Recruiting Volunteers for Difficult or Long-Term Assignments

"Hmm...sounds like a job for Superman."

Volunteer Position

Steve McCurley

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About the Author:

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Chapter One
The Problem

One of the most significant trends in volunteer involvement during the past decade has been the remarkable shift towards the 'short-term volunteer', that individual who prefers to donate time in smaller and simpler chunks than the prototypical dedicated volunteer of the past. Nancy Macduff refers to this as 'episodic' volunteering, a propensity for giving time in relatively small, complete units, each with a definite end point measured in hours or days instead of an on-going in-depth commitment. Others have referred to this phenomenon as 'fast food volunteering' or the 'hit and run' approach.

Examples of this behavior include the 'athon' volunteers, who regularly participate during successive weekends in a variety of athletic events (the bikeathon, the runathon, the walkathon, etc.), all sponsored by different organizations. And it includes those volunteers who pass from organization to organization, sometimes specializing in a job such as assisting with computers, sometimes simply helping a bit at any job and then moving on.

The hallmark of the short-term volunteer appears to be a reluctance to become involved in a volunteer position which requires a depth of commitment measured either in terms of time or emotional involvement. For the short-term volunteer, volunteering is still a desirable thing to do, but measured as a part of life it is an activity which is balanced against all other activities and must accommodate itself to other demands and other desires. The greatest fear of a short-term volunteer is to get into a volunteer position for which there appears to be no clear ending point, either in terms of time frame or of workload.

One cannot blame the short-term volunteers for their conduct. The behavior is probably the result of two factors, both of which lead to a scarcity of time. The first factor is the increasing complexity of life, with additional demands and opportunities competing with volunteering for discre-tionary time. The volunteer of today is more likely to be employed, and thus has less time available to give than previous generations of volunteers. A recent survey by Louis Harris and Associates revealed, for example, that the median number of American leisure hours available per week had declined from 26.2 in 1973 to 16.6 in 1987. And the volunteer of today is beset with more opportunities for alternate leisure time activities — more restaurants, more recreational activities, more entertainment, more everything — which also compete with volunteering.

The volunteer of today is also being sought by many more agencies who wish them to volunteer. The vast increase in agencies with volunteer programs over the past ten years has lead to increasing competition among agencies for volunteers.

In polls of volunteer behavior, the single most consistent reason given for declining to volunteer is "lack of time." And, conversely, the most frequent reason given by those who have increased their volunteering has been the availability to them of more free time. As society places further demands and diversions on its members, this situation will only increase in significance.

Consider the lifestyle of your parents when they were your age and compare it with your own. And contemplate the radical difference that will occur between yours and your children's. As life becomes more complex, we initiate adjustments that would seem totally alien to earlier generations.

The reaction on the part of many people has been a continued decision to volunteer, but a necessity to volunteer differently than before. Instead of donating a large amount of time to a single cause or agency, the volunteer of today is spreading out their donation among several or many groups, limiting it both in terms of the length of their commitment and the total hours donated. And the volunteer of today is reluctant to accept volunteer jobs which

would require a high level of commitment, whether that commitment is expressed in terms of time or high emotional involvement.

This trend toward short-term volunteering appears to be the wave of the future. The 1987 J.C. Penny survey, "Volunteering - A National Profile", revealed the extent of this feeling when it asked non-volunteers what incentives would be necessary to get them involved and 79% of respondents responded quite clearly, "a short term assignment" [See Table 1]. Volunteers of the future appear to want to do good, but only under controlled circumstances that do not get out of hand: *"I'll give you my time, but not my life."*

1987 J.C. Penny Survey
"What incentives would be most important to non-volunteers to encourage their involvement?"

	%
Short-term assignment	79
Volunteering with a friend or group	71
Training	70
Involving one's family	55
Low-cost day care	49
Transportation to job	42
Reimbursement of expenses	40
Volunteer freebies	38

Table 1

All of this is well and good, and no doubt will force many volunteer programs to work hard to develop new jobs which can satisfy this trend toward short-term involvement, but what do you do if you are trying to recruit volunteers for jobs that **require** a longer or deeper commitment? What do you do if you are attempting to locate volunteers for jobs which, to be done effectively, must have a donation either of many hours of time over a long period or must have a strong emotional commitment

to the work and not just feel a casual sense of attachment?

There are, in fact, many volunteer jobs that cannot be done well by short-termers. Most are jobs that demand either high-time or high-commitment levels from volunteers. Examples include:

◆ **Leadership Positions:** volunteer jobs which mandate experience and knowledge in order to be done well. Examples of this would include board or advisory committee volunteers.

◆ **Emotional Bonding Positions:** volunteer jobs which require time and continuity of care in order for the client/helper relationship to mature. Almost all one-to-one volunteer matches with clients would fit into this category.

◆ **Emotional Subject Areas:** volunteer jobs which involve working in a subject area which might provoke a negative emotional reaction or fear on the part of the potential volunteer. Examples include working with death and dying, working with special needs populations, etc.

◆ **Time Intensive Positions:** volunteer jobs which require frequent contact or high levels of time, such as chair of an event.

◆ **High Investment Positions:** volunteer jobs which require expensive training or screening on the part of the agency, for example, a volunteer consultant or a volunteer who requires a background in the subject area or clientele before beginning work, such as a crisis clinic volunteer.

In short, work which requires a bit more than a casual approach to the subject. Clearly, not everyone can volunteer to be a hugger at a Special Olympics game — someone has to get involved in the tougher jobs.

Chapter Two
Some Answers

D on't give up hope. There are still a number of ways to locate and recruit long-term volunteers willing to give both time and commitment. Here are a few possible ways to approach external recruiting of volunteers for difficult positions:

☞ Re-Design the Job

Why fight the inevitable? Sooner or later, and all too much sooner if present trends continue, you may be unable to recruit a long-term dedicated volunteer for the job. Take a long, hard look at the job and see if there are ways that it can be split up, and divided into smaller units or chunks. You may find that it was originally designed twenty years ago and no one has ever thought of doing anything differently. Be prepared to be burned for heresy the first time you suggest any changes.

This will not be an easy task, but it is definitely one which is better to approach slowly over time rather than on an emergency basis when the crisis really strikes. You can also experiment to determine which jobs are appropriate for re-design and which don't seem to work well in any but the tried-and-true fashion.

You might occasionally be forced to consider an even more radical alteration in the job. Some volunteer jobs may be of such a complexity that the only solution is to turn them into paid positions, either because it is impossible to recruit volunteers for them or because it is actually more cost-effective in terms of training and management to utilize a paid employee. Don't find this to be startling, since it has been happening for a long time — almost all of the positions in non-profit agencies started as volunteer jobs and eventually grew to a point where it became managerially necessary to convert them to paid jobs. As the volunteer firefighting profession will currently attest, this conversion may not be completely peaceful.

☞ Expand Recruiting Efforts

You may be able to find the right volunteer if you simply increase your marketing and recruitment efforts. While a vanishing breed, there are still some long-termers out there and you may be able to locate them by one of three recruitment methods:

❏ Mass Media Recruitment
Put an ad on television or radio, or write a good classified ad for the newspaper. Perhaps only .01% of the population would be interested in your volunteer job, but if over one million people see the ad this could result in 100 applicants.

In most large television markets at least one station is involved in airing messages to assist in volunteer recruitment. Many of these local campaigns are operated in conjunction with the local Volunteer Center or United Way and feature a variety of community volunteer projects.

Local newspapers often operate their volunteer recruitment classified ads themselves and will give information on who to contact about placing an ad in the column which they run.

Despite many current new efforts to involve volunteers by mass media processes, it is difficult to count on this method to solve all of your problems. In the 1990 Gallup Poll only 6% of all volunteers reported having learned about their volunteer job via mass media.

It may be difficult for you to adequately describe a complicated job in a format which fits the short framework of a newspaper ad or a radio or television PSA. If you do attempt to construct such an ad you might wish to concentrate on 'selling' the needs of your client population, since it will be simpler to describe their needs than it will be to describe the entire job. Other motivational needs which might be mentioned include the provision of training or other support to the volunteer

in preparing for the job, and the availability of flexible scheduling to make it easier for the volunteer to meet the time requirements for the job.

The following are some sample newspaper classified ads which do a good job of being both brief and fairly compelling:

Volunteer Classified Ads

☎ The King County Sexual Assault Center believes that all people, including children, have the right to be free to live without the fear of sexual violence. We also believe that victims of sexual abuse and their non-offending family members deserve support to alleviate the trauma of sexual abuse in their lives. Volunteer opportunities are currently available in a variety of areas and we are recruiting now for our October and January training sessions. Please call xxx-xxxx to help eliminate sexual violence in your community.

☎ Volunteer counselors needed. The Fairfax Victim Assistance Network is accepting applications from volunteers to join a dedicated team who counsel victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Extensive training will be provided in March on counseling skills, crisis intervention, advocacy and community resources. Persons with diverse backgrounds and life experiences are encouraged to apply. Call xxx-xxxx for info and application.

Table 2

It is important to realize that even if ads like the above do attract a volunteer, they will not by themselves guarantee that recruitment is successful. You will still need to individually motivate the potential volunteer about the job and the agency. The mass media techniques will simply serve to get you close enough to the volunteer to make the actual recruitment pitch.

❏ *Targeted Recruitment*
Devote time to determining who would really like to do the job and track them down. Start by examining the motivations and backgrounds of current volunteers in the position to find out if there are any common factors. Do they all have the same type of motivation? Do they have similar

backgrounds or education or experiences or occupations? Do they come from similar groups? Did they all hear about the job in the same fashion? Common factors will enable you to identify populations who seem to like the job despite its requirements, and the commonality will enable you to locate others from that population group.

Recent research studies can provide examples of this approach. Bigler, in a study of 4-H volunteer leaders, found that 4-H volunteers who continued in their leadership roles tended to differ from their discontinuing counterparts in geographical location, number of children in the family and number of children who had participated in 4-H. Williams, in two studies, found that individuals willing to work as volunteers in the field of mental retardation differed from non-volunteers in that they placed less emphasis on success (both social and economic) and greater emphasis on values such as equality, personal expression, and growth.

A targeted recruitment campaign involves answering three questions:

1. *What am I looking for?* What sorts of skills, traits, or characteristics relate to the volunteer position I am attempting to fill? Another way to think about this question is to ask, "What would a person look like who would really **want** to do this type of job?"

2. *Who would have such a skill or characteristic?* What population groups, occupations, social gatherings, etc would be likely to display such traits? In what groups would similar attitudes and traits be likely to occur? [See Table 3 for some questions that might get you started in thinking about this.]

3. *How can I communicate with them?* Where do they live, what do they read, what do they do for fun? What interests them about what they do, and how can I relate this volunteer job to that interest?

By examining and interviewing your current volunteer population you should get a good start in developing a list of targets, but you should be careful not to assume that this list will represent **all** of the potential groups who might be interested in the job. Once you have developed a list of the characteristics of the volunteers who have enjoyed the job, start thinking about what other types of people are likely to have

similar backgrounds or interests, and try to expand the list of potential targets before you begin analyzing how to locate and approach each potential target group.

One of the most difficult notions to accept about targeted recruitment is that somewhere in this world there are people who will want to do what will seem to you to be the strangest volunteer jobs, ones that you cannot imagine anyone actually *wanting* to do. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* commenting on a group of volunteer professionals in New York City notes:

> The wide variety of chores is an advantage. Volunteers stand ready to give time but are not sure what jobs they can handle. One young woman, for instance, explained that she started taking city children on outings but discovered "I couldn't stand kids." Now she hauls trash from housing-rehab sites. "You'd be surprised," she says, "at the satisfaction you can get when you see a dumpster finally fill up."

Not your typical volunteer job, perhaps, but one that is quite satisfying to some people whose work doesn't give them that sense of definitive accomplishment.

Prompt Questions
"Who Would Have Such a Skill or Characteristic?"

1. Who currently has or does it? What jobs or occupations does it show up in?
2. Who once did it and has now quit or retired?
3. Who would like to be doing it, but is now in a job where it is not possible? Who was educated in this, but now has a different type of job?
4. Who could learn to do it?
5. Who is now learning to do it and intends to do it more in the future? What schools teach this subject?
6. Who can get someone else who is qualified to do it? Can we find a teacher or a senior practitioner in this skill who can recommend and encourage others in their field to help us?
7. Who has such a radically different job that this would be an exciting novelty?

Table 3

Targeted recruitment tends to work best when you are looking for a particular type of skill, such as experience in accounting. It tends to work somewhat with psychological characteristics, but only if they are sufficiently identifiable [such as a love for children or a liking for sports] that they can be readily traced by going beyond internal mental states into outward physical manifestations.

By carefully wording your mass media communication you can actually make use of targeted recruitment. Consider this elegant ad, from Washington, DC:

> Interested in the arts? Volunteers know what goes on behind the scenes at the Kennedy Center. Call the Friends of the Kennedy Center.

While distributed via mass media, this ad makes use of targeted wording to appeal to a certain audience. The key words "behind the scenes" provide a strong incentive to those of artistic bent who wish either to meet and mingle with stars or to get to help with stagecraft. Contrast its effect with the following ad which utilizes exactly the same wording, but with a very different result:

> My Sister's Place, a shelter for battered women and their children. Hands-on with hotline and shelter work. Behind the scenes with committee work.

By utilizing targeted recruitment techniques to identify the motivations of likely volunteers you can design a mass media campaign which will generate a greater number of qualified and interested applicants.

❑ *Concentric Circles Recruitment*
Concentric circle recruitment is the lazy way to always have a flow of replacement volunteers applying to work at your agency. It works off of the simple theory that those people who are already connected to you and your agency are the best targets for a recruitment campaign.

To envision the theory of concentric circles, simply think of ripples in a pond when a rock is thrown in. Starting in the center of contact, the ripples spread outwards, with each successive wave striking another, getting larger with each following wave. Concentric circles

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volunteer recruitment operates in the same manner:
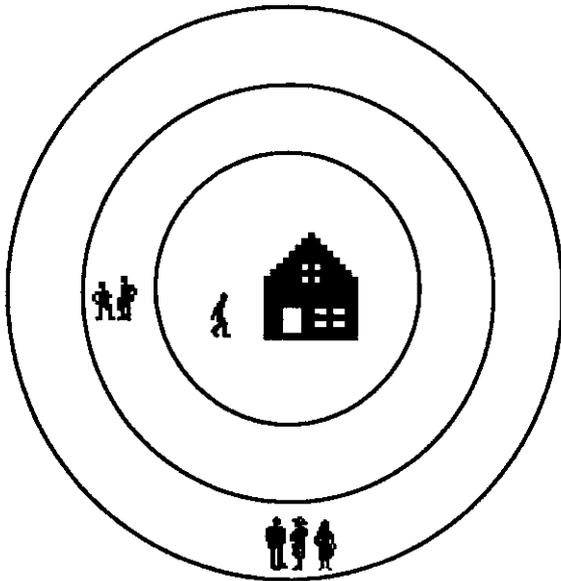
To utilize the concentric circles theory, first attempt to locate a volunteer for the position by starting with the population groups who are already connected to you and work outwards. You might capitalize on the fact that most volunteers are recruited by those people who they already know [see Table 4] by asking the incumbent in the job to recruit a friend of theirs to replace them. You might look among former clients or your current volunteers for a replacement. This approach will make it more likely to get a positive response, because the group of potential volunteers with whom you will be talking will already be favorably disposed toward your agency.

1990 Gallup Poll
Independent Sector
"Who Asked You to Volunteer?"

	%
Friend	52.0
Someone at church or synagogue	28.3
Family member or relative	25.0
My employer	7.9
Organization representative	7.9
Teacher/school activities leader	4.0
Other	5.1
Don't know	1.8

Table 4

Other data from that poll indicates the following:

☞ Of 40% asked to volunteer, 87% did so.
☞ Of 57% not asked, only 30% did so.
☞ The groups least often asked were blacks, hispanics, and low-income youth.
☞ When asked, these groups volunteered at a rate equal to or above other groups.

These results indicate one of the simple reasons for the remarkable success of concentric circles recruitment. Since it often involves face-to-face recruitment by those who already know the people whom they are approaching, one of its strengths is the personal testimony of the asking volunteer. During the conversation the volunteer can say, either directly or indirectly, *"This is a good volunteer job with a good agency. I know this because I worked there and I think it is worth your time to work there too."* This is a very credible and a very persuasive argument that mass media techniques and appeals from strangers have a hard time equaling.

Even more direct evidence of the efficacy of concentric circles recruitment was seen in a result of the 1987 Gallup Survey, also available from Independent Sector: among those who have been the recipients of services by a community agency, 23% volunteer; among non-recipients, only 9% volunteer. The service received need not have been given directly by the soliciting agency, but may instead be only of a similar type to that received by those being solicited. Collins, Barth, and Zrimec report on the success, for example, of an effort to recruit volunteers for an alcoholism treatment unit in a hospital. The recruitment campaign consisted of letters to members of a local Alcoholics Anonymous group. Each letter was jointly signed by the volunteer coordinator of the hospital and by a current member of the AA group (thus tapping two elements of the Concentric Circle concept).

These examples demonstrate that a clear strength of the concentric circles theory is that it concentrates on approaching those who may already have a good reason for helping out, either because they have received services themselves or they have seen the impact of the services on others. They have thus become convinced both of the need for the services and of the ability of your program to assist those with that need; all that remains is to demonstrate to

them that **they** are capable of helping in meeting that need.

Ideal groups around whom to structure your concentric circles recruitment include:

❖ Current volunteers
❖ Friends and relatives of volunteers
❖ Clients
❖ Friends and relatives of clients
❖ "Alumni" (Clients and volunteers)
❖ Staff
❖ Donors
❖ People in the neighborhood
❖ Retirees in your field or subject

In short, any population group which has already been favorably exposed to your program makes an excellent target for a concentric circles recruitment effort. All you need to do to capitalize on this receptivity is to start a 'word of mouth' recruitment campaign and a constant trickle of potential volunteers will approach your agency. Continually stress to all of these groups that they are essential to your recruitment campaign, and help them in knowing the types of volunteers for whom you and looking and the ways in which they can assist in finding and recruiting these volunteers.

If you are a new agency you will probably not be able to take advantage of concentric circles recruitment, and will have to rely on the less effective methods of mass media and targeting. In time, however, you will build up the good will among a sufficient population group to take advantage of this simplest and most efficient method of recruitment.

☞ *Gang Up on the Job*

Another approach to difficult recruitment is to make the 'volunteer' not one person, but several. If the difficulty is that the job is too 'large' for a single individual, then the obvious solution is to make it the responsibility of more than one person. You can approach this via two different methods:

❑ *Team Volunteering*
Team volunteering is the classic job sharing approach to the situation. Make the volunteer unit a partnership, with two persons equally sharing the job, or make the job one done by a 'lead' volunteer who is given an assistant. The team can split up the time and work requirements. This approach is particularly useful when you are attempting to encourage a volunteer who has a particular expertise but is reluctant to volunteer because they don't feel like they have the time necessary to do all of the work. Their volunteer 'aide' can provide the hands; the expert volunteer can provide the brains.

This approach can have several advantages as Susan Chambre notes: "Teaming up compatible volunteers builds in several key elements that enhance the success of jobs performed by people who work for free: It facilitates recruitment, reduces the need for training, increases the probability of success in performing tasks since one member of the team is more experienced, and addresses the need for sociability."

An interesting advantage of team volunteering is that it benefits all parties in the relationship. It will both enable you to induce reluctant volunteers to attempt new positions and enable you to convince tired volunteers to remain on a bit longer. Another potential advantage of team volunteering is that a properly constructed team may be synergistic, resulting in a whole that is stronger than the sum of its parts. Team members may individually lack skills which are compensated for by other team members, resulting in a more effective work group than any one individual worker.

The disadvantages of team volunteering are twofold. First, it requires careful matching of the personalities who will be involved. They must be compatible in personality, vision of the job, and work style to successfully form a team. Second, it requires greater management and supervision, particularly during its early stages when the team is attempting to work out relationships and working arrangements. If you assign volunteers to work together as a team, schedule a review session for about a month after the volunteers have been matched. Turn this session into a discussion of their working relationship, using it to determine whether they have made the transition to a smooth working unit, and using it to determine whether their personalities are suitable for a situation of shared responsibility.

While the word 'team' is utilized to describe this type of job-sharing relationship, it is

important to note that the team should not include more than two people. Job-sharing with three or more people is nearly impossible to accomplish without an extravagant amount of work. Larger groups begin to function more as committees, and the nature of that larger social interaction can result in factions and alliances.

❏ *Cluster Volunteering*

Recruit an entire group as the volunteer unit. The group might include an entire family, a club, or even a business. The group sub-divides the work, lessening the time burden on any single member. Start this process by recruiting one member of the group who will persuade the others to become involved, making the volunteer job their project.

Both of these approaches are substantiated by data from the J.C. Penny survey of volunteer involvement. In that study [see Table 1, above], 71% of non-volunteers said they would be attracted by a volunteer opportunity in which they could work with friends or peers, and 55% said they would be interested in an opportunity to do volunteer work with their families. By giving them these opportunities you are essentially creating "two-fers", positions in which the volunteer can simultaneously do good and spend time with others.

A demonstration project on family volunteering conducted by VOLUNTEER: The National Center suggested the following characteristics for design of successful family volunteer jobs:

- ✓ The time commitment is flexible, often beginning with one-shot or short-term jobs that have the potential to grow into continuing activities.
- ✓ The jobs have understandable goals and logical, specific activities to be undertaken.
- ✓ The jobs provide something relevant for every member of the family.
- ✓ The jobs take advantage of the unique nature of family relationships.
- ✓ The jobs provide an opportunity to work with other volunteers, particularly other families.

Your search for volunteer groups may lead you into some strange places. Consider, for example, Lifers Group, Inc., a volunteer club that operates out of East Jersey State Prison. The convicts have established a tax-exempt group that helps local organizations raise money and other resources. High school students in Philadelphia have formed a group to provide volunteer computer assistance to local agencies and other students. They call the program "Dial-a-Nerd."

Management of these 'volunteer clusters' will depend upon your utilizing an existing natural leader of the group as your key supervisory mechanism. The group must enforce its own rules, and will resist too much direct outside intervention. Make sure that you have worked out a way of relating to the group leader, and use them to train and direct the group.

Groups may often rotate leadership, as does 'doingsomething', a volunteer group for young professionals in Washington, DC: "Volunteers are encouraged to take the lead on a project that interests them and to coordinate the activities of the project. By rotating responsibilities, the group avoids letting one volunteer take on too much, and acts as a safeguard against burnout."

☞ *Ease Them In*

One of the reasons for saying "No" to a high-time or high-involvement position is that the volunteer is afraid. This fear might be based on a feeling that the volunteer won't like the job enough to devote the time and energy to it, that it isn't worth the investment which it requires on the part of the volunteer. It might equally be based on a fear that the volunteer won't be able to do the job well enough, and a reluctance to let the agency down.

Both of these difficulties can be dealt with by introducing the volunteer to the position gradually rather than expecting them to buy the whole package at once. Here are some ways to let the volunteer become accustomed to the more difficult position:

❏ *Test Driving*
Offer the potential volunteer a 30-day trial period. Tell them to try the job and see if they like it enough to keep it. This is a great approach because it allows both the volunteer to see if they like the job and the agency to see if they like the volunteer.

Schedule a review meeting when the volunteer starts the position and stress that the volunteer is under no obligation to continue the job after the test period — a "no fault" divorce clause. While you will lose

some volunteers, you will gain quite a few who have had the opportunity to examine the job without pressure, learned that they liked the work, and decided that investing their time and energy was worth it.

The test drive system works quite well because most of us are accustomed to dealing with it in other parts of our lives. Would you, for example, buy a car without taking it for a drive? Would you buy a new and unfamiliar product that didn't have a money back guarantee?

The implicit promise to the volunteer is *"Try it, you'll like it!"* And the reassurance is that the volunteer can honorably back away if they don't feel as though they really do like the job. At that point, however, the resourceful volunteer coordinator will try to negotiate with them about another job with the agency...a smart move in this case, since anyone can persuade someone to volunteer *once*, the trick is to find them a job they will stick with and enjoy.

❏ *Apprenticeships*
Apprenticeships work by making the volunteer an aide to the person who is currently holding the job. The volunteer then operates as an assistant at the direction of the volunteer who is presently responsible for performing that position.

Apprenticeships work exceptionally well for leadership jobs or jobs with large amounts of responsibility which people are reluctant to take because they don't feel totally comfortable about being able to do the work well. Examples of good positions for considering apprenticeships are chairs of committees or special events, or technical jobs which require decision-making experience which the volunteer does not currently possess.

During the apprenticeship they can learn to do the work until they are comfortable with their ability to handle it well. At the end of the apprenticeship they can be 'recognized' by a promotion to being in charge, a position which they will now think they have earned and for which they will now think they are prepared.

A variation on apprenticeship is the 'mentor' or 'buddy' system. In these cases, the assisting senior volunteer does not directly supervise the new volunteer but serves to provide advice as requested or needed, and often will operate as a coach to the newcomer.

❏ *Propinquity*
This method works through obtaining a volunteer for a difficult position by first recruiting them for something else instead. This might sound a bit strange if you don't understand the propinquity principle.

"Propinquity" is the process of becoming accustomed to and favorably disposed toward those things or people which you are around and used to, somewhat to the effect 'familiarity breeds affection.' Things, or people, or jobs which seemed too large or too difficult or too frightening because they were new or strange may no longer seem quite so daunting after we've been around them for a while.

In propinquity recruitment, you attempt to recruit a person for an alternate position which is near or connected to the position for which you eventually want them to serve.

For example, if my agency were having trouble recruiting counselors for one-to-one matches with emotionally disturbed children, I might recruit someone to assist in collecting data from the volunteers that we currently had in that job. The data collection position is a small and simple job that is easily done, but while doing it one is exposed to the more difficult job and can learn to understand it and how valuable it is. Through the process of propinquity, the data collection volunteers are more likely to become attached to the counseling job with which they are in contact. When then asked to consider becoming counselors they are more likely not to be as afraid of the position, thinking *"If those guys can do it, so can I."*

One way to view recruitment by propinquity is that you are simply creating a new population of 'concentric circle' volunteers who will become interested in the job. Another way is to view it as the 'bait and switch' approach to the problem. By any way that you view it, it works: people are much less reluctant to take jobs that they understand and are accustomed to. In recruitment by propinquity, the job ends up speaking for itself...

Chapter Three
A Conclusion

There is one additional method for recruiting volunteers for difficult positions and it is probably the most meaningful of all. At the bottom of the trend for short-term involvement is a desire by potential volunteers to help but to not get over-whelmed by a volunteer position which they do not enjoy. The obvious answer to this problem would be to ensure than all short-term volunteers begin to look at their volunteer work as so much fun and so rewarding that they want to do more of it. Short-termers can thus be converted to long-termers. Recruitment based on this theory might be described as 'internal' recruitment.

This answer is not as simplistic as it may sound. For many reasons, short-term volunteering is not as rewarding as long-term — it doesn't provide the emotional satisfaction of really being a part of something and watching it succeed. Short-term volunteering is to long-term as fast food is to a real meal: you can survive on it but you don't call it dining. Many short-termers may be engaging in sporadic volunteering as a sampling technique until they find the volunteer position which is right for them, practicing 'comparison shopping'.

To take advantage of this, a smart volunteer coordinator should develop a series of entry-level, short-term jobs which provide the volunteer with the opportunity to see how they like working with the agency, its staff, and its clientele. Once the volunteer is working in these 'starter' jobs, the volunteer coordinator should work on retention, slowly grooming the volunteer for more work and ensuring that the volunteer truly enjoys the work they are doing. Volunteers are curiously rational: they won't stay in jobs that aren't enjoyable and they will stay in those that are.

Some evidence for the effects of this phenomenon is available from studies of volunteer behavior. In the 1988 Gallup Poll on Giving and Volunteering in the United States, 14% of those volunteers who reported increasing their volunteer hours said they did so because of expanding interest and involvement.

From this perspective, emphasis on volunteer retention would be much more important than emphasis on recruitment. Rather than focusing on constantly bringing new volunteers into the system, with the concomitant expenditure of energy required for recruitment, screening and training, this approach would concentrate on maintenance of the existing volunteer force through retention of the incumbents. Over time, the organization would benefit from the increased experience levels of its volunteers and from the lessened costs of bringing newcomers into the system.

There are three different ways of thinking about the process of 'improving' volunteer jobs to make them more interesting and involving.

☞ Give Them a Great Place to Work

The nature of the process for strengthening involvement would necessarily vary from job to job and from volunteer to volunteer, but some factors are probably common to all volunteer jobs. One of these is providing for the volunteer a rewarding job situation, one in which working facilities are satisfactory and social relationships are positive.

Some research has identified factors in the volunteer work relationship which might be important in this conversion process. A study by Gidron of volunteer workers in three Israeli social service agencies found that organizational variables (such as adequate preparation for the task they were asked to do) and attitudinal variables (such as task achievement, relationships with other volunteers, and the nature of the work itself) were the best predictors of volunteer retention. A similar study by Colomy, Chen, and Andrews identified the following factors as important to volunteers in any volunteer job that they

might do. The factors are ranked from 1 to 4, with 1 being 'Not At All Important' and 4 being 'Very Important.'

Rank and Mean Scores of Individual Items for All Volunteers

Rank		Mean
1.	Helping others	3.83
2.	Clearly defined responsibilities	3.58
3.	Interesting work	3.53
4.	Competence of supervisor	3.51
5.	Supervisor guidance	3.47
6.	Seeing results of my work	3.46
7.	Working with a respected community organization	3.43
8.	Reasonable work schedule	3.41
9.	Doing the things I do best	3.39
10.	Suitable workload	3.22
11.	Freedom to decide how to get work done	3.21
12.	Chance to make friends	3.20
13.	Pleasant physical surroundings	3.17
14.	Opportunity to develop special skills/abilities	3.09
15.	Challenging problems to solve	3.05
16.	Convenient travel to and from volunteer work	2.94
17.	Opportunity to work with professional staff	2.88
18.	Volunteer recognition	2.49
19.	Adequate reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses	2.07
20.	Chance to move to paid employment	1.50

Table 5

Note that most of the top 10 items deal with the situation in which the volunteer work is performed and the design of the job itself: clear responsibilities, interesting work, effective supervision, etc.

After analyzing their data, Colony, Chen and Andrews noted:

"Perhaps the single most important finding reported in this study is the relatively high importance volunteers accord situational facilities...In addition to the intrinsic and extrinsic incentives associated with volunteer work, then, it appears that individuals strongly desire conditions and organizational settings that facilitate effective and efficient volunteer work."

Roughly translated, this means that volunteers like good working conditions, just like the rest of us, and that volunteers

tend to prefer jobs where the environment is friendly, supportive, and effective.

The factors which are key elements for each volunteer job will vary. Greishop, in a study of the Master Gardener volunteer program, identified three top perceived benefits which volunteers thought were essential to them: receiving new sources of information, obtaining new gardening knowledge, and gaining access to experts and information. He went on to note that none of these was 'altruistic'. Instead, each factor dealt with a benefit which the volunteer felt was of value to himself or herself and which was gained through volunteering and the additional training provided to Master Gardeners. Greishop also noted that the Master Gardener program was successful in providing these factors – over 64% of the 1980 volunteers reentered the program in 1981.

☞ Give Them What They Don't Have

Another way of approaching the process of making a job more interesting is to look at it from the perspective of the potential volunteer. What is it, for example, that they want out of this volunteer job that they aren't getting from their current paid job?

Miller, in a study of volunteers at three social service agencies, tested the hypothesis that some people volunteer in order to satisfy needs that are not currently being met in their paid employment. The findings indicated that volunteers whose regular paid employment failed to satisfy their needs for psychological growth tended to be more satisfied with volunteering when it could satisfy those growth needs.

One of Miller's conclusions from the data is quite intriguing: *"The present study suggests that volunteers who perceive their paying jobs as relatively unfulfilling should be asked to do the more challenging work."*

This would suggest that volunteer motivation could be improved by first analyzing potential volunteer's attitudes toward their current job to identify deficiencies and then structuring and selecting volunteer assignments to fill in the gaps. Variables that might be examined would include rating work on whether it is worthwhile, interesting, satisfying,

diverse, flexible, and allows for such factors as social interaction, expression of leadership skills, etc. Sample questions that might be useful during the volunteer interview would include:

- *"What do you get out of your current job?"*
- *"What do you not get to do enough in your current job?"*
- *"What would your ideal job look like? "*
- *"What would you do in it, and not do?"*

The prospective volunteer would be encouraged to identify elements of a possible volunteer job that would match motivational needs which were not currently being met in their life and particularly were not being met in their paid work setting.

It would then become important to make sure that the volunteer received this perceived need. Morrow-Howell and Mui demonstrated the consequences of failing to provide volunteers with a sense of meeting their motivational needs. In a study of senior volunteers who had initiated service because they strongly wanted to help others, the major reason given for quitting was an inability to help clients of the agency as much as they originally had thought they would be able.

☞ Give Them a Good Time

Another way of thinking about more effective retention is to develop ways to let the volunteer have more 'fun'.

This is not quite as strange a notion as it might seem. Henderson has suggested that one way to view volunteering is as a 'leisure' activity, i.e., something which is done freely without expectation of monetary benefit. Volunteering and leisure have similar expected benefits: *"People want to do something interesting, to achieve something, meet people, have fun, learn new things, be refreshed, and relax."* All of these factors might be examined as aspects of volunteer jobs which could be strengthened.

Lynch has pointed out the relationship between work and games, as seen from the perspective of motivation. Games are activities which people choose to do, simply because they enjoy them. If jobs could be designed which were as interesting as games, supervision would be largely irrelevant because the worker would (sometimes literally) fight to do the job.

If you doubt this, think about the people you know who will go to absurd lengths to participate in their chosen game, whether it is bridge, golf, skiing, etc. They will, as Lynch points out, not only give their time to learning and doing the game, they will pay money to learn how to do it better, and will even pay to watch other people playing their game. This attitude, which almost all of us have about some part of our leisure activities, would solve all problems in volunteer retention if we could re-direct it.

Henderson suggests that the volunteer manager focus on four areas to take advantage of this relationship between leisure and volunteering:

- ✓ The self-interest and recreational expectations of volunteers which might make volunteering more appealing to people.
- ✓ Providing volunteer opportunities which will be perceived as worthy leisure.
- ✓ Utilizing the 'recreative aspects' of volunteering as a technique for recruitment.
- ✓ Matching a person's leisure expectations to potential outcomes associated with a volunteer experience.

The J.C. Penny survey alluded to earlier suggests that some aspects of leisure, such as enjoying activities conducted with one's social group, may be of particular significance in tapping this aspect of motivation.

☞ If All Else Fails, Do It Correctly

The final answer to the long-term/short-term split may be quite simple. We all have the same amount of time, the key issue is whether the volunteer job situation is worth what is being asked. The best method for recruiting for difficult positions may simply be that old stand-by, effective volunteer management: good work, good friends, and good fun produces good volunteers. This 'internal recruitment' may produce volunteers from where you least expected them — your own agency.

Chapter Four
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