## ABSTRACT

*The authors identify 10 contemporary trends in volunteerism in the United States and Canada based upon documented societal trends, published literature, and 45 years of combined experience in volunteer management. The trends include: (a) Increasing rates of volunteer burnout; (b) increased competition among organizations for a decreasing number of volunteers; (c) an emphasis by volunteers on the human touch; (d) workplace changes; (e) episodic volunteering; (f) the professionalization of the volunteer corps; g) an emphasis on diversity; (h) new forms of volunteerism; (i) liability issues and risk management; and (j) technology broadening volunteer opportunities. Critical management implications are discussed for each trend. The authors conclude that administrators of volunteer programs must practice strategic thinking so as to maintain the long-term viability of their programs.*

# Management Implications of Contemporary Trends in Volunteerism in the United States and Canada[1]

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of volunteerism in North American society has evolved dramatically during the past two centuries (Ellis and Noyes, 1990). What historically began as individualized, altruistic behaviors founded upon strong religious tenets has evolved into a contemporary social movement driven by a wide range of individual motivations, and organizational and governmental incentives. According to Vineyard (1993), volunteerism and volunteer programs today are emerging "into a new maturity. . . a maturity which is vastly different from older patterns of 20 and 30 and 90 years ago" (page 3). According to Vineyard, this "new maturity" for volunteer programs is necessary due to the rapid and continuous global changes facing contemporary society.

While the fundamental social concept of volunteering has remained relatively unchanged, the applied cultural and organizational contexts for volunteerism changed dramatically during the final 25 years of the 20th century (Ellis and Noyes, 1990). These contexts continue to evolve today owing to the unprecedented nature of change in present-day society. However, many present-day managers of volunteers find it an ongoing challenge to monitor these evolving contexts and to adapt in response the volunteer-based programs they administer.

On the basis of documented societal trends, published literature and over 45 years of combined personal experience in volunteer management, the authors suggest the following 10 contemporary trends in volunteerism in the United States and Canada, each with accompanying critical management implications. For the purposes of this discussion, we define "volunteer" as "anyone who contributes time, energies, or talents to an orga-

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nization, group or individual (other than a family member) for which they are not paid" (Safrit, King, and Burcsu, 1994, page 3). Thus, on the basis of this operational definition, we suggest that the trends identified are applicable to the entire range of volunteer-based programs, from all-volunteer grass-roots efforts, through individual programs delivered by volunteers within larger non-profit organizations, to non-profit and government agencies that are almost entirely dependent upon unpaid volunteer staff for organizational operations and client services. While we believe the trends also have relevance to larger social movements and registered charities, they are focused primarily upon the active engagement and sustainability of unpaid and uncoerced individuals working towards such ends rather than any underlying philosophical tenets driving their volunteer actions.

Furthermore, we suggest that the trends identified are valid only for the United States and Canada. While our preliminary scholarly dialogues and informal professional discussions suggest their possible relevance to Great Britain and other Western societies, we have not established either a conceptual or data-supported basis for such a premise. Rather, we would encourage our volunteer administration colleagues in other countries, societies and cultures to consider their trends and critically evaluate their possible implications for their specific contexts.

## INCREASING RATES
## OF VOLUNTEER BURNOUT

Until the end of the past decade, the percentage of Americans who volunteer initially declined, while the total number of hours volunteered remained fairly constant (Independent Sector, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996b). The 1998 Independent Sector survey reported the highest ever level of participation in volunteering (55%) yet the average number of hours volunteered per week fell to an all time low of 3.5. Although there are increasing

numbers of people volunteering, fewer volunteers are contributing a constant number of hours, greatly increasing the risk of individual volunteer burnout. A 1994 study of volunteers in five Ohio Urban Centers found that 42% of adults currently volunteering, and 27% of adults currently not volunteering gave "Think I've done enough" as a reason for not volunteering or for not volunteering more (Safrit, King, and Burcsu, 1994, page 14).

The 1997 Canadian National Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participation (Ministry of Industry, 1998) reported a 40% increase in the absolute numbers of volunteers since 1987. Reflecting a pattern similar to that in the United States, the total number of volunteers increased while the average annual hours contributed per volunteer decreased. "One third of volunteers... accounted for 81% of the total hours contributed" (page 28). Approximately 30% of Canadian volunteers echoed U.S. volunteers in suggesting they felt they had already made their contributions and that this was a reason for not volunteering more.

Life pressures, particularly those of time and family, limit the availability of traditional volunteers. Baby boomers (individuals born between 1964 and 1943) are facing new pressures in their lives as they find themselves caught between two generations; they are frequently sandwiched between the needs of their children and the needs of aging parents. "Many are wrangling with issues surrounding care of elderly parents... Their young adult offspring continue to put demands on their time and energy... Still other Boomers waited until later in life to have children" (Zemke, Raines, and Filipczak, 2000, page 85). This leaves the boomer generation with limited, often inflexible, discretionary time to devote to volunteer activities (MacKenzie and Moore, 1993).

The people of Generation X (those born between 1960 and 1980) tend to be very inwardly focused and less inclined to get

involved (Putnam, 2000). They place a premium upon personal time and often view volunteering as taking away from time spent with friends and family (Putnam, 2000). This generation faces personal and professional pressures as they build both their families and careers.

Organizations must find ways to structure volunteer work that will allow people greater flexibility to move in and out of volunteering as work and family pressures affect their lives. Volunteer positions may need to be redesigned into smaller work segments that can be shared by two or more people. Greater attention may need to be given to rotating volunteer tasks to avoid individual burnout. More attention needs to be given to personal and professional development opportunities for volunteers that will increase individual effectiveness while maintaining personal interest. Job sharing and team volunteering would encourage longer-term individual volunteer commitments with shared responsibility.

INCREASED COMPETITION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS FOR A DECREASING NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS

MacKenzie and Moore (1993) and Independent Sector (1996a) document the increasing number of registered charities and grassroots organizations in North America. Larger numbers of organizations lead to more opportunities and more choice for individuals interested in volunteering. Additionally, there is greater competition among organizations for volunteers, as non-profits become more sophisticated in their approaches to marketing and volunteer recruitment. The Canadian government's promotion of volunteerism as a way for young people to gain work skills and experience, and the increasing emphasis on, and changes in, the health care system have created new emphases on the roles of volunteer work.

According to a survey conducted by the United Parcel Service Foundation (1998), professional associations in both the United

States and Canada are becoming concerned about increasing opportunities for volunteerism. More than half of the respondents stated they were attracted to organizations with a reputation for good management that effectively used volunteers' talents. They also found that poor volunteer management was frequently cited as the reason why people stopped volunteering.

The increased publicity and public awareness generated by national events such as the President's Summit on America's Future in April 1997 have highlighted the wide range of issues and problems facing today's communities. There has been unprecedented growth in the number of self-help groups and grassroots, community-based organizations. This growth reflects a larger societal trend towards individuals seeking local solutions to local problems.

Highly effective volunteer organizations will emphasize their mission and priorities in terms of the problem or issue they are addressing. They will have a positive vision, clearly articulated and widely shared, of the role of volunteers within the organization. Volunteers will be viewed as valuable human resources, and volunteer assignments will be more clearly aligned with the ultimate mission and vision of the organization (Allen, 1995).

AN EMPHASIS BY VOLUNTEERS ON THE HUMAN TOUCH

Recent research has documented the human-focused motivations for volunteers (Independent Sector, 1996b; Safrit, King, and Burcsu, 1994) and their preferred types of volunteer activities (e.g., "working directly with others" [Safrit, King, and Burcsu, page 11]). The primary reason given by volunteers for volunteering is "I feel compassion towards people in need" (Independent Sector, page 4). In the Ohio urban volunteerism study, 99% of respondents reported that "helping others" was their primary motivation for volunteering (Safrit, King and Burcsu, page 13). Seventy-

four percent of Ohio's urban volunteers indicated that they had worked directly with others. Other types of volunteer activities in which volunteers were engaged included fund raising (50%), general support (50%) and leadership (42%). Seventy-five percent of Canadian volunteers reported an interest in helping people directly, and 94% cited compassion towards people in need as a prime motivator for volunteering (Ministry of Industry, 1998). Canadian volunteers were engaged in similar activities, including supervising activities or events (50%), fund raising (44%), leadership (38%), and general support (28%).

In increasingly impersonal, technology-driven workplaces, employees often find themselves isolated from human contact. Additionally, work and career requirements often separate families geographically. Volunteers are attracted to activities that allow them direct interaction and one-to-one contact with the recipients of their services. Several studies conducted by psychologists, physicians, and sociologists have found that one-to-one volunteerism promotes, maintains and enhances good health and prolongs life expectancy (Electronic Library, 1997).

Volunteers are looking for meaning, value and enrichment in their lives through the one-to-one contact of volunteer work. This poses problems for volunteer organizations that do not offer opportunities for direct volunteer-client contact. They must increase their efforts to connect volunteers to the overall mission of the organization, highlighting the contributions of volunteers to the improvement of the human condition. In all cases, organizations must strive to monitor and clearly report the impact of volunteer activities and services on the people being served, and ultimately on the community at large.

WORKPLACE CHANGES

Several workplace trends suggest that an increasing pool of potential volunteers is being created, resulting from the growing number of skilled yet unemployed (often by choice) individuals, from the increasing frequency of employees working out of their home, and from early retirement incentives (MacKenzie and Moore, 1993). Since 1975 Canadian society has experienced a 50% increase in the number of people retiring before the age of 55 (Ministry of Industry, 1998). Unemployed adults are engaging in volunteer work to fill time between jobs and/or as opportunities to sharpen their work skills and experience. Today's worker is experiencing increasing pressures to make mid-career changes and is viewing volunteer work as an opportunity to explore new careers and develop new skills. Home-based businesses are one of the fastest growing segments of the American workplace. Self-employed workers are less connected to the traditional structures that promote volunteer activities. However, they often have more flexible work schedules and are seeking opportunities for connections within the community that will highlight their individual skills and professional interests. Increased numbers of women in the workplace have eroded the traditional pool of daytime volunteers. Seventy percent of women born between 1946 and 1964 are employed full time outside of the home (Sheehy, 1995). Many of these women are having their first children in their 30s and 40s, and are under increasing pressures to balance home and career. "Among [working] volunteers there is trade-off between time spent working and time spent volunteering" (Putnam, 2000, page 119). People from Generation X place great value on creating a balance between personal and professional lives.

These workplace changes call for more opportunities to be created for flexible, short-term volunteer assignments that can accommodate people with limited time. Corporate and employee volunteer programs seek opportunities for group projects that can be coordinated and accomplished through the workplace. Organizations should develop potential group projects for these workplace

volunteers. Current views of organizational management and leadership are affecting the choices people make in their volunteer activities. Participative decision making and teamwork have replaced authoritarian management styles in the for-profit workplace; volunteers are seeking similar management styles in non-profit organizations. They tend to avoid authoritarian management and large bureaucratic institutions, and are seeking volunteer organizations that treat them professionally and include them in the planning and decision-making phases of the work. Volunteers expect organizations to have clearly defined volunteer assignments, appropriate volunteer training and support, and standard processes for evaluating volunteer performance and progress (MacKenzie and Moore, 1993). Today's volunteers are increasingly interested in the impact of their contributions.

## EPISODIC VOLUNTEERING

Research suggests that volunteers are seeking quality, short-term volunteer opportunities repeated annually rather than time-intensive, ongoing volunteer responsibilities (Independent Sector, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996b; Safrit, King, and Burcsu, 1994). Respondents in the Ohio urban volunteer study reported being too busy to volunteer (81%) or to volunteer more (83%) as the primary barrier to volunteering. Seventy-one percent of non-volunteers stated that volunteering "requires too many hours" and 66% believed volunteering "requires a long term commitment" (Safrit, King and Burcsu, page 14). Canadian respondents also reported that they "do not have extra time" to volunteer (69%) or to volunteer more (74%), and 50% of Canadian non-volunteers stated they were "unwilling to make a year round commitment" (Ministry of Industry, 1998).

Episodic volunteering has been defined as "service of short duration" performed on a once-only basis or work on a specific project or assignment that recurs annually (Macduff, 1990, page 15). This type of volunteering focuses on the short-term nature of the involvement; it has been increasingly promoted among young professionals and employee volunteer programs that encourage and support one-time projects that can be easily accommodated to a busy lifestyle. Short-term opportunities also have wide appeal among student groups looking for service projects that correspond to specific school time frames. Additionally, these short-term projects may have greater appeal among new workplace retirees who are seeking opportunities to stay connected with the community and their personal interests while retaining the freedom and flexibility to travel and pursue long time hobbies.

Organizations that can creatively design and manage volunteer opportunities that allow individuals to make meaningful contributions in non-traditional time frames are more likely to attract a wider, more diverse range of volunteers. Episodic volunteers will require different approaches to volunteer job identification, screening, orientation and training. Offering such opportunities presents new possibilities for attracting families, young professionals, students, church and service club groups and clients of the organization as volunteers.

## THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE VOLUNTEERS CORPS

Early retirement incentives (Nichols, 1990) and an increased emphasis on volunteerism through the workplace (Points of Light, 1995) suggest an increasingly professional pool of actual and potential volunteers. The Canadian Ministry of Industry (1998) reported that 42% of current volunteers have university degrees and 29% have high school diplomas, and Independent Sector (2000) reported that U.S. college graduates are 60% more likely to volunteer. Large numbers of Americans have experienced buyouts and early retirement, leaving them in positions of financial security and increased free time (Dychtwald, 1990). These are frequently

high level managers who continue to seek opportunities to utilize their professional skills and fill free time through volunteering as a substitute for paid work (MacKenzie and Moore, 1993). Record numbers of professionals will enter retirement in the next decade, as baby boomers move into their 60's. It is predicted that with early retirement and increased longevity, retirement may represent as much as one-third of an individual's entire life (Fisher and Schaffer, 1993). There will be increasing emphasis on volunteerism as a mechanism for making a smooth transition from work to retirement. Increased numbers of skilled, educated volunteers are seeking volunteer opportunities through workplace volunteer programs. Frequently viewing themselves as consumers of volunteer opportunities, these workplace volunteers want to know the return on their investment of time and resources. They want good-quality, meaningful volunteer opportunities that have a measurable impact.

This increased demand for accountability has placed new pressures upon organizations to design and implement processes for measuring and reporting the impact of volunteer services. Organizations need to be creative in developing volunteer opportunities that call upon corporate/workplace volunteers to build the capacity of the organization itself, as well as to provide services to clients. Workplace volunteers can contribute professional marketing, evaluation, technology, accounting, and other career skills to help organizations develop processes that strengthen and support their mission. These volunteer professionals will present new challenges for managers of volunteer programs. Many will have come from high-level management positions where they have delegated work and managed other employees. They will be accustomed to assuming leadership roles and to having professional freedom to act independently. *Fortune Magazine* recently reported on the frustrations that can occur when retired, high-powered baby boomer executives have to

adjust to the limited resources and (often) bureaucratic structures of non-profit organizations (Tanz and Spencer, 2000). Organizations will be challenged to find meaningful opportunities for these volunteer professionals that will creatively harness their skills and resources while giving them the freedom to act creatively. "For volunteerism to work in an age of retiring boomers... non-profit agencies will have to abandon some of their hidebound practices" (Tanz and Spencer, page 3). Volunteer managers will struggle to find a delicate balance between the needs of these volunteer professionals and the need of the organization's paid staff and management to have authority over the volunteer professional's work.

AN EMPHASIS ON DIVERSITY

Volunteer organizations are actively reaching out to ever more diverse client groups while simultaneously attempting to recruit and retain volunteers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds (Independent Sector, 1996b). "Rapid demographic shifts in race/ethnicity and age distributions are changing the composition of American society, and all organizations need to re-examine their ways for doing business to meet resulting challenges to traditional ways of thinking and acting"(Kolkin, 1998, page iv). Independent Sector (2000) reported a significant increase in the number of Hispanics, African Americans, and people with incomes under $20,000.00 volunteering in the United States. The Canadian Ministry of Industry (1998) also reported one in every four volunteers as being from a cultural background other than English or French; 20% of these volunteers reported less than a secondary education, and 22% reported incomes under $20,000.00. While American and Canadian communities are reflecting a growing diversity, the volunteers continue to be predominately white, middle-aged females. There is increasing pressure on volunteer organizations to reflect a broader cross-section of the societies in which

they function. Highly effective volunteer programs recognize the value of involving people from all sections of the community, including those that volunteer organizations seek to serve (Allen, 1995).

We know that the most effective recruitment strategy is a personal invitation (Independent Sector, 1996b), but the danger of this approach is that, by relying on current volunteers to invite new volunteers similar to themselves, organizations will perpetuate existing volunteer demographics. Organizations will need new approaches to volunteer recruitment, based on differentiated marketing strategies that target recruitment efforts to produce greater diversity. This will require moving beyond the current circles of volunteers to develop strategies for attracting and retaining volunteers who reflect the larger diversity of culture, socio-economic status and age. Two groups in particular warrant increased marketing and targeted recruitment efforts: corporate or employee volunteers and retirees. The welfare reform movement will present new opportunities for involving a wider diversity of volunteers. These new types of potential volunteers, however, have specific needs and expectations that will have to be addressed. Volunteer managers may find themselves working with volunteers who have vastly different work skills.

The current volunteer corps may resent the incoming volunteers from diverse backgrounds, who may have different customs and views. Traditional ways of managing volunteer programs may cause resentment among both traditional and diverse volunteers and paid staff. Successful diversification of volunteer programs will require the agency to give significant attention to making itself ready for diversity before actually recruiting the volunteers. Issues that will affect the ability of diverse individuals to be involved as volunteers include flexible hours, location and accessibility. As the majority of today's volunteers are working full or part time (Independent Sector, 1996b), non-traditional hours

for volunteer service would offer increased opportunities for involvement. The question of accessibility concerns not only the physical accessibility of a volunteer's work space, but also whether a volunteer is reimbursed for fares, childcare, or out-of-pocket expenses, thus making volunteering accessible to those on fixed or limited incomes (MacKenzie and Moore, 1993).

NEW FORMS OF VOLUNTEERISM

Various government-initiated programs established over the past decade provided minimal financial stipends and other material incentives to encourage individuals to serve their communities through volunteerism. Service learning, national service and AmeriCorps are terms used to refer to various U.S. government-initiated, volunteer-focused programs. The term service has been used since the early 1900s when referring to various forms of public service (Ellis and Noyes, 1990). The U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps of the Great Depression era was based upon the concept of stipended service. In 1960 the U.S. Congress created the Peace Corps and VISTA as international and national service programs that provided minimal financial stipends for those who enrolled ("volunteers").

There have been many proposals put before the U.S. Congress in subsequent years to promote and expand service through such programs as the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions. The National Service Trust Act of 1993 appropriated the funds for AmeriCorps and service learning programs while bringing together all domestic volunteer service programs under one funding source, the National Corporation for Service. All of these volunteer-focused programs are government initiated and, with the exception of service learning, offer varying amounts of monetary stipend to service participants. These service programs join with more traditional volunteer programs and organizations

as ways for citizens to become involved in solving social problems and to contribute to the health of society through volunteer service. Service learning is an educational approach that integrates community service into the formal learning curriculum. In addition to these forms of government-initiated service, courts have for many years used mandated community service activities as an alternative sentence for non-capital criminal offenses. Volunteer program directors are asked to develop time specific volunteer opportunities for convicted offenders. Although many of the offenses involved are misdemeanors, organizations may need to assess the potential risks associated with these community service placements. Furthermore, there are increased reporting and accountability requirements.

Canada has aggressively promoted volunteerism as a means of skills development and career exploration for young adults preparing for the job market. The merits of mandated service learning and mandated service are currently being debated. These initiatives place new pressures on organizations and volunteer professionals to develop volunteer opportunities that focus on skill building and learning.

Although within American and Canadian society the vocabulary of volunteerism continues to involve, through the emergence of national service, service learning, corporate social responsibility, lay ministry and civic responsibility, each of these new forms of volunteerism values the concept of doing something for the common good without concern for personal profit.

## LIABILITY ISSUES AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Organizations are becoming increasingly conscious of the risks inherent in programs delivered by volunteers, and are beginning to design organizational strategies and policies to manage these risks better (Jackson, White, and Herman, 1997; Lai, Chapman, and Steinbock, 1992; Non-profit Risk Management Center, 1992, 1994; Tremper and Kahn, 1992; Tremper and Kostin, 1993). An increasingly litigious society has increased the concern of individuals about their potential liability as volunteers. Some people cite the fear of being sued and having personal assets at risk as one reason why they do not volunteer (Kadlec, 1998). In 1997 the U.S. Congress passed the Volunteer Protection Act, granting individual volunteers immunity from personal liability in certain well-defined instances. This legislation does not, however, free organizations from the obligation to introduce policies and procedures that will safeguard paid employees, volunteers, and clients. Programs that serve children, elderly people, or other vulnerable groups must be especially cognizant of the risks inherent in volunteer-delivered programs.

Risk management is the process of acknowledging and controlling risks in order to protect people and resources. It looks at vulnerable elements of the program that can lead to an active threat, and takes appropriate steps to control the risk. It is the process of developing good day-to-day operating policies, procedures and training (Merrill, 1998). Five risk management techniques are recommended: risk avoidance, risk acceptance, risk transfer, risk reduction, and risk prevention (Safrit, Merrill, and McNeely, 1995). These techniques should be systematically incorporated into volunteer management through identification of volunteer responsibilities, volunteer recruitment and selection, volunteer orientation and training, volunteer utilization and supervision, and volunteer evaluation. A well constructed, professionally administered volunteer program will have implemented sound procedures for risk management as part of its management structure. Volunteer organizations must take the time to identify potential risks and to address them as challenges, rather than accepting them as barriers to volunteer involvement. "Volunteering and volunteer work has changed dramatically in the last few years... As paid and unpaid

staff perform more sophisticated duties, and as they work more directly with increasingly vulnerable populations, there is a concomitant increase in the dual burdens of responsibility and liability on the organizations that deploy them" (Graff, 1999, page 146).

Some volunteer administrators believe that concerns about legal liability and the desire to manage risk are beginning to dominate decision-making by volunteers and volunteer managers. Establishing procedures to manage risks and protect all organizational assets, both human and material, is a proactive management approach for today's volunteer manager. Volunteers, clients and staff must collaborate to develop risk management policies that strengthen, rather than hinder the organization's ability to carry out its mission effectively and efficiently.

## TECHNOLOGY BROADENING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We are in the midst of a global technological revolution that is affecting every area of our lives. Few question the changes in today's workplace brought about by computers, modems, fax machines, cellular phone, etc. Although volunteerism is still in the early stages of development where cyberspace is concerned, new means for electronic access to volunteer opportunities are beginning to proliferate (Volunteer Canada, 1998). Distance will no longer be a factor when people consider which organization to choose as a site for their volunteering; physical location will be less of a factor when individuals think about where to perform their volunteer activities. The time of volunteering will change as people work in one time zone but serve customers in a different time zone.

Through on-line marketing, individuals will be deluged with information about potential volunteer opportunities and organizations. The power of the computer to search for and classify organizations according to the volunteer-delivered programs they conduct and the clients they serve will lead such organizations to focus more closely on their societal niche, their specialty or uniqueness in addressing social and community concerns. As more people work out of their homes, their willingness to travel to other areas for volunteer work may decrease (Cairncross, 1997). Organizations will need to re-evaluate their activities in order to find creative opportunities for drawing upon these new "techno-volunteers" to provide both organizational and client services.

The Internet provides innovative ways for organizations to post information and volunteer opportunities and to recruit new volunteers. Independent Sector (1998) reported for the first time that 1% of survey respondents learned about volunteering via the Internet. "Through its VolunteerMatch.com web site, launched in November 1997, ImpactOnline has placed over 35,000 people with local organizations across the county" (Lerner, 1999, page 1). An Ohio Library survey reported that 70% of the state's residents reported that they use the Internet three or more times per week (Casey, 2000). Internet technology has brought us "virtual volunteering" and "online volunteering" where volunteer tasks are completed via the Internet from home or work computers (Ellis and Cravens, 2000). New distance learning techniques via the Internet can revolutionize training, off-site volunteer supervision and on-going support. These on-line networks enable "content for one" training opportunities that can provide specialized volunteer orientation and training exactly when and where it is needed (Cairncross, 1997, page xii). List servers and chat-rooms offer volunteer administrators opportunities to communicate directly and immediately with professional and volunteer colleagues (Hawthorne, 1997), share information, discuss issues of common concern and (in general) strengthen the profession of volunteer administration through peer learning. "The horizontal bonds among people performing the same job or speaking the same language in different parts of the world will

strengthen" (Cairncross, page xii). These Internet connections will bring a global perspective to local volunteer work, allowing professionals and volunteers to share innovative programs and cutting edge approaches to social problems.

Volunteer organizations that have limited funds for computer technology will find themselves lagging behind as technology continues to shape our work environment. It is important also to remember that access to and knowledge of computers may be limited among some client groups. As the new generation of "tech-teens" enters the workplace, they will demand more and more opportunities for virtual volunteering. Limited funding for social services will continue to be a problem for many organizations. In addition, we are only just beginning to address the issues of risk management associated with many virtual volunteering opportunities. Another consideration is the increasingly impersonal nature of Internet connections and volunteer opportunities. Although distance learning and virtual volunteering may be attractive options for some, they seem to contradict documented research that suggests that volunteers prefer "working directly with others" (Safrit, King and Burcsu, 1994, page 11). This exciting new dimension to volunteerism will require careful monitoring and research in the months ahead to assess volunteer satisfaction as well as client impact. Organizations should continue to offer opportunities that emphasize the human touch, while at the same time exploring the new options of virtual volunteering through technology.

## A NEW CHALLENGE FOR ADMINISTRATORS OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

No one can predict the future accurately. However, the justification for futuring as a managerial tool is that it enables organizations to: (a) accurately assess and monitor current data on organizational effectiveness and productivity; (b) reflect upon such information within the larger and ever-changing

contexts of the organization's surrounding culture and society; and (c) reposition and modify the organization's policies, programs and procedures so as to achieve the best "fit" with these changing contexts. Thus, we suggest a critical new professional responsibility and competency for the managers and administrators of volunteer programs: strategic thinking. According to de Kluyver (2000), strategic thinking focuses on:

taking different approaches to delivering customer value... to create value — for shareholders and other stakeholders — by satisfying the needs and wants of customers (pages 4 - 5).

Vineyard alluded to this competency when, as a volunteer administrator herself, she stated:

*As the rapid pace of change escalates in the wider world, we find ourselves having to adapt to the impact of those changes on our daily work and the roles we play in leading volunteer energies* (page 179).

Although this competency is anchored firmly in the fundamental management competencies of leading, planning, decision making and controlling (Kreitner, 1995), we believe that it also requires higher levels of critical analysis and thinking. Successful volunteer administrators of the future must be able both to analyze the environments of their programs and synthesize this analysis into new ways of managing and leading. According to Safrit and Merrill (2000), it will require the personal capacity to embrace and feel comfortable dealing with rapid and (most often) unpredictable change.

> *We must develop the personal capacity to approach change and the ambiguity that will always result from it as merely new ways of doing business within contemporary volunteer organizations... Our roles and responsibilities will then expand to become leaders of learning organizations where change is seen as an opportunity to institutionalize learning... (page 36)*

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ENDNOTE

[1] This article was originally published in *Voluntary Action, Volume 3, Number 1*, Winter 2000. It is reprinted here with permission of the Institute for Volunteering Research. Voluntary Action, The Journal of the Institute for Volunteering Research, is published three times a year. For subscription information please contact: Institute for Volunteering research, Regent's Wharf, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, Instvolres@aol.com.