committee was to design volunteer programs to fit the company, plan the publicity, and launch the programs. The eight advisory committees which followed have planned how to bring SecuriTeam to new geographical areas, and they have selected the interim executive committee members. After the advisory committees accomplish their objectives, they dissolve.

TEAM CONCEPT

The bank chose the team concept as its primary form of volunteerism, hence the name "SecuriTeam." First, the volunteers do things together in groups rather than as individuals, making their initial involvement less risky while providing peer support. Second, projects are more inclined to be concentrated, short-term or even one-day efforts rather than requiring lengthy time commitments. And third, employees find team volunteerism is more fun. Security Pacific's reasons for having the team concept prove themselves a hundred times over each year.

Simultaneously, the bank also piloted an Employee Volunteer Referral Service. This program failed for several reasons. It required too much staff time and netted too few results (actual placements). Employees really did not want to commit themselves as volunteers on an ongoing basis because of their busy work, family and social schedules.

In a study of the first forty employees who used the referral service, none actually volunteered at an agency. The closest many came to volunteering was exploration of opportunities and agency needs. Ironically, while waiting to volunteer for agencies, most of the volunteers joined SecuriTeam, which satisfied their volunteer desires. The referral service is still offered, but the phone never rings.

STRICTLY VOLUNTARY

SecuriTeam is strictly voluntary. Members join by completing an application. Joining SecuriTeam in no way obligates members to participate. Membership simply means that the member receives all chapter volunteer announcements and can select the volunteer projects that are appealing. This "safe" element plays a key role in the program's success.

VOLUNTEER TIME

Members meet and volunteer on their own time, after work hours. SecuriTeam does not have a released time policy. The

hours of service are the volunteers' time, not the company's time: a measure of true volunteerism.

The fact that SecuriTeam does not include released time from the job made the program easier to sell initially to top management in the proposal phase and easier on an on-going basis to sell to the supervisors of the volunteers. Even without released time, SecuriTeam has made significant contributions to communities on weekends and evenings.

HIGHLY STRUCTURED

Because the program was designed to expand statewide, SecuriTeam had to be highly structured and well organized. The pilot phase lasted a little over a year, long enough to develop, test and modify by-laws and an administrative handbook which outlines chapter operations. All SecuriTeam chapters operate in exactly the same manner, a necessity from an operational point of view.

SecuriTeam is available to employees and retirees who either live or work in the geographical areas served by the nine chapters. Because of limited staff time for program coordination, the decision was made to include retirees as equal members in SecuriTeam rather than beginning a separate volunteer program for retirees as some corporations have done.

VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

SecuriTeam is organized around volunteer leadership. One of the major benefits of SecuriTeam to Security Pacific is the invaluable leadership and coordination experience the volunteers gain through their participation as chapter leaders. Chapters are led by executive committees consisting of five elected officers, chairpeople and assistant chairpeople of four standing committees, plus the past president. These executive committees propose, approve and coordinate or oversee all community service projects and social activities.

All events approved by the executive committees must also be approved by the SecuriTeam approval committee consisting of the Senior Vice President of Community Relations, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Security Pacific Foundation, and the SecuriTeam Advisor (Vice President and Manager of the Community Affairs Division). Events must not be strictly religious, strictly political, in philosophical conflict with Security Pacific, or for some reason likely to fail.

Executive committees are coached by Corporate Volunteer Coordinators (CVCs) and the SecuriTeam Advisor from the Community Affairs staff. CVCs attend all executive committee meetings plus major chapter meetings such as general or annual meetings, and major projects and activities. There are three CVCs who each coordinate three chapters. Their jobs require much travel plus evening and weekend work.

Community Affairs funds all chapters, provides overall chapter management and operations procedures, maintains computer records, provides mailing labels for all members, provides clerical support, and orders, stores and ships chapter supplies such as t-shirts and recognition items.

The flow of SecuriTeam events can be followed in the accompanying chart.
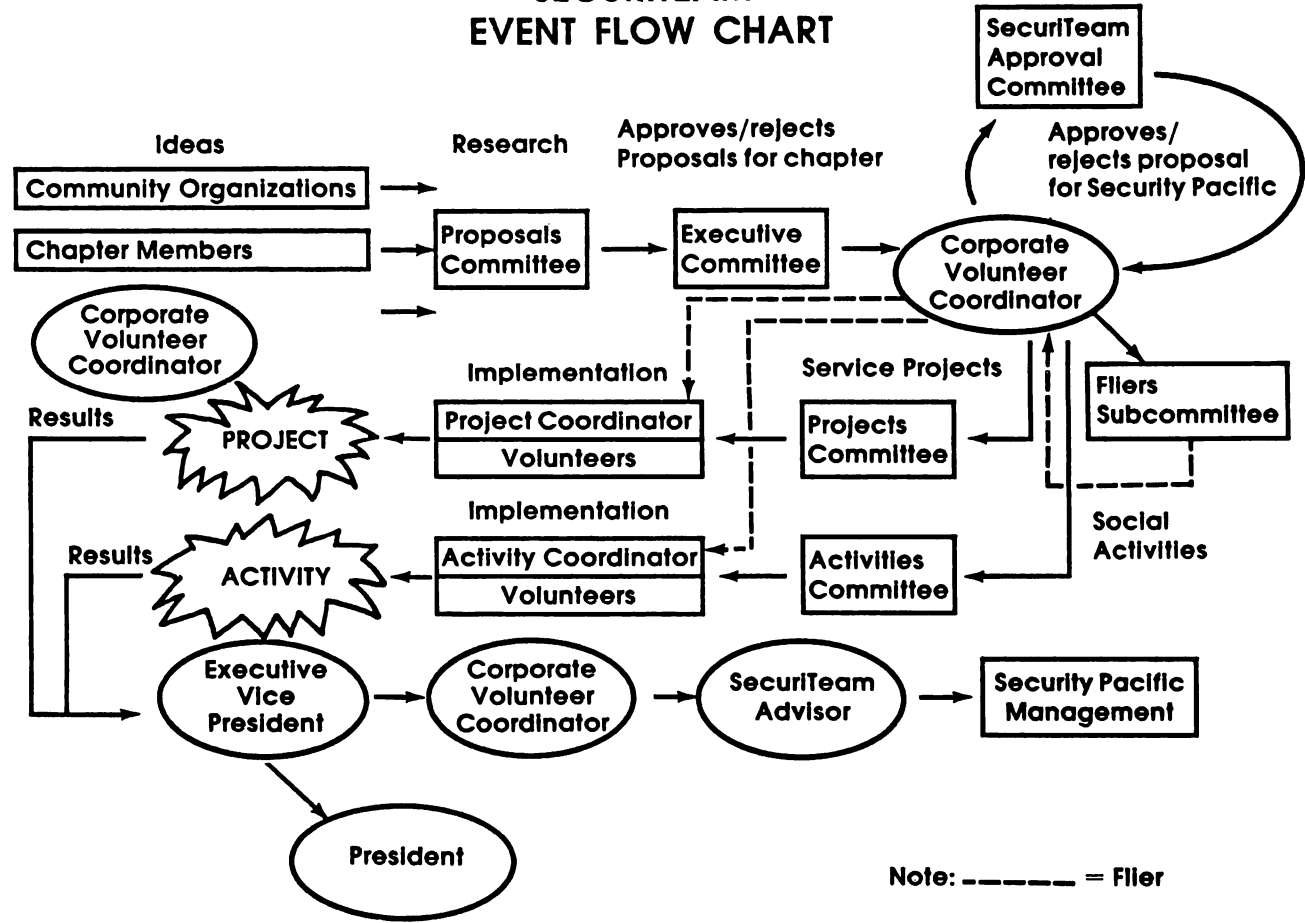
PROJECT PROPOSALS

In a highly structured, well-organized program such as SecuriTeam, community organizations have a clear-cut role in proposing projects which utilize volunteers. They must either complete an official proposal form or give project requirements to a SecuriTeam member.

Because SecuriTeam has quickly become institutionalized at Security Pacific, it is not necessary for an agency to sell the benefits of volunteerism to the company. The size and scope of the program demonstrate Security Pacific's support of volunteerism. All that must be sold are the volunteer needs of the specific project. In addition, the complexity of the formal SecuriTeam process requires at least a six week lead time from the proposal to the implementation of a project, a requirement difficult for some agencies to accommodate.

Unfortunately, there cannot be a SecuriTeam chapter in every Security Pacific service area due to limited resources. Chapters have been placed in vast geographical areas where the most potential members can be found.

SECURITEAM
EVENT FLOW CHART

SecuriTeam
Approval
Committee

Approves/
rejects proposal
for Security Pacific

Ideas   **Research**   Approves/rejects
Proposals for chapter

Community Organizations

Chapter Members

Proposals
Committee

Executive
Committee

Corporate
Volunteer
Coordinator

Corporate
Volunteer
Coordinator

Implementation   **Service Projects**

Fliers
Subcommittee

Results

PROJECT

Project Coordinator
Volunteers

Projects
Committee

Implementation

Results

ACTIVITY

Activity Coordinator
Volunteers

Activities
Committee

**Social
Activities**

Executive
Vice
President

Corporate
Volunteer
Coordinator

SecuriTeam
Advisor

Security Pacific
Management

President

Note: _____ = Flier

LIMITATIONS

SecuriTeam has several limitations:

1. Every community cannot have a SecuriTeam chapter.
2. The process intentionally is very structured and not very flexible; therefore, SecuriTeam is not the answer to every community need.
3. A long lead time (at least six weeks) for any chapter event is required.
4. SecuriTeam requires maximum full-time staff support.
5. Due to the built-in awards systems and travel of the CVCs, SecuriTeam chapters require a separate and approved budget.
6. SecuriTeam can only help community organizations on evenings or weekends, unless a weekday project can interest enough retiree members.

Although SecuriTeam is not a panacea, it has been extremely successful as demonstrated by the requests to start new chapters and the number of service projects completed and hours of service contributed.

TALENTBANK

SecuriTeam has been so successful that it spawned Security Pacific's newest volunteer program, the TalentBank. Also utilizing group action, the TalentBank's "teams" are various-sized "acts" of talented performing artists, ranging from soloists to the 40-person Security Pacific Chorus. Over sixty employee and retiree members in over a dozen acts meet, rehearse and perform on their own time. They include a dance company, a chamber ensemble, and a clown troupe.

The advisory committee phase occurred from June through September, 1985. Auditions began in September, 1985, and the program's first performance was the holiday showcase in December of the same year. The TalentBank's years are "seasons," from July to June. Within the program's first season (only six months), the acts performed 39 times for 27 community organizations and at eleven special Security Pacific functions including the shareholders' meeting. The TalentBank had a live audience of over 8,000 people and was seen on television on Christmas Eve.

The TalentBank proves that the time and effort taken to tailor a volunteer program to Security Pacific paid off. SecuriTeam was and continues to be an overwhelming success, and the newest program from the mold, the TalentBank, follows suit.

REFLECTIONS

So much has happened in corporate volunteerism at Security Pacific in such a short period of time that it has been difficult to take some time and reflect on the whole experience.

Surely SecuriTeam and the TalentBank are successful, but not without problems. Community Affairs staff members work long, hard hours, beyond a forty-hour week. The SecuriTeam has been in such high demand that, in order to respond to vehement requests, expansion into new chapters happened somewhat prematurely, occasionally causing frustrations to volunteer leaders due to continued program evaluation and modification. Growing from one to nine chapters so soon has drastically escalated budget costs. Fortunately, the costs will level off in 1986 with the addition of the final two chapters. Many chapters' executive committees have had to work through burnout due to their over-enthusiastic desire to fulfill each and every community request.

It is interesting to observe the unique character of each chapter and its executive committee. Also, it is interesting to see the high energy and level of commitment in the new chapters compared to more experienced chapters who must work at keeping the ball rolling and maintaining interest and enthusiasm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A wealth of experience has been gained in four highly concentrated years. Perhaps some of the wisdom gleaned may help other corporations and community organizations.

For the corporations, endless benefits will result in the undertaking of a formalized volunteer program:

- Meeting community needs.
- Supplementing corporate contributions with volunteer assistance.
- Low financial output yielding high social return.
- Improving the company's credibility and influence.
- Providing information on community needs and organizations.
- Offering additional testing grounds for employees to develop skills and abilities.
- Increasing employee and retiree morale.
- Building a stronger bond of employee and retiree loyalty to the company.
- Demonstrating corporate concern about employees, retirees, and the community.
- Improving the corporate image.
- Increasing positive publicity.

But these programs need and require a commitment of adequate staff and budget to give them substance and enable them to make significant contributions to the community. Any amount of sincere, committed involvement, regardless of how small, is better than superficial support and token or loosely-formed programs. Employees as well as community organizations will see through insincere effort, resulting in negativity both internally and externally.

Corporate volunteerism appears to be a national movement, with several hundred corporations participating at various levels of commitment, but the vast potential of utilizing the wealth of corporate volunteers needs to be released a step at a time, in small chunks to be understood, sold, worked with, utilized, and not wasted.

For community organizations, finding corporations with extensive commitment to volunteerism will probably be difficult. More and more companies are becoming involved, but they need to be sold, helped, nurtured along the way. Community organizations should not expect companies to have programs. Their roles must be as salespeople, coaches, and consultants in addition to being end users of the volunteers. (See Gayle Jasso, "In Search of Volunteers: How to Crack a Major Corporation," *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*," Summer, 1983.) Some communities have "Corporate Volunteer Coordinators Councils," which help agencies recruit corporate volunteers, but such councils are often novices themselves. Expecting corporations to go full steam ahead as has Security Pacific is unrealistic. As a company representative once said in response to a slide show on Security Pacific's enormous community education programs: "You are expecting us to get the flu, when all we wanted was a little cold." Community organizations must not expect the flu, or they will be disappointed. Rather, they should hope for a little cold!

If a company decides to become involved in volunteerism, both company and agency must work together, hand in hand, as partners, each receiving benefits and meeting needs. Patience, understanding, plus a little compassion will go far in helping a company discover the many rewards of corporate volunteerism.