

# **BUILDING CREDIBILITY**

**WITH THE POWERS  
THAT BE**



**A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO  
ENHANCE PERSONAL, PROGRAM  
& ORGANIZATIONAL POWER**

**GAIL MOORE  
and MARILYN MacKENZIE**

# BUILDING CREDIBILITY WITH THE POWERS THAT BE:

A Practical Guide to Enhanced Personal,  
Program and Organizational Power

BY  
GAIL MOORE  
MARILYN MACKENZIE

To Susan —  
Thanks for providing the  
challenge & appreciate your  
support!  
Gail Moore  
Sincerely,

To Susan,  
For provoking us to  
write, to reflect and to  
do!  
Affectionately,  
Marilyn

## **ABOUT PARTNERS PLUS**

**Partners Plus - Innovative Ideas for the Voluntary Sector, is a management consulting firm specializing in training and consulting services to to the voluntary and public sectors. The partnership's mission is to act as a catalyst in the growth and enhancement of volunteerism in Canada. The firm provides resources and consulting support to national, provincial and local organizations, and is the major distributor of voluntary sector publications in Canada. Their newsletter, Partners in Print, has subscribers from coast to coast.**

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# Chapter One

## POWER IS NOT A FOUR LETTER WORD!

*“No one ever listens to me when I talk.”*

*“My budget has been cut to the bone AGAIN.”*

*“Why is it that our funders ignore our pleas for help? They know we’re desperate.”*

Sound familiar? Perhaps you recognize these statements. Maybe you’ve made them yourself. *Building Credibility With The Powers That Be* is a practical workbook that you can use to enhance your own credibility, that of your volunteer department and finally that of your organization itself.

This book is written for directors of volunteer services, executive directors and board chairpersons who want to advocate more forcefully for the things they believe in. The monograph is a blend of solid theory, practical exercises and provocative questions that will allow you, the reader, to apply the workbook content to your own backhome situation. We hope it will empower and challenge you to take risks and assume your rightful role in making things happen.

### **Power is NOT a Four Letter Word!**

Gwendolyn sat in her office, a renovated elevator shaft, in the basement of St. Cecilia’s Home for Wayward Youth. “No one ever takes me seriously,” she complained. Gwendolyn has good reason to feel depressed as the volunteer program budget was just cut

by sixty per cent. That means no recognition dinner and no computer this year; no secretarial help either. Gwendolyn is already working a sixty hour week. There’s no time to plan or to delegate work. Gwendolyn is swamped and feeling oppressed and unappreciated. What’s a Director of Volunteers to do?

Gwendolyn is not so very different from many other directors. She feels blocked. She is unable to make decisions that affect her job, her department and the quality of her life. Gwendolyn is so busy at work she scarcely has time for a life outside work. Working as hard as she can, she doesn’t seem to be making much progress. Overwhelmed by the myriad of details that enslave managers, so much administrivia, so many forms to fill out, so many meetings that there just isn’t time to attend to the non-urgent parts of her job. Gwendolyn feels powerless to make changes. She is out of control.

Gwendolyn needs help but she doesn’t know how or where to turn. Although she recognizes that other people seem to control her destiny, Gwendolyn is uncomfortable with the notion of POWER and seeking it out for herself. She has been taught that power is selfish, abusive, manipulative and wrong. Pictures of villains dance in her head - Machiavelli, crazed politicians, heartless employers, Wall Street brokers. These people with power are so unlike Gwendolyn with

her strong commitment to service to others, a belief in collaboration and a desire to work with and through others. Should Gwendolyn want power for herself?

**POWER is not a dirty word.** Directors of Volunteers have many opportunities to build power for themselves and for their departments so that they can work for the betterment of others. Power can be a force for good when used responsibly. Before we can “empower” others, we must understand and creatively be able to use power ourselves.

### **Power and the Volunteer Manager**

It is not surprising that volunteer managers in particular are uncomfortable with power. Many of us have come from the volunteer ranks ourselves. I’ve yet to meet anyone who could honestly say she had always wanted to be a volunteer administrator. No, for most of us, we were volunteering for a cause we believed in and someone came along commenting, “You’re good with people. You can be our volunteer co-ordinator.” Many of us looked around and when no one else offered, we reluctantly agreed to take on the task. We were promoted, rarely for our management skills or our persuasive presentations, but because we were good “doers” and we were kind folk. If the truth be known, few of us were born managers, we just “fell” into it.

**Into our new role, whether paid or unpaid, we brought some heavy baggage.**

### ***Who me, a manager?***

Very few volunteer coordinators come to the job with formal management training. When they attend business seminars or read about the corporate sector, they just don’t seem to fit.

I remember my own first efforts at learning my role as a brand new Director of Volunteers. I took myself down to the Public Library, expecting a treasure trove of books and articles about working effectively with volunteers. Not a single slim volume was to be found. It was four months into the job before a colleague gave me Marlene Wilson’s book, *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*. I cried! Here was someone who understood. There are now many more resources available - print, video, audio and many fine courses and workshops. Unfortunately, there are still many folks who have never stopped to think, to reflect and to apply to their own programs the knowledge that is now available.

### ***I must never forget my roots.***

This is sometimes verbalized as “we’re just the volunteer department.” Sloppy practise and failure to meet deadlines are excused because “we’re just volunteers.” The volunteer department is friendly to a fault, but not very efficient. While people are exchanging friendly hugs in the volunteer office, important service work just doesn’t get done. The volunteer manager may not even think of herself as truly a staff person but rather a volunteer who magically gets paid. Until she truly accepts her position as staff supervisor and not “front line worker extraordinaire”, she won’t receive the recognition she craves.

### ***Making do.***

Volunteers are notorious for overcoming incredible obstacles in the approach to their work. We convince ourselves that when we take on a volunteer coordinator’s job, if we just work harder, longer, faster, we will be able to get things done. We don’t need the newest equipment, we’ll just do the best we

can with what we've got! So people agree to manage a six hundred person volunteer department with a shared secretary, an electric typewriter and a phone.

***My role as a woman is to be nurturing, supportive, passive and reactive. Men should be the ones to initiate, control, change and direct.***

Despite a revolution in the last forty years about women, their roles, their values and beliefs, widespread confusion still exists about what women really want. Men are readily expected to lead, make change, and to explore new horizons. Women in the 90's are exclaiming, "Me too!" but they have come to this realization just recently. The acceptance of new roles creates questions about the old ones. Women are reluctant to give up a nurturing role. To whom will they delegate it? Can women do both? Is it genuinely appropriate to be "in charge" despite what good old mom said? Volunteer coordinators, because they are caring folk, people-focused, supporters and nurturers, will no doubt struggle with this issue more than others who see their role in terms of personal achievement and goals reached. During a period of internal struggle, volunteer coordinators will have to acknowledge the tensions and tugs of rapid social change.

My apologies to my male colleagues but you are still only a small percentage of those claiming coordinator of volunteers status. Maybe that's because the role has traditionally been one that waits to see what is happening out there, not making it happen. Men who enter the field often move out to executive director roles or other more powerful positions.

Many women in the role of Director of Volunteers are uncomfortable with change,

innovation and risk-taking. They crave the security of tradition, habits, well-established routines. At the same time, some women are critical of those women who seek out positions of power and influence. They don't trust them, for they seem to be usurping the man's role. Men aren't all that sure how to behave with strong women either. Men know lots of volunteers who are women, perhaps their mothers or wives, so they react to the volunteer manager as they would to most volunteers. They are pleasant, even respectful but not very attentive. After all, real work of value is PAID work. Volunteer work is a frill, not very essential, nor likely to be missed.

This puts volunteer administrators at a distinct disadvantage when they try to act as managers, credible spokespersons and leaders. Their audience is thrown slightly off base.

### **Why is Credibility an Important Issue Now?**

More than ever before, the voluntary sector needs leadership with vision, passion and integrity. We live in potentially negative times when people can easily become overwhelmed by the social and environmental issues of our day. The problems seem so vast that it is conceivable that people will give up, will declare "What can be done?"

Credible leadership can assure citizens that their volunteer time and effort will be well utilized. It will mobilize people to form coalitions that go beyond the rigid boundaries of organizations by joining the efforts of like minded people to face the critical problems that trouble us.



*“I absolutely believe to the core of my being that we are on the verge of a qualitative change around volunteer activities which will focus on issues. The leadership that is implicit in people, in volunteers getting together around these issues and causes, is extraordinary in terms of its example to the broader society.”*<sup>1</sup>

The need for credibility does not stop at the door of top leadership. It is shared by any who seek to offer service, acknowledging that good programs, much needed by the community are being cut because there is no one to speak for them, or more accurately, the people who speak on the program’s behalf are not heard. In a time of shrinking resources for social programs and increasing demands for service from clients, many worthwhile programs can’t compete. There are no “sacred cows”. All programs are up for review and many will be abandoned because their merits are not persuasively presented.

Even those who are currently blessed with adequate funding, are competing for another valued resource - volunteers. How can we make volunteering a desirable option for everyone in our society? Once we’ve alerted them to volunteering, how do we attract and retain volunteers to our cause, our agency, our program, when there are so many others from which to choose?

To serve clients, to strengthen programs, to attract volunteers, directors of volunteers must create departments that:

- contribute** to the achievement of the agency’s goals
- effectively manage** volunteer resources
- offer jobs** that volunteers want to do

This calls for new approaches and new directions. Directors of Volunteers need to capture control of their programs and make the needed decisions to allow innovation to occur. They can be dependent and powerless no longer. They must develop credibility and use it.

### **Learning From the Voluntary Sector**

For a long time the voluntary sector has thought of itself as the poor relation of the corporate sector. We have studied the Harvard Business Review and adapted their techniques to suit our experience. The climate is changing. The business world is beginning to ask what it can learn from us.

*“The only sustainable advantage that any organization is going to have (in the 1990’s) is the ability of its people.”*<sup>2</sup>

Rosenberg goes on to describe conditions that will create a more skilled workforce. His suggestions sound like a volunteer management textbook:

**select** workers appropriately. Match the right worker to the job.

**provide** a formal and informal award system.

**develop** feedback so that the worker knows how he is doing.

**consider** job design.

**allow** the worker to think about assigned work, welcoming creativity as long as the result is satisfying.

Rosenberg suggests that we treat employees as humanely as we treat volunteers! This same plea was advanced by Ivan Scheier.<sup>3</sup>

Rosenberg is not the only theorist viewing the voluntary sector with interest. Peter Drucker, one of the foremost authorities on management, has written a book on what there is to be learned from our sector. One of the most fascinating revelations is that volunteers can feel challenged in a way that for many is just not possible in their paid work.<sup>4</sup>

We have an opportunity to share what our sector does well with our corporate cousins. We can train, teach, advise and counsel them. We can act as translators and innovators that will allow us to take the strengths of the voluntary sector into the corporate boardroom. They may be ready and willing to learn from our experience.

### **What About the Profession?**

The emerging profession of volunteer administration needs credible leaders; men and women who will speak on behalf of the profession and will seek to unify us around a common set of goals and overarching principles. It is tempting to become fractionalized by the many issues that appear to divide us - regional concerns, perspectives shaped by our different organizational backgrounds and histories, our different entry routes into the profession. We need leadership that can see beyond these differences to mobilize us around shared values. Clients, volunteers and services require articulate spokespersons who will advocate on their behalf when decisions are made and dollars are allocated.

The thoughtful volunteer manager can enhance her credibility in a number of ways. The same principles apply whether we are discussing personal power, the credibility of the volunteer department within an agency or initiating negotiations on behalf of your agency within a broader community. Some

of the players may be different but the basic strategies remain the same. You too can have enhanced credibility to advocate persuasively and proudly for the issues you believe in!

---

### **Footnotes**

1. Stephen Lewis, former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations, AVA Conference Keynote Address, Washington, D.C. November 1989.
  2. D. Quinn Mills, Harvard Business Review, quoted by Marc Rosenberg, "Performance Technology: Working the System", Training, February, 1990.
  3. Ivan Scheier, *So You Still Want to Win With Staff*, Yellowfire Press, Boulder, 1987.
  4. Peter Drucker, *The New Reality*.
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# Chapter Two

## DEVELOPING PERSONAL CREDIBILITY

When Willa Winsome was hired as volunteer coordinator for the Creaky Knees Seniors Centre, the Program Manager promised that the volunteer office would soon be relocated from the basement to the main floor. She was still hopeful three months ago when the new executive director announced a major expansion of the facility. Last night Willa attended the formal unveiling of the expansion plan and was devastated to discover that not only will her office stay where it is, but the adjacent cubbyhole where she holds volunteer meetings has been targeted to become the computer supply room.

Tessie Tenderfoot co-ordinates the Transportation Program for the Squeaky Wheels Home Support Centre. Since she started nine months ago, she has been successful in building a strong volunteer program, and has as well become an advocate for better coordinated services to meet the transportation needs of the disabled and the isolated elderly. The trouble is, she's so busy that it's hard to find enough time to keep in touch with other staff in the organization. Tessie read in the newspaper that the mayor's office had formed a task force to research transportation issues, and when she asked why their agency wasn't involved, the ED said that a board member had been asked, but didn't have the time. Tessie was disappointed that no one thought to ask her to be on the committee.

Are these isolated incidents, exaggerated scenarios, or situations disturbingly commonplace in non-profit organizations? While some volunteer administrators are confident in their ability to command respect, many others express frustration because they have so little control over their time, their budget and the conditions of their work. They feel unheard, not part of the planning and decision making that affects them and their programs.

This sense of disempowerment, this feeling of lacking control and a voice in the organization is a common thread expressed by volunteer managers time and time again across the country.

*“There are so many demands on my time as volunteer coordinator that I feel totally swamped and out of control.”*

[I'm responsible for managing 150 volunteers and you expect me to take on the #\$\$%&! too?]

*“The Volunteer Department's budget is not only inadequate, but it is the only department without support staff.”*

[Doesn't anyone recognize the value of volunteer services?]

*“My salary is lower than everyone else's in management positions.”*

[Because I co-ordinate volunteers doesn't mean I should be expected to do it as a volunteer!]

***“When I’m asked to participate in a community event, attend a workshop during working hours, or even purchase a book for the department, I have to get my boss’s permission.”***

[Isn’t professional development and networking important for all management staff?]

***“They’ve reorganized our programs and planned a major fundraising event without any prior consultation with me.”***

[Does the board and executive director know I’m here?]

***“My volunteer office is tucked around the corner from the cafeteria service entrance, and is so small that I can’t interview anyone.”***

[Maybe the problem is that NO ONE can FIND me!]

At one time or another, you have probably felt like Willa, Tessie or one of those other voices in the wilderness. You believe that you have lots of potential, you care about the quality of the work you do, and you want to be recognized as a valued member of the team. But somehow, it isn’t coming together.

**So let’s start at the beginning and ask ourselves - what is credibility?**

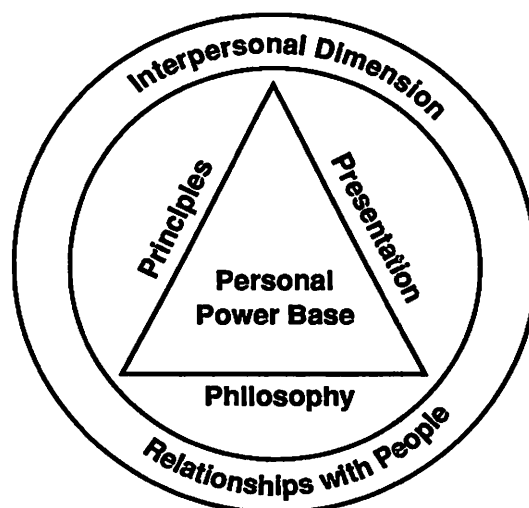
Think about the people whom you perceive have credibility. What qualities set them apart? What says to you, this person has something to offer, this person is credible?

A sampling of dictionaries defines credibility as:

***state of being believed, honoured  
influence derived from good reputation  
integrity, reliability, trustworthiness***

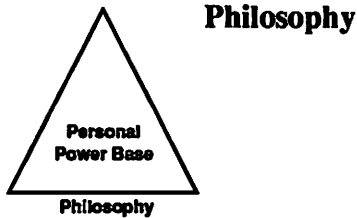
These definitions and your own personal observations lead inevitably to the conclusion that credibility is a personal quality that begins from within. The following model illustrates graphically the factors that I believe build credibility.

### Personal Credibility Model



Personal credibility has two dimensions: an inner personal base that reflects who you are, and an outward interpersonal approach by which you relate to the world around you. The inner triangle represents three different aspects that together make up your personal power base. The outer circle represents the relationships you develop with other people. Credibility is not an innate characteristic, something that particularly lucky people are born with. It begins with and is earned by paying attention to these personal and interpersonal dimensions.

Let's examine the **personal dimensions** that together build your power base. These dimensions are identified in the model as your **philosophy**, the principles that guide your actions and the manner in which you present yourself to others.



**Personal credibility starts with YOU.** Before others will value you and your services, you must first believe in and value them yourself. What is your personal vision? What beliefs and values express your personal philosophy? Challenge yourself to think about the personal vision that drives you. You may find it easier to share this discussion with a good friend or colleague whom you trust.

Roll up your sleeves, pour a cup of coffee (or maybe a glass of wine?) and let's begin. **Develop the following statements to reflect your personal beliefs:**

**This is what I believe about myself as a person** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**This is what I believe about volunteerism** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**This is what I believe about volunteers** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**This is what I believe about managing volunteers** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**This is what I believe about working in a social service agency (educational, environmental, rehabilitation, etc.)** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**This is what I believe about clients in this organization** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Now take this one step further. Refill your cup (or glass) and think about how you demonstrate these beliefs. For each of your previous statements, add:

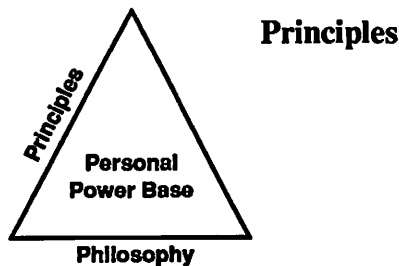
**Because I believe as I do, therefore this is how I behave....**

For example, in my own belief statement about volunteers, I stated that I believe volunteers must be respected for their individual gifts, therefore I demonstrate this belief by:

- asking them what their gifts are
- giving them tasks that match their skills
- acknowledging their unique contribution

Reflect on the things you believe about yourself and your work as a manager of volunteers. Hold a lively discussion at your next coordinators' network or dovia meeting. (This doesn't need to be a cocktail party!) Talk with other volunteer administrators about their philosophies. Each statement can be the basis of heated debate and dialogue. Break into small groups and let the sparks fly. You'll be fascinated by their differing perspectives, and challenged to think about and defend your own beliefs.

I can feel that you're just itching to get started! Be sure not to hurry the process - this takes time. Your beliefs and values will no doubt be transformed and strengthened as you journey through the process of discovering and articulating your own personal philosophy.



While you develop and affirm this personal philosophy, how do you translate those values and beliefs into action? It's important to ask yourself, how does what I believe impact on what I do? Your moral, religious, and philosophical beliefs fundamentally affect the way you act.

**I am convinced that guiding principles are absolutely essential in building credibility.** They shape our behaviour, our work, our lives. They form the creed by which we live, and are reflected in all our dealings and interactions with others.

Let me share with you the guiding principles that I try to follow in my personal and work life. I offer these for your consideration with the hope that they may be helpful and because I believe passionately that they do enhance credibility.

**Showing respect for people** and sincerely valuing their contributions. We may not agree, but I must respect other's points of view. This means a commitment to listen to others and hear their ideas and concerns.

**Demonstrating honest and ethical behaviour.**

**Recognizing** that I don't know it all, others have MUCH to offer. Being mindful that there may be many roads to the end of the rainbow and new insights often come in very unexpected ways.

**Setting a good example** in the standards I set for myself and the quality of my work.

**Showing a warm and caring attitude** in my approach to people, trying to be sensitive to their needs.

**Collaborating with others**, rather than going it alone. Although the process takes longer, the products and decisions are almost always better.

**Being loyal to people** so they can count on me to follow through on commitments and treat them well in the process.

**Celebrating the successes** of those who work with and for me.

This principle is so fundamentally important that I was tempted to put it first AND last. Volunteer managers have wonderful opportunities to mobilize and coach volunteers and staff, with the expectation that these folk will often do the job better than we could. Rather than feel threatened by other's successes, we should rejoice that we have done our management job well, that we enabled them to flourish.

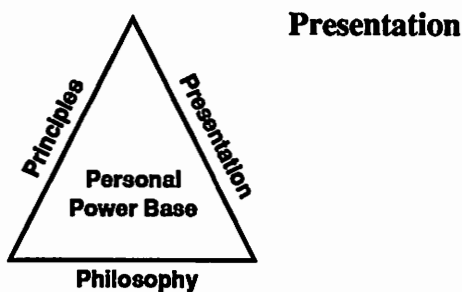
Refill your beverage, decide if it's time for cheese and crackers, and think seriously about the guiding principles that are important to you.

What is your own personal creed? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are the values that you hold most dear? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do you demonstrate these values in your personal life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do you demonstrate these guiding principles in your work life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



The individual that you present to the world is not only the physical body that people see, but the knowledge, skills and attitudes that you demonstrate.

### Physical Self

Most of us are uncomfortable with the notion that "clothes make the person". We believe that it's important to respond to people's inner qualities. Nevertheless, the rest of the world initially judges us by the physical impression we create.

A recent study of attitudes towards teachers as professionals revealed that students and

parents alike considered teachers who dressed more formally to be more professional and competent. I will never forget my discomfort at the opening plenary of a major volunteer conference when I escorted the political keynote speaker to the ballroom. We had to squeeze by a volunteer administrator wearing a stretchy one piece shorts outfit that barely covered her ample contours. I almost choked on my words as I continued my plugs for the importance of volunteer administration as a profession!

Appropriate dress depends on the climate of the organization, the different audiences to whom you relate, and the occasion itself. A formal presentation to your board of directors or major funder will dictate more conservative attire than working alongside your volunteers to collate and staple the volunteer services newsletter. If there's any rule of thumb, it would be, it's better to dress up!

### Knowledge

Knowledge is power! We respect people's opinions when we're confident that they know what they're talking about. Since volunteerism is the business you're in, it's essential that you be your organization's volunteer expert. You may be the lonely voice in the wilderness, but your voice will carry more conviction and is more likely to be heard when you truly know your stuff!

*This requires understanding the principles of effective volunteer management, and being knowledgeable about trends and issues in the sector today.*

Why is it so critical to understand the trends and issues facing us in this next decade? Society is changing, volunteerism is changing. The impact on the mobilization of volunteers to provide quality service will be

enormous. Volunteer administrators cannot successfully manage resources in isolation from the changing realities of the world around them. Unfortunately there are still complacent administrators in traditional settings who are reluctant to move with the times. They bemoan their difficulties in finding daytime stay forever volunteers who are exact replicas of their volunteers in the past. People's expectations are changing, volunteer demographics are changing, and to earn any vestige of credibility volunteer managers must understand these changes.

### **How Can You Accomplish This?**

Read the latest wisdom by experts in the field, and then get out there and discuss the issues with your colleagues. Offer to help sponsor a forum for other managers to discuss the implications for their agencies. Such a discussion might start with the latest statistics on volunteer activity. Trends worth addressing could include:

*The demand for volunteer services is growing dramatically while the pool of "traditional" volunteers continues to decrease. What is the implication of this for non-profit organizations?*

*How will the aging population impact the volunteer world? What does that mean in terms of service demand and volunteer availability?*

### **Skills**

Management skills are not innate. Because we have always been great "doers" does not automatically mean that we become good managers. We must recognize that volunteer administration is a management function, and requires developing and strengthening our planning, evaluating and delegat-

ing skills. The next chapter will discuss volunteer management functions in greater depth.

**Strong verbal and written communication skills are essential to building personal credibility.** Are you comfortable speaking to groups and making presentations, or do your knees shake and your hands sweat? Do you write reports for your supervisor, confident that they will articulately reflect your program successes? Take heart, these skills can be learned! Years ago, as a new graduate entering the corporate world, my husband trembled with fear whenever he had to make a presentation. After one especially difficult experience he took the bull by the horns and joined the Toastmasters Club. Within a few months he began to rival Johnny Carson!

One final comment about communication skills. Because volunteer administrators, as a breed, tend to see themselves as warm enablers, they are often uncomfortable in more business-oriented environments. Do budgets and balance sheets terrify you? Do mission statements, goals and objectives intimidate the heck out of you? **Communicating knowledgeably in the lingo of the power brokers is absolutely essential to negotiate successfully for recognition and resources**, whether you are the volunteer administrator advocating for increased program support or the executive director relating to a board of directors and community funders. Remember, do your homework and be sure to speak the language! Once again, there are lots of good books, courses and workshops that can help you build these skills.

**Start with the positives.** Identify the skills that you have in abundance. Talk with your friends and colleagues about your strengths.



My years as a career development trainer convinced me that most people don't give themselves credit for the abilities they have. Women in particular have been conditioned to be modest about their accomplishments. Don't be shy, write them down and feel good about them. \_\_\_\_\_

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Now think about those skill areas that you would like to improve. Select just a few as a start, concentrating on the ones that you believe are most important to you. Once again, talk with friends and colleagues, seek their advice about how you could go about developing those skills.

Skill Need	How to Improve

### Attitudes

**The most important attitude in building credibility is taking control and saying to yourself, "I can do this!"**

You are the master of your own fate. Thinking back on my eight years as manager of a volunteer centre, I still remember to this day those volunteer administrators who made things happen, who looked at obstacles as challenges to prove their stuff. Approaching volunteer administration from the perspective of "How can I make this work?" rather than "These are the reasons why I can't," is fundamental to personal credibility. Be the person who sees windows of opportunity rather than barriers that block. You can make a difference!

**Another attitude essential to building credibility is a commitment to continue learning, both personally and professionally.** What are you doing to keep abreast of current wisdom in the field? Ask yourself the following questions. Do I -

### Subscribe to professional journals?

Two should be required reading for people in the sector, "The Journal of Volunteer Administration" published by the Association for Volunteer Administration, and "Voluntary Action Leadership," from VOLUNTEER- The National Center. The "Journal of Voluntary Action Research" is also an excellent quarterly published by the Association for Voluntary Action Scholars, although much more scholarly in approach.

In addition there are many excellent newsletters which contain great ideas and helpful information, including "Dovia Exchange", from the Center for Creative Community, Sue Vineyard's "Grapevine" and "Training Wheels", and "Partners in Print" from Partners Plus. Check with your local volunteer centre or coordinators' group for many more suggestions.

### Belong to my professional association?

A personal commitment to the profession means joining ranks with others in the field. Being a member is a must! How do you support your local, provincial/state, or national association? Actively working on a committee or the board provides numerous opportunities to develop new skills, demonstrate your competence and at the same time broaden your professional network. This is what we tell other people that volunteering does!

**Advocate for an annual professional development budget, and allocate personal dollars to my own growth?**

What workshops or courses have you attended this past year? Your national and provincial/state associations sponsor annual conferences that offer wonderful opportunities for personal and professional growth. You may need to hold a garage sale to get you there, but GO!

Closer to home, advocate for your volunteer centre or network of volunteer administrators to provide professional development opportunities locally. There are lots of great consultants and trainers out there. Find a way to access them! My experience suggests that it is relatively easy to find dollars to sponsor quality training, whether it is through a corporate donation or government grant. The proposal is strengthened when staff from several agencies collaborate in planning a joint learning venture.

On a personal level, encourage a friend or colleague to register with you for continuing education programs. The opportunity to learn together and at the same time challenge each other's assumptions provides fertile ground for personal growth.

**Own a personal resource library and actually read this wisdom?**

How long has it been since you read and inwardly digested a thought-provoking book on volunteerism? Have your good intentions become mired in the demands of daily life? Those of us who have little or no access to community college or university learning experiences need to be particularly mindful to continue stretching our volunteer grey matter!

Enhance the likelihood of reading what's new (or not-so-new) in the field by creating a "book review" group. Your volunteer centre or local AVA may be the catalyst to sponsor regular brown bag lunch discussions, or you could be very selective and only invite those colleagues whom you enjoy and respect.

**The vision for the group might be to:**

**Increase personal and professional development**

**Provide a forum to discuss trends and issues**

**Enhance learning**

**Develop mutual support system**

Long term success is more likely if the group shares the co-ordination and facilitation responsibilities. Consult with potential members to determine the ideal number of members, frequency of meetings, theme (if any), recommended books to read and preferred format and facilitation process.

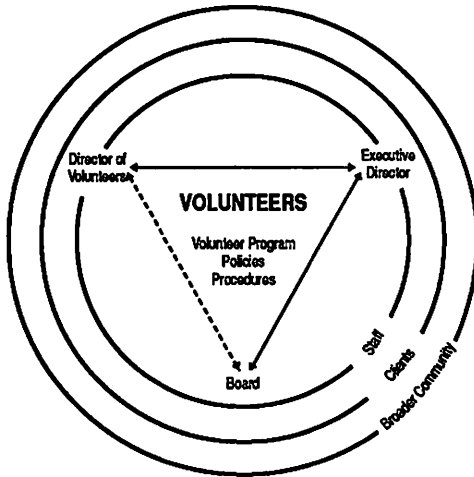
For each meeting, one member prepares a few questions, selects thoughtful quotes and/or identifies challenging issues to give focus and direction to the discussion. Obviously all members are expected to demonstrate their commitment by reading the book! Don't hesitate to review a book that's been around for awhile because a challenging discussion inevitably leads to new insights.

The facilitation role provides an excellent personal growth opportunity to enhance your group leadership skills, a first step up the "trainer career ladder". The field is sufficiently small that the authors whose works you review might be fascinated to hear about your discussions and observations. Last hint: "Book Review Group" sounds terribly boring. Try something wingy, or better yet, have a contest with a free book as the prize!

## Interpersonal Dimensions in Building Credibility

Your personal power base with its solidly integrated philosophy, principles and personal presentation becomes the foundation for developing successful relationships with others. An analysis of the responsibilities of managers of volunteers and executive directors indicates that these two positions, of all others, require the ability to foster supportive relationships within and outside the organization. Let's concentrate first on your personal relationships within the organization.

### You in Your Organization's Environment



**Roles, Relationships & Responsibilities in Volunteer Service Development**

Voluntary organizations, with their sometimes complex reporting relationships and partnerships between volunteers and paid staff, are a minefield for putting one's foot in it. **All organizations have implicitly understood rules about appropriate political process, as well as established power networks.** Don't be an ostrich; be aware of and understand this process. How are decisions made? At what points can policy be influenced? Who are the decision-makers?

Be aware of which people within your organization are most likely to influence you and your credibility. As the manager of volunteers you relate to volunteers, probably clients, other staff including the executive director, committees and maybe even the board of directors, although for some folk the board of directors seems like light years away. Even if from your perspective the board appears very remote, it is a very important force within the organization. Refer to the model and identify the people to whom you relate, beginning with those closest to your "sphere of influence".

Reflect on the current state of your relationships with these people. Identify those relationships you feel are positive, and take as well an honest look at those which are not. Write down for yourself the positive ones and what you can do to maintain them:

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Now consider the not-so-positive ones, and think about how you can enhance those.

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The next chapter will suggest specific strategies to help volunteer administrators develop successful relationships, exploring the importance of building collaborative relationships and working with supportive allies.

## You in the Community Environment

In the community are individuals, groups and networks that may offer windows of opportunity for enhancing your credibility. Your role as coordinator of volunteers suggests several appropriate and productive access points for involvement. Both you and your organization benefit from these enhanced external relationships.



The above diagram illustrates typical groups found in a community. From those networks, or others you identify, select one or two that relate to your personal and work interests. What might you do to get involved? What skills might you learn?

One allied agency that relates to your personal interest in volunteerism is the volunteer centre. You might choose to become involved in an appropriate committee or task force. Or offer to sit on the Volunteer Advisory Committee of another influential agency. Your professional network of volunteer administrators offers an excellent route to enhance your relationships with colleagues and build support for your abilities.

No discussion about personal credibility would be complete without addressing the value of a mentor, a wise counsellor. I encourage you to find a mentor, within your organization if the level of trust is high, or elsewhere. A mentor encourages, acts as a sounding board, flags potential pitfalls, and cares about you and your future. A mentor's honest feedback is not only helpful, but that person often becomes an advocate on your behalf. Most successful people acknowledge that their careers have been positively influenced by a wise and supportive mentor.

I would like to share with you one last thought. Years ago I attended a wedding reception where the father of the bride reflected that as a parent the gift he most wanted to give his child was roots and wings. The impact of those two words has never left me. As my career in the voluntary sector moves down various paths, I increasingly believe that roots and wings express exactly what volunteerism is all about. Volunteering helps people build roots, a sense of community and belonging. Those roots nurture a personal development that frees people to take risks and to grow. **So it is with you and your search for personal credibility. Be sure that your roots grow deep and are strengthened by knowledge, integrity and a belief in yourself. Then dare to fly.**

# Chapter Three

## GAINING CREDIBILITY FOR THE VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT

Madge Matt is fuming! The Volunteer Department Submission is missing again this year from the Annual Report of the Breakneck Falls General Hospital. When Madge called to complain, the only response by the Executive Director's secretary was "Oh, really?" in a disinterested voice. This is the last straw. No one from Administration or the Board attended the Annual Volunteer Recognition Banquet held in the hospital cafeteria. The format of the event was as stale as old sandwiches.

There are always wonderful articles in the local paper about the scientific breakthroughs accomplished at the hospital, about the splendid fundraising done by the Foundation, but not one word has ever been written about Volunteer Services despite some really spectacular accomplishments. "It's as if we are invisible", Madge lamented as she hummed a few bars of "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen."

Madge feels "invisible". Despite her belief that she is doing great things, no one is noticing her efforts or those of the department. How do you get people to pay attention, to give credit where it's due, to take note?

In the 90's and beyond, to build a volunteer department that is noticed and credible you must create a volunteer program that **better serves the needs of the client (customer) in a way that enhances existing service or**

**provides a broader range of services.**

You will note that this focus is mission-driven - meeting the needs of the organization to achieve its mandate first rather than focusing first on the needs of volunteers.

How is this accomplished? By involving the resource we best understand and value, volunteers. We attract these volunteers by offering:

**jobs that are meaningful and challenge volunteers**

**jobs that fully utilize the skills people have to offer**

**an environment that celebrates and recognizes the unique contributions made by volunteers.**

This notion of a mission driven volunteer department may be an unexpected one for many directors of volunteers. Those who teach volunteer management, write about it or debate it, may have been guilty of misdirecting the profession. We have suggested that the volunteer program was an END in itself. Its purpose was to create "happy volunteers". This was the definition of a successful volunteer manager. As a result, volunteers ask the question "What do we want to do?". The real question is "What needs to be done?". When the focus is meeting volunteer, not client needs, here are

some examples of what happens:

\* the hospital gift shop is open for two hours every morning and afternoon, but not during the evening visiting hours when demands are greatest.

\* volunteers are still rolling bandages because they enjoy it, while clients are using disposable dressings.

\* staff stay late to make up work for office volunteers to do so they won't be bored the next day.

\* volunteers are making presentations to community groups about their own favourite topics despite the agency's clear direction that these topics are no longer needed or wanted by the community.

It is difficult to demand respect within an organization when decisions are made that support these activities. However, when the volunteer program asks "What needs to be done?" and then goes out to recruit volunteers who **want** to do what is needed, credibility is greatly enhanced.

Please note that I am not suggesting that volunteers must be forced to do things they don't want to, nor am I negating a volunteer's desire to learn new things. That would be a great step back in our field. But if **directors of volunteers want to establish credibility they must demonstrate a commitment to helping the organization (and the people that direct it - the executive director and board) meet its objectives and achieve its mission.**

Think about your own agency. What is its mission? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What **priorities for action** have been identified by your organization that will focus agency activity over the next two or three years? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does the **volunteer department** help the organization **achieve** its mission and its priorities? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How are volunteer programs developed? Do they respond to **genuine need** or are they in response to volunteer wishes? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A hard look at many volunteer programs raises questions about whose needs are really being met. If you are disturbed by some of the above answers, you may want to review all volunteer programs using this new yardstick

*Does it contribute to the achievement of our mission?*

*Could improvements or changes in the program make it a more effective instrument for achieving the organization's mission?*

Now you, the Executive Director, the Board, staff and even your volunteers are on the same team, moving towards the same goal. **You can expect respect when you are helping the "team" to win!**

## **Developing Volunteer Programs that WIN!**

Once we make the commitment to help the agency achieve its mission, how do we accomplish this using volunteers who are not only more demanding in terms of jobs they will do, but less readily available to us. Here lies the challenge! Volunteers today expect to be:

**more involved in decision making that affects them**

**included in a team**

**valued for their contribution to the team**

**given an opportunity for personal growth and development**

**enjoying their work**

These trends put further pressure on the creativity, flexibility, wit and wisdom of the director of volunteers. How do we create programs that respond to the expectations of today's volunteers? We are all pioneers, researchers, and inventors creating the answers as our work unfolds. Some promising examples:

- \* job sharing
- \* co-chairing
- \* advisory, not standing committees
- \* contracts
- \* recruiting of professionals as volunteers
- \* self directed training materials, videos (it works for McDonald's!)
- \* conference calls, action minutes
- \* family volunteering

There are many others, and these new initiatives cry out for a volunteer program that is adequately resourced (in both staff and dollars) to experiment and innovate. Here we come back to the issue of credibility. **How do you convince the key decision makers and funders that YOUR volunteer program should be given a chance?**

**Have a vision.** Believe passionately in the value of volunteers and advocate for them within your organization and in the broader community.

*“Most organizations do not really know why they use volunteers and have not articulated definitions or policies regarding volunteers. Why, then, is it surprising that these organizations are muddled in their perspective on the manager of volunteers?”<sup>1</sup>*

Many volunteer administrators believe that because an agency has volunteers, that it supports and welcomes them. As Susan Ellis rightly points out, many organizations are unclear about why they use volunteers or their value to the organization beyond an expanded workforce.

The volunteer administrator should be the most vocal supporter of volunteers and volunteerism. She should encourage the board to:

**confirm the value** of volunteers to the agency effort

**define** how it will involve volunteers

**create policies** that demonstrate commitment to effective mobilization of volunteers.

As the volunteer administrator consider yourself as a role model, with volunteers working creatively in your own office to demonstrate how you expect others to behave in nurturing volunteers. To influence the board, clip relevant articles to send to the Executive Director. Offer to forward them to the board. Suggest that you can help with board orientation and training. Look for opportunities to talk about volunteers. Make Volunteer Week a real celebration in your agency. Inspire others. Build commitment. Part of being an advocate involves keeping up to date with trends that impact volunteers and shape volunteer services.

Use the space below to write about your dream. What is your **vision** for the **volunteer department** in your agency? \_\_\_\_\_

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Once you've identified your vision, don't file it or throw it away. Enter it in your day book. Think of it as a living document to be reviewed regularly. Use it to make decisions about what to do next, what goals to set, what doors to open. I keep my dream in my day book and move it every month to the front of my planning activities. **One of the most frequently cited qualities of leadership is the ability to have a VISION.** Another is to realize it.

**Develop a volunteer management philosophy.** Let the philosophy translate your vision into a practical and workable reality. If you have not clearly identified your philosophy in the chapter about personal credibility, do so now.

### **Ten Things I Believe Passionately about Volunteers and Volunteer Effort**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### **Because I Believe These Things So Strongly, Ten Things I Do:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

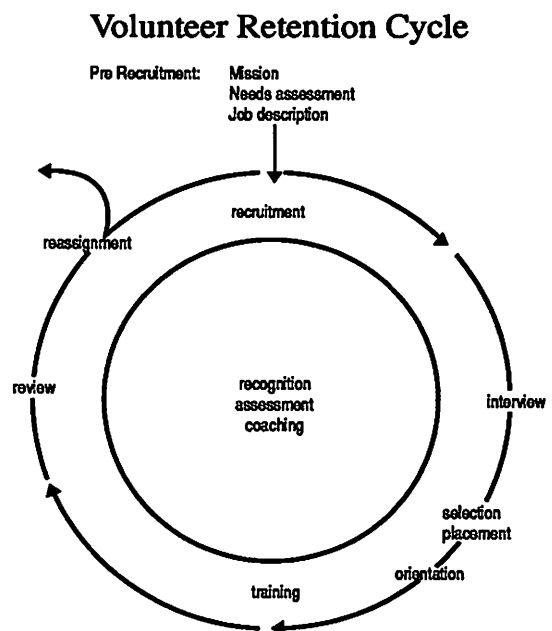


Again, don't hide these noble ideas under a bushel basket or in a vertical file. Keep them front and centre. Use these beliefs to make decisions and shape your thinking. Revisit them frequently to ensure that they are still valid and responsive to changing organizational and community needs. If you are stuck, take a look at the resource section of this monograph to get some help. We are fortunate that in this field many of these pioneers are still living, writing and open to new ideas. I like to think of them as guests at my table, people who have come to share their wisdom with me. What would Vineyard, Wilson, Ellis or Scheier say, faced with this problem? Get to know these fine folk for they will greatly enhance your understanding of how volunteers can best serve and be served.

**Put systems in place that maximize volunteer effectiveness and celebrate volunteer effort.** The policies you suggest to the board, and the procedures you create to support them, should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the theories and practice of effective volunteer management. Again, the resources listed will give you much needed help and affirmation that you are on the right track. Don't underestimate the value of local colleagues to set you on course and to keep you there. Study the programs of people you admire. Meet with them to seek out their guidance.

One of the major stumbling blocks to effective volunteer management is to view it as a set of discrete steps that bear no relation to the steps preceding or following. As a result, people initiate recruitment strategies without the necessary advanced planning or they create complex training plans that do not respond to the needs of either the task to be done or the folk being trained. Viewing volunteer management as a process or cycle

helps people appreciate the interconnectedness of each phase. There are many good models of volunteer management that you may choose to adopt to guide your practise.<sup>2,3</sup> The model that I feel most comfortable with is the Volunteer Retention Cycle, described in detail in *Dealing With Difficult Volunteers*.<sup>4</sup>



If you are truly serious about gaining credibility as director of volunteers, you must talk, act and be a manager. You must spend time planning, organizing, evaluating, delegating your work and not standing on the firing line. In my work with students in the field, many complain "I don't have time to think, never mind to plan. If you are caught in the treadmill of reacting to crises, you aren't managing your work. It is managing YOU. Stop! Take a deep breath. Close your door or get out of your office and take stock. What do you need to do to get back into control? What steps will get you there? Set yourself small, achievable goals and objectives that will build your own confidence and enhance your department's reputation as a department on the move.

Don't throw up your hands when people mention objectives, flowcharts, and financial statements. Roll up your sleeves! You're a manager now. Read management articles and think about how they relate to your experience. Talk with department head colleagues about management practise. Know your stuff and do your homework. Dress like a manager too! You don't need to invest in a gray flannel three piece suit, but do dress carefully to project the image of someone who makes decisions, knows where she's going and is in charge of herself and her department.

*"Insofar as volunteer administration continues to see itself as derivative, passive and dependent, others naturally see us in the same way. Beginning to define ourselves as powerful, active and autonomous is the first step in becoming so."* <sup>5</sup>

The three steps outlined in these articles help to move you from being passive and dependent to defining yourself as powerful and active. You can take control of your management practise and the profession, consciously deciding how to proceed. This is the very crux of professionalism and credibility.

Once you have your act together you can now take it "on the road". This is the important function of reporting and recordkeeping as an invaluable tool in demonstrating your credibility. Instead of recording endless statistics of hours worked, look to capturing volunteer activity in a way that excites people and tells the story of the volunteer department in meaningful and vital ways. Consider the personal vignette and reporting related to services offered (the number of tours given, the number of interviews conducted, the number of visitors to your centre). You are trying to paint a

picture in technicolour not reproduce a charcoal sketch. Your reports to the board must highlight what is exciting and innovative. Think of it as a vehicle to enhance your reputation within the agency.

You are ready now to seek out supportive allies and to work with them. Identify folks who have organizational respect and test out ideas with them. Start small and tentatively. Ask for their feedback. "I'm considering....., what are your thoughts?" Really listen and try to incorporate their wisdom into your plans. Thank them. Be ready to reciprocate by offering supportive criticism to their ideas when your opinion is sought.

I'm not suggesting that you ignore old friends just because they can't advance your position or argument. Not at all, but be aware of the networks that make decisions and shape policies within your agency. As the saying goes, "it's hard to soar like an eagle when you are surrounded by a flock of turkeys". Find the eagles and join them! Build relationships that will nurture you and will help secure a hearing for new ideas. Plan how you will introduce your new ideas, remembering that many ideas will need to be introduced several times before they are accepted. Don't get discouraged by a single NO. Persevere! At all levels look for opportunities to work with people. Help them realize their dreams so that they will be well disposed to help you achieve your vision. Demonstrate that you are trustworthy, committed and responsive.

Despite your most noble efforts, the ultimate effectiveness of your program does not rest with you alone. You will need allies and colleagues. No one is fully autonomous in a voluntary agency. The old notion is that the success of the volunteer service rests solely with the director of volunteers. I would like

to propose a new notion of who shares that responsibility.

My thinking about this topic has been stimulated by two provocative sources:

\* rereading of Susan Ellis' book, *From the Top Down*, and

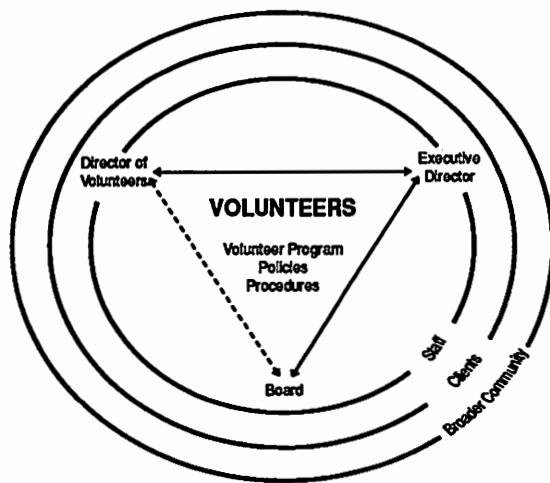
\* a three part series in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* by Ivan Scheier written in 1988.

The empowerment of volunteers depends on the observance of quality guidelines and standards for volunteer services. These are especially influenced by:

**an Executive Director** who values volunteers

**a Board of Directors** that establishes a welcoming and supportive climate for volunteers

**a Director of Volunteers** who puts in place systems and procedures that allow volunteers to serve the agency effectively and efficiently.



**Roles, Relationships & Responsibilities  
in Volunteer Service Development**

We have discussed at length the obligations of the Director of Volunteers in defining roles and responsibilities. Let us turn our attention to the other players.

The Board of Directors, whose members are volunteers themselves, sets policy and develops a philosophy concerning how volunteers are to be involved within the agency. Because they are obligated to monitor and evaluate service delivered by volunteers on behalf of the agency, their understanding and appreciation of the volunteer contribution is critical to the success of the department and its credibility within the agency.

In order to fully support the volunteer program, it is desirable that the Board:

**believes in the value of volunteers**

**acknowledges that the Board is a volunteer body**

**consults with volunteers** about changes in the agency that will impact on them

**considers input** from volunteers that suggests a need for change in agency policy or procedure.

**develops and approves policies** that enhance volunteer participation and retention

**identifies the agency to the community** as a good place to volunteer

**attends events** that recognize agency volunteers

**allocates adequate resources** to manage the volunteer department fairly

Clearly, the board can greatly influence the success of volunteer services. The director of volunteers must commit herself to providing the necessary information for the board to fulfil their duties wisely and well. The usual link to the board is through the executive director, as it is unusual for the volunteer director to sit on the board or to work with board members directly. Occasionally, the President of the Volunteer Association sits on the board and in that case, two points of access are available for information and advice.

The volunteer manager who ignores the board, or who considers that the board is beyond her scope of interest, is failing to engage those powerful allies in the development of credibility for her program. It is essential that she understand the board and how it works and that she seeks to identify board members who can speak on behalf of the program as decisions are being made.

The Executive Director continues to have a pivotal role in assuring the success of the volunteer department. She stimulates the development of appropriate policy and oversees its translation into workable procedures and program activities. She enforces the wishes of the board with both staff and clients.

The most critical responsibilities of the Executive Director in support of volunteer services are:

**belief in volunteers** and their value to the work of the agency

**willingness to staff** the volunteer program appropriately to meet service needs both in terms of the number of staff and the qualifications of the people assigned to manage the task

**provision of the needed budget and equipment** to manage the task

**hiring of people** who want to work with volunteers, training them on the job to enhance their skills

**recognition of those staff** who consistently work well with volunteers

**granting of permission** to the director of volunteers to make independent decisions about recruiting, screening, disciplining and terminating volunteers

**commitment to keep the board informed** of volunteer activity

To achieve this degree of attention to the volunteer service from an executive director is unusual. It is most often demonstrated by those folk who were at one time volunteer directors themselves. There are a number of ways that directors of volunteers can alert their Executive Directors to the need for this active support:

\* give your Executive Director a copy of Susan Ellis' fine book, *From the Top Down*, and ask to arrange time to discuss it.

\* issue invitations to joint seminars to outline shared responsibilities, shared goals

\* ask to make a presentation to the board about this most important topic

\* lobby individual board members to raise policy issues at board meetings

\* ask for discussion time at a staff meeting to raise the issue of how volunteers are received at your agency.

Administrators and executive directors often work in isolation. These positions can be lonely and filled with stress. Peer support and mutual understanding make decision making easier and share the heavy burden of leadership. The bonus of working collaboratively is that shared experiences build trust and offer opportunities to demonstrate one's ability.

The strong connection of Board, Executive Director and Volunteer Director builds a base for relationships that include all volunteers and ultimately extend beyond the program itself.

The professional association has a role here to clarify for both current and potential employers the role of the Director of Volunteers and her colleagues. But the change agent in the process is the director herself.

*“Until the majority of practitioners view their work as a career other than a job, the position of manager of volunteers will lack professional status.”*<sup>6</sup>

5. Ivan Scheier, “Empowering the Profession”, a three part series in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, 1988.

6. Susan Ellis, *From the Top Down*, Energize Press, Philadelphia, 1986

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## Footnotes

1. Susan Ellis, *From the Top Down*, Energize Press, Philadelphia, 1986

2. Marlene Wilson, *The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs*, Boulder 1976

3. Sue Vineyard, *Marketing Magic for Volunteer Programs*, Heritage Arts

4. Marilyn MacKenzie, *Dealing With Difficult Volunteers*, VMSystems, 1988

# Chapter Four

## GAINING CREDIBILITY FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

The Crusty Bread Food Bank distributes countless pounds of food to needy people in Mouldy Meadows each year. Its small staff and many dedicated volunteers know that the service they offer is much needed. The media periodically writes stories about the people who use the food bank, and local church bulletins regularly request donations and volunteers. The frustrating part, however, is that no one else in Mouldy Meadows ever thinks to call on Crusty Bread to participate in finding solutions to the larger problem. On two occasions in the last few months they were not even invited to participate in public debates scheduled to look at poverty and community needs.

The Rough and Tumble Youth Centre had great plans to celebrate its 15th anniversary. Now it's wondering if maybe a wake is more appropriate. The Board has always relied on the executive director to look after funding negotiations, and although board members are supportive, they have not been particularly active in public relations or fundraising. The ED recently learned that two new youth programs have applied to the town council for funding. The recreation department has ordered a program review of Rough and Tumble which may result in a reduction in their annual grant. Moreover, the President's wife heard at a United Way meeting that an innovative school drop-in program is applying for a seed grant to expand youth services. What does all this mean?

What is it that determines which organizations flourish and which continually struggle to be heard or to survive? What is the dividing line between success and failure? Many factors lead to organizational success, and credibility is clearly one of them.

It would be presumptuous to even attempt to address such weighty subjects as organizational management, strategic planning, marketing and the like, since entire textbooks devoted to these topics are readily available. This chapter will, however, address the importance of credibility in today's competitive climate and suggest practical strategies for involving your board, staff and volunteers in enhancing the organization's credibility in the community.

### What is Organizational Credibility?

Credibility requires that an organization has its act together, that it provides quality service to clients, and that it demonstrates leadership in the community. Building credibility is clearly dependent on a combination of factors:

**vision** for the organization, its mission and mandate in the community

**effective** organizational and management systems

**demonstrated service** to clients in response to identified community needs

**proactive attitude** that is mindful of trends, aware of issues and one that keeps a finger on the pulse of the sector

**successful relations** with funders, donors and appropriate levels of government

**collaboration** with allied agencies

**effective communication** and relations with the media

**consultation** with community networks, and public and educational institutions

### Why Worry About Credibility in the Community?

When we consider the issues that affect our credibility within the organization, we are generally confident that the people involved are committed to the same mission and cause. As we look beyond the organization to the broader community, however, we must be mindful that ours is but one of many causes. We will need to persuade the powers that be that we deserve their support. Organizational credibility becomes crucial in building that support.

The **growing competition for human resources**, both volunteer and paid, is increasingly evident in the non-profit sector. Successfully recruiting volunteers and staff in this competitive environment requires that organizations be seen as credible places in which to work.

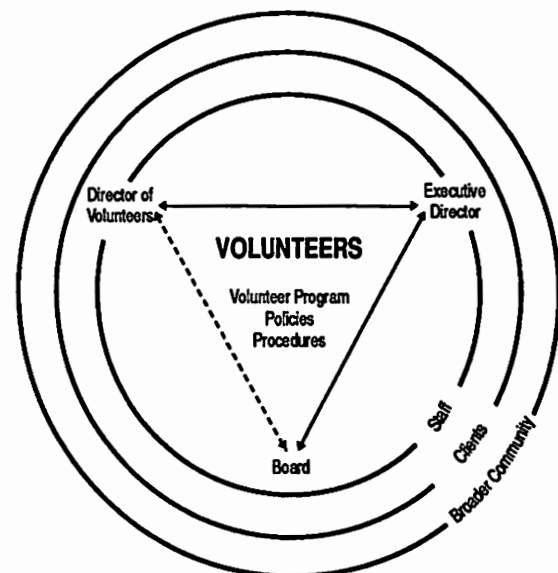
The **financial reality** of tight budgets resulting from government cutbacks and funding restraints, means that more and more often organizations will jockey for power. That old adage "the rich get richer" could well read "the credible get funded".

Finally, the powers that be in the community, the decision-makers, the policy-shapers, the people with the ability to open those doors of opportunity, today more than ever expect organizations to **demonstrate leadership**, to be advocates for positive change, to be proactive rather than reactive.

Think about your organization's role in the community. Is it perceived as a problem solver, an initiator, a group with something to offer in meeting community needs? Or like Crusty Bread is its credibility lacking in some way? How does its reputation fare with funders, allied agencies, the media, clients, staff, volunteers?

These are important questions for organizations to be asking these days. The complexity of these issues requires that we consider our image on an ongoing basis and develop strategies that will build credibility and serve us well in the long haul.

### The Big Picture in the Broader Community



### Roles, Relationships & Responsibilities in Volunteer Service Development

In the previous chapter the emphasis was on the inner circle, that triangle encompassing board, staff and volunteers working together to deliver service. We explored their relationships with each other and their impact on services to clients. These same players are now the key supporters when we look to the environment outside the organization. They give us many access points to the broader community. It's an unwise organization that expects its executive director to be its only or key spokesperson. The ability to spread the message, to seed the funding garden, to influence and advocate, is multiplied many times over when board, staff and volunteers become positive ripples (maybe even waves!) in the community pond.

Before everyone runs out willy-nilly to spread the good word, take the time to decide which of these relationships are important ones for your organization to develop. The following diagram illustrates some of the players:

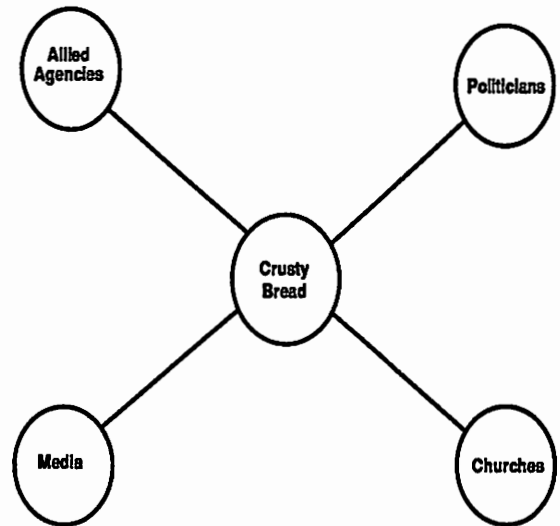


It is obvious that many of these groups have the potential to impact on your organization's success. By determining which are the most important ones, depending on whether your concerns are fundraising, advocacy, public relations or whatever, you focus your energies in the most productive way.

Let's use the Crusty Bread Food Bank as an example to illustrate how this might unfold.

The Crusty Bread Food Bank recognizes that in some measure they lack credibility, given that they were not invited to participate in the Mouldy Meadows public debates on poverty. The organization is anxious to play a stronger advocacy role in alleviating the poverty to which their service responds.

After lots of lively discussion, their newly formed Credibility Task Force decided that the key groups to target in a planned effort to build Crusty Bread's credibility would most likely be Allied Agencies, Politicians, the Media and Churches. The President proceeded to draw up the following chart .



At this point, they decided it would be important to identify the most influential players in each of these groups, and develop plans as to how those relationships will be developed and fostered. Pretty soon they had flip chart paper stuck all over the room, with these ideas:



**Allied Agencies:** Which groups share our vision and want to help break the poverty cycle in our community?

*Don's Soup Kitchen  
Public Health Department  
Housing Shelter  
Mouldy Meadows Social Action Committee*

**Politicians:** Which politicians are influential and as well have shown an interest in poverty issues?

*Member of Mouldy Meadows town council  
Mayor's Task Force on Poverty, new chair  
Provincial/state representative*

**Media:** Which newspapers or other media have wide readership and are sensitive to social issues?

*Mouldy Meadows Mirror, lifestyle and nutrition editors*

**Churches:** The churches have been very supportive. What further ways can we build on that support?

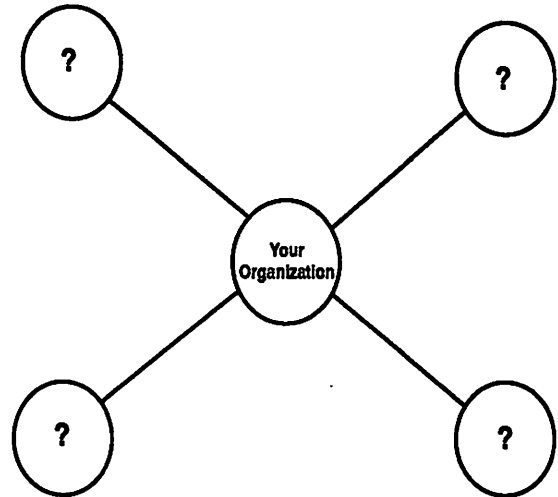
*Interdenominational Council on Poverty  
Interfaith Newsletter*

Get the picture? The final step for Crusty Bread will be to research who knows whom, and then finally develop a coordinated action plan. The continuing saga of Crusty Bread resumes later...

Now it's your turn. Key people (staff and volunteers) need to identify where your organization should direct its energies. Start by looking at the community players out there who currently do or potentially could impact on your credibility. Your first response is probably - "You've got to be kidding! We can't possibly do all this!"

Don't panic. Take heart. Invite those colleagues and volunteers to sit down with you and get the creative juices going. Keep in mind the credibility priorities for your organization, whether they are fundraising, public relations, advocacy or whatever.

### Target Groups to Enhance Our Credibility



### How Do We Get Started?

Just as personal credibility begins with a vision of one's own values and beliefs, and volunteer program credibility starts with the vision of how volunteers are an integral part of the organization's priorities, so it is with organizational credibility. **It must begin with a clearly articulated statement of the organization's mission and services, a vision for its role in the community.**

Earlier you looked at your mission, and identified how volunteers help meet service priorities. Take that a step further now and work your way through the following:

**Mission:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

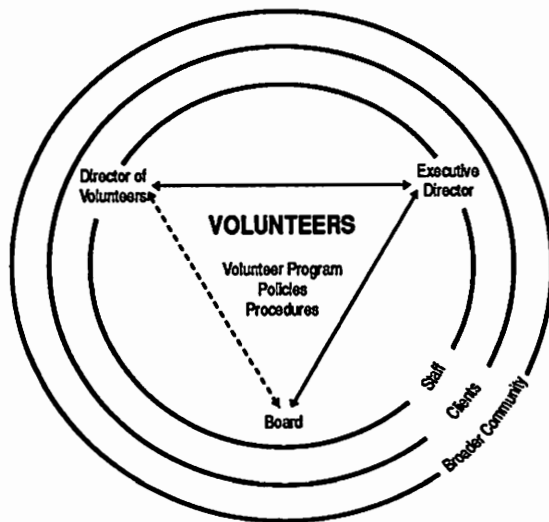
**Priorities for our organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do our mission and priorities respond to community needs? What is unique, special about our organization?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How does the work of our organization relate to the larger issues in the community? Identify hot issues in your community and consider how your mission fits with those issues. This helps determine in which places you need to have a voice to be sure that your concerns are addressed.** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Who Builds Credibility For Us?**

It's awfully hard to sell others on the value of our organization if we're not thoroughly committed ourselves. That's why it is so important that people advocating on our behalf be knowledgeable and enthusiastic supporters of the mission and service. Who are the key people best able to act as articulate spokespersons and thus build credibility beyond the doors of your organization?



### **Roles, Relationships & Responsibilities In Volunteer Service Development**

As the model suggests, the people most committed and intimately knowledgeable about the value of your organization are the board of directors, executive director, manager of volunteers, other staff, volunteers, and perhaps, clients. These people must become the key access points to establishing your agency's credibility in the community. Let's look at the potential role each can play.

### **Role of the Board**

In her book *Survival Skills for Managers*, Marlene Wilson devotes an entire chapter to discussing concepts of power. She contrasts personal power and its view of people as pawns in an "I win - You lose" text with social power in which people are viewed as colleagues whose contributions are valued in an "I win - You win" milieu. Wilson laments the fact that so many voluntary organizations fail to tap into the skills and abilities that board members may bring. She goes on to say:

*"If you have social power people, allow them to function. If you do not have them - get them! The future of your organization and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of your clients may just depend on it."*<sup>1</sup>

This is a telling argument for careful board recruitment and subsequent mobilizing of board resources to enhance your organization's credibility. Select the right key people to sit on your board or committees. Foster their commitment. Leadership volunteers bring credibility to your negotiations in the community because, even without a vested interest, they believe in and support your cause. Involve your board members!

## **Role of Volunteers**

The image of volunteer service with its “1000 points of light” across this continent speaks eloquently to the concept of volunteerism as a vital force in our lives. Satisfied volunteers who truly believe in the cause are powerful public relations assets out in the community. When they speak well of their positive experiences, of the quality service offered, of the benefit and value to the community, they “spread the word” in a way that money can’t buy. Alternately, a disgruntled volunteer is a disaster! Thoughtfully mobilize your volunteers to be credible ambassadors of good will on your behalf.

## **Role of Staff**

There are many routes whereby staff have opportunities to enhance an organization’s credibility in the community. The executive director, manager of volunteers, other program staff, as well as the front-line person who initially answers the telephone - all can impact positively (and negatively!) on the agency’s image. For many voluntary organizations, however, the key staff positions that are crucial to building credibility are the executive director and manager of volunteers. These two positions, above all others, provide significant opportunities to relate to community movers and shakers. The manager of volunteers demonstrates leadership with allied agencies and professional networks. The executive director may focus on coalitions and political task forces that relate to funders and powerful decision makers.

## **Strategies for Building Credibility in the Community**

Let’s go back to the Crusty Bread Food Bank. When we last tuned in to their quest for credibility they identified four groups towards which they will target their efforts. For each of these groups (allied agencies, politicians, media and churches) they brainstormed and then selected key people and agencies who could be most influential towards their cause.

The potential strategies to effectively influence these people are endless. The most important consideration is that an overall, integrated plan be developed to build on spokespersons’ strengths, keep the end goal clearly in mind, and above all prevent duplication and confusion.

Crusty Bread’s Credibility Task Force has decided on a plan of action and has mapped out what their volunteers and staff will do.

### **Allied Agencies:**

- \* regularly send copies of the Crusty Bread newsletter “Crumbs” to the executive directors of these agencies, as well as to the chair of the Social Action Committee.
- \* volunteers write letters of support to the Medical Officer of Health and the Social Action Committee.
- \* volunteer from Crusty Bread sit on the Housing Shelter’s Advisory Task Force.
- \* recruit appropriate and qualified Public Health nurse to sit on the Crusty Bread Nominating Committee.
- \* plan the Crusty Bread Annual General Meeting to highlight poverty issues and invite selected people from these groups to participate.

- \* request that the Crusty Bread executive director or board member become a member of the Social Action Committee.
- \* make a presentation highlighting Crusty Bread to that committee.

### **Politicians**

- \* volunteers write letters of support.
- \* president and executive director request a meeting with the member of town council and provincial/state representative.
- \* executive director or board member to join Mayor's Task Force; second best, to make presentation to the Task Force.
- \* send newsletter "Crumbs" to Task Force Chair.
- \* develop "impact report" of services, send to representative with request to meet and discuss.

### **Media**

- \* promote experienced volunteer to write regular articles about Crusty Bread to send to the lifestyle and nutrition editors.
- \* regularly send the newsletter to the Mirror.
- \* invite Mouldy Meadows Mirror editors to attend Crusty Bread's Annual General Meeting or Volunteer Recognition Dinner and honour them with a special award.
- \* write letters to the editor (volunteers and staff).
- \* send news releases about Crusty Bread services and successes.

### **Churches**

- \* offer to provide articles for Interfaith Newsletter
- \* recommend a Crusty Bread representative to sit on the Council on Poverty.
- \* make a presentation to the Council on Poverty.
- \* send letters, newsletter to the Council.

## **Importance of Customer Service**

Changing expectations on the part of clients, customers and the public at large play an important role in building and maintaining credibility. People expect to have a voice in the decisions that affect them. Clients no longer tolerate systems that are autocratic and non-responsive, but instead demand a voice in shaping service to ensure that it more effectively meets their needs. The move towards a customer service focus is very evident these days, and plays a major role in building credibility.

The strategies for spreading the word and demonstrating organizational competence are endless, limited only by the degree of our willingness to target our efforts and follow through on our action plans. Rome was not built in a day, nor is organizational credibility. It takes time, collaborative effort, and persistence.

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### **Footnote**

1. Marlene Wilson, *Survival Skills for Managers*, Volunteer Management Associates, Boulder
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# Chapter 5

## WHAT DO I DO NOW?

### Ten Tips to Build Credibility

**Have a vision** for yourself, your department and your organization

Be a **passionate advocate** for volunteerism

**Build a volunteer program that better serves the needs of the client**

**Set a good example**

**Become involved in planning**, both inside your organization and in the community

**Know your stuff**, keep learning and growing

**Build collaborative relationships**

**Seek out supportive allies**

**Understand the political process and power networks** and use them wisely

**Value the contribution** you make to your organization and the community

### Start With Books

Throughout this monograph we have made reference to many educational resources that are currently available to volunteer administrators: publications, audiotapes, videos, and professional development opportunities such as conferences, seminars, certificate programs and trainings offered by professional consultants and trainers.

The literature in the field continues to grow as you read! While only a few years ago the number of authors could be counted on one, possibly two hands, today many fine writers have taken pen to hand (or fingers to computer), to share their wisdom and expertise. The following publications are recommended reading, and in fact should comprise the core of your resource library.

#### Absolute Musts

*The Effective Management of Volunteer Programs* by Marlene Wilson

*Marketing Magic for Volunteer Programs* by Sue Vineyard

*From the Top Down* by Susan Ellis

*Essential Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch

*Dealing With Difficult Volunteers* by Marilyn MacKenzie

## **Other Excellent Management Resources**

*Survival Skills for Managers and How To Mobilize Church Volunteers*, both by Marlene Wilson

*Proof Positive: Developing Significant Volunteer Recordkeeping Systems* and *No Excuses: The Team Approach to Volunteer Management*, both by Susan Ellis and Katherine Noyes

*101 Ideas for Volunteer Programs, 101 Ways to Raise Resources* and *101 Tips for Volunteer Recruitment*, all by McCurley and Vineyard

*How to Take Care of You, Beyond Banquets, Plaques and Pins: Creative Ways to Recognize Volunteers and Staff, Evaluating Volunteers, Programs and Events* and *The Great Trainer's Guide: How to Train (almost) Anyone to Do (almost) Anything!* all by Sue Vineyard

*Curing Terminal Niceness: Building Healthy Volunteer/Staff Relationships* by Marilyn MacKenzie

*Building Credibility With The Powers That Be: A Practical Guide to Enhanced Personal, Program and Organizational Credibility* by Gail Moore and Marilyn MacKenzie

*Volunteers: How To Find Them, How To Keep Them* by Mike Haines

For those wanting to learn more about the roles and responsibilities of boards of directors, you might consider:

*The Effective Voluntary Board of Directors* by Conrad and Glenn

*Working With Volunteer Boards* by Diane Abbey-Livingston and Bob Wiele

*The Board-Staff Workbook* by the Edmonton Social Planning Council

The list could go on and on, and would include such fine writers as Ivan Scheier, Eva Schindler-Rainman, Nancy MacDuff, Jane Justis, Elaine Yarbrough and many others. For more information about purchasing publications and other resources, write the following distributors for catalogues and then treat yourself to great stuff!

**Volunteer Management Associates**  
320 South Cedar Brook Road  
Boulder, Colorado 80304

**VMSystems - Heritage Arts Publishing**  
1807 Prairie Avenue  
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

**Energize Associates**  
5450 Wissahickon Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

**VOLUNTEER - The National Centre**  
1111 North 19th Street  
Suite 500  
Arlington, Virginia 22209

**Partners Plus**  
**Innovative Ideas for the Voluntary Sector**  
9030 Leslie Street  
Suite 220  
Richmond Hill, Ontario  
Canada, L4B 1G2

## **National Organizations in the United States**

There are many national and state organizations that offer support to the voluntary sector. The three highlighted in this section are of particular interest to volunteer administrators.

### **The Association For Volunteer Administration (AVA)**

AVA is an international membership association of persons involved in volunteerism and volunteer administration. Membership in the AVA entitles you to *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*, a quarterly featuring articles dealing with practical concerns in the field, philosophical issues, and significant research. In addition, members receive a bi-monthly newsletter, reports on issues, special subscription rates to certain publications, and a member's registration fee for the National AVA Conference held each year in October. AVA also offers a certification program for volunteer administrators (CVA).

For more information write or call:  
Association for Volunteer Administration  
P.O. Box 4584  
Boulder, Colorado 80306  
(303) 497-0238

### **VOLUNTEER - The National Center**

VOLUNTEER - The National Center is a nonprofit organization that works to strengthen the volunteer sector in the United States. VOLUNTEER acts as a resource on volunteering, supports and strengthens volunteer centers across the United States, and provides consulting resources to corporations interested in employee volunteer pro-

grams. VOLUNTEER sells publications and recognition materials. It publishes "Voluntary Action Leadership", a quarterly publication which highlights innovative volunteer program profiles and up-to-date tips and techniques on managing a volunteer program. VOLUNTEER sponsors a National Conference each year in June.

For more information write or call:

VOLUNTEER - The National Center  
1111 North 19th Street  
Suite 500  
Arlington, Virginia 22209  
(703) 276-0542

### **The Center For Creative Community**

The Center is an Institute for the Advanced Study of Volunteerism. It is a volunteer-operated center for the study and encouragement of volunteering, and provides a variety of services including a clearinghouse for people who want to share special skills, advanced educational seminars, and numerous networking opportunities. The Center produces resource materials, including a newsletter, "Dovia Exchange". The Center also sponsors "Think Tanks", seminars for advanced practitioners to discuss today's issues.

For more information write or call:  
The Center for Creative Community  
Dr. Ivan Scheier, Director  
P.O. Box 2427  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504-2427  
(505) 983-8414

To find out about state or regional networks, call your nearest Volunteer Centre, State Office on Volunteerism or VOLUNTEER-The National Center.

## **National Organizations in Canada**

### **Voluntary Action Directorate, Secretary of State**

The Voluntary Action Directorate is a department of the Canadian Secretary of State which works with national and regional voluntary organizations to support volunteerism in Canada. The Voluntary Action Directorate has a number of publications and resources available. A series of handbooks, originally produced for Parks Canada for its voluntary sector clients is now available in limited numbers. The Directorate has published as well several excellent guide books on fundraising. In addition, it has produced a series of 34 monographs highlighting volunteer profiles based on the findings of the 1987 National Survey on Volunteer Activity.

For more information about these and other resources write or call:

Voluntary Action Directorate  
Secretary of State  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K1A 0M5  
(819) 994-2255

Two other national organizations in Canada that provide information and services of interest to the voluntary sector are:

### **Coalition of National Voluntary Organizations (NVO)**

P.O. Box 15812  
Station F  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Canada  
K2C 3S7 (613) 723-2180

## **Canadian Centre For Philanthropy**

The Centre for Philanthropy distributes a range of publications, many of which focus on philanthropy and fundraising. The Centre sponsors an Annual Conference in November each year, as well as a National Non-profit Sector Management Certificate Program.

74 Victoria Street  
Suite 920  
Toronto, Ontario  
Canada  
M5C 2A5  
(416) 368-1138

In Canada there are many provincial and local networks that serve and support the voluntary sector. These include provincial associations of volunteer centres, professional associations of volunteer administrators, as well as local networks. For more information about professional development opportunities in your province, call your nearest Volunteer Centre or local coordinators' network.



## About the Authors



**Gail Moore, B.A.,B.Ed.,** is a founding partner of Partners Plus - Innovative Ideas for the Voluntary Sector. Prior to joining the firm she was Executive Director of Volunteer Ontario, a provincial network of volunteer centres, and for eight years managed the North York Branch of the Volunteer Centre of Metropolitan Toronto. Gail has been a career development trainer for the Junior League, and continues to sit on their Community Advisory Board. She has planned and coordinated major volunteer conferences in Ontario, and provided the consulting services for the 1989 National Consultation on Volunteerism. Gail has many years experience as a volunteer, both at the direct service and board levels, and was most recently the Membership Chair on the Board of Directors of the Ontario Association for Volunteer Administration.



**Marilyn MacKenzie, M.Ed(Adult), B.ScN.,** is a founding partner of Partners Plus - Innovative Ideas for the Voluntary sector. She has many years experience working in the non-profit sector, and is widely acclaimed as a trainer, facilitator, consultant and author. Marilyn coordinates a certificate program in the Fundamentals of Volunteer Management at Humber College in Toronto, Canada. She is also a national trainer for the United Way of Canada. Marilyn's volunteer experiences are extensive, and range from direct services at the grassroots level to administrative leadership on numerous boards of directors. She currently sits on the board of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division, as Chair of Public Education. Marilyn is the author of the highly successful book, *Dealing With Difficult Volunteers*, and recently published *Curing Terminal Niceness...A Practical Guide to Healthy Volunteer/Staff Relationships*.