ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

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AVA
ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION

The mission of the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA), an international membership organization, is to promote professionalism and strengthen leadership in volunteerism. Members include volunteer program administrators in a wide variety of settings: agency executives, association officers, educators, researchers, consultants, students—anyone who shares a commitment to the effective utilization of volunteers.

Membership in AVA is open to salaried and non-salaried persons in all types of public, non-profit, and for-profit settings who choose to join with AVA to promote and support effective leadership in volunteerism.

AVA is an association run by its members. Active committees include: Public Information, Professional Development, Resource Development, Pluralism, Marketing, and Public Issues. Members also plan the annual International Conference on Volunteer Administration, a major event held each year in a different city in the United States or Canada. This conference provides participants the opportunity to share common concerns and to focus on issues of importance to volunteerism.

Two major services that AVA provides, both for its members and for the field at large, are the Certification Program and the Educational Endorsement Program. Through the certification process, that recognizes leaders of volunteer programs who demonstrate professional performance standards, AVA furthers respect for and appreciation of the profession of volunteer administration. Similarly, AVA educational endorsement is given to those workshops, courses, conferences, and training events that provide opportunities for professional growth in volunteerism.

Finally, AVA produces publications including informational newsletters and booklets and THE JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION.

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Editor's Note

This issue opens with a reflective piece. The ideas it explores were developed in a retreat by members of a group of volunteer administrators who wondered if they had lost sight of the "mountain top." Their discussions led them to believe they should open their eyes wider, improve their peripheral vision, and find new paths and new challenges. I hope you will take up the author's invitation to share new "climbing tools" you have discovered that can help scale the mountain.

The four articles that follow this opening piece were contributed by colleagues in Canada. Their thoughts on experiential learning, community development, strategic visioning, and workplace volunteer councils speak to the creativity and innovation going on around the world. The authors give shape and form to new roles for volunteer administrators and describe strategies that have practical application for volunteer program management everywhere.

THE JOURNAL encourages a mix of the practical and theoretical. We report on research projects and model programs. We like to publish articles that serve as resources. We welcome provocative ideas and opinions. The letter to the editor published in this issue shows that you have strong beliefs. Our goal is to present a mix of articles that make THE JOURNAL the voice of the profession.

Marjorie M. (Mitzi) Bhavnani
Editor-in-Chief
Summer 1997
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ABSTRACT

Recently a group of volunteer administrators and experts in the field gathered with Ivan Scheier, the internationally-known author, trainer, and mentor who has contributed to the development of our profession for decades. The event was a Challenge Think Tank for a thoughtful "Reconsideration of Volunteerism." For two days the group was challenged to think beyond the micro and macro levels of our work and wrestle with some philosophical issues and assumptions. What follows is thinking that provoked significant "ah-ha's" for many members of the group, altering some of our perceptions of volunteerism today and our roles as leaders and managers.

Keeping Our Eyes on the Mountain Top

Katherine Noyes Campbell

The discussion began with a story from a member of the group who shared an experience she had while working in Mongolia one summer:

> *The countryside was uninhabited, a sea of green grass about knee high. In the background, between us and our final destination, were majestic mountains jutting high into the sky. The driver seemed to know which of the many paths to take—not "roads" really, just small paths through the fields. Sometimes there were twenty or thirty of them in a tangle like a pile of pretzels. Always the driver seemed confident. Finally I asked, in a hesitant voice so as not to challenge or question his expertise, "How do you know what path to take?" He laughed and replied, "I just keep my eyes on the mountains, and I know I'll get there."*

What is *our* "mountain," our unmoving landmark, reference point, and spiritual guide? Perhaps, for us as volunteer administrators, the mountain consists of the values that we hold to be true, that capture the essence of our commitment to volunteerism. Consider the following values that are at the core of everything we do:

- *Everyone has the capacity to contribute, to give.* Our society often designates certain groups as primarily receivers of service rather than providers of service. But volunteering offers a way for every individual to become a resource to someone else. Youngsters, oldsters, those with disabilities, those with limited economic resources—all are capable of giving something that enhances their community. From this perspective human resources are theoretically infinite.
- *Citizen participation is critical to a democratic society.* It challenges the status quo, experiments with new ideas, holds political leaders accountable. Without it, we become stagnant, complacent, and divested of our ability to influence our future.
- *There is value in unpaid work.* In the paid world some jobs are regarded as worth more than others as reflected in varying salary levels. However, we believe that money is not the only measure of the value of work. In the world of volunteerism there are those who are willing and able to perform very important tasks with little or no financial compensation. Firefighting, teaching someone to read, crisis intervention—all are regarded

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as extremely valuable types of activity even when they are done by unsalaried individuals. The paycheck or lack thereof is irrelevant.

- *There are some things that volunteers can do better than paid workers.* We often say there is no task being done by a salaried worker that a volunteer can't do (given the appropriate credentials, training, authority, etc.) But what about the reverse statement: Is there any task that volunteers do that staff can't do? Are there some instances where volunteers actually are more effective? Mentally ill individuals and people in prisons and jails often can connect better with someone they see as a peer, not a "professional." Fund raising and mentoring come to mind as two additional examples where actually it may be preferable they be done by nonsalaried individuals.
- *Volunteerism is universal.* By that we mean two things: First, there is no limit to *who* can volunteer; and second, there is no limit to *how* volunteering can be applied.
- *Volunteerism has a duality of impact.* When we volunteer, we benefit ourselves and others at the same time. We often hear this reflected by volunteer statements such as, "I get back so much more than I give." There is also value in building capacity for change within the community. As volunteers learn and apply skills, the community becomes more valued which, in turn, leads to more investment of time and energy to it by others. This transformational potential is significant and offers a very powerful argument for the value of volunteerism to our society.

These statements represent our beliefs—the philosophical base for why we do what we do, and why we strive so hard to convey the value and power of volunteerism. If this is our "mountain top" in the distance, the goal we seek to attain, where does our profession fit in?

Imagine for a moment that there are no volunteer coordinators/managers/administrators on this planet. Volunteerism would most likely still happen starting with single acts of leadership. Individuals would still take voluntary actions to solve problems and eventually begin to mobilize their neighbors to get involved as well. Over time, in order for these groups to sustain their volunteer activities and have a significant impact, new leaders would emerge. Leadership is what ultimately makes volunteerism happen and continue happening. We have seen this repeatedly throughout history. But leadership is not embodied primarily in a position or title, and the same people don't have to be leaders all the time. Leadership is action. It is demonstrated through skills and attitudes in a particular time and place—the role model who sets the pace, the charisma that inspires, the organizer who offers a process for getting things done.

If we truly wish to help our fellow citizens experience the mountain—defined as the power and value of volunteerism—perhaps we need to become less fixed on our titles as "managers" and "administrators" and increase our skills as coaches and guides. Instead of standing on top of the mountain and directing newcomers to the field who are trying to make the climb, perhaps we should position ourselves in the valley and all along the trails, cultivating leadership skills in others so they have the vision and strength for their journey to the summit. We can help people believe they have the ability to "fix" what needs fixing in their communities. We can help people let go of "myth-conceptions"—the mythical stereotypes about what volunteers can and can't do that limit action. We can be conservators of the unique values listed above, articulating them so that our organizations and institutions keep them in sight.

By assuming a greater "coaching" role, we empower many citizens to become leaders who, in turn, strengthen the fabric of volunteerism wherever they go rather than making them dependent on our position as "volunteer administrator." The intrinsic elements of service to others do not change no matter what words we use (volunteering, community service, etc.), no matter what we call ourselves (manager, coordinator, director, administrator, etc.), no matter how we are compensated, and no matter who we are. Embracing this philosophy means letting go of the notion that there is only one way to operate, one way to climb the mountain, one path to follow. This is a somewhat scary thought since we have invested almost half a century defining one path known as "volunteer management." But the reality of today's world is that flexibility, creativity, and diversity are essential for survival. The values of volunteerism (the mountain) don't change, but the paths and climbing tools can (and must). Isn't it time we added some new tools to our backpack, came down into the valley, and looked around for hikers in distress who need some guidance? There are many trails worth exploring, and we need not fear we will get lost as long as we keep our eyes on the mountain top.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

If you have discovered new "climbing tools" that are helping others reach the mountain, please share them with *The Journal of Volunteer Administration.*

ABSTRACT

Workplace volunteer councils (WVC) are associations of representatives from the public, private, and non-profit sectors working together to enhance grassroots volunteerism. By forming meaningful partnerships within the community, council members can recruit large numbers of volunteers as well as gather other resources from the workplace and focus them on key community issues. Volunteer administrators can play an integral role in supporting partnerships formulated through a WVC by providing volunteer opportunities and the volunteer management expertise necessary to ensure that the experience is positive for the volunteers and the workplace supporting them.

Bridging the Sectors: Developing an Effective Workplace Volunteer Council

Keith Seel

INTRODUCTION

A workplace volunteer council (WVC) is a collaborative group of representatives from diverse organizations who mobilize volunteers from the workplace for the benefit of the community, the employer, and the employees themselves.

As an organization, a WVC typifies the resurgence of a community acting on its own behalf for its own purposes as championed by advocates such as John McKnight. The WVC is an example of what McKnight would call an "association" that he defines as "a group of citizens working together ... an amplifier of gifts, talents, and skills" (Kretzman and McKnight, 1993).

At its heart, a WVC inspires the imagination of individuals and organizations who have already reached the conclusion that working together on major issues is more effective than trying to find solutions on their own. This kind of organization offers a number of strengths: the ability to pool resources and broaden perspectives on community issues, the opportunity to build upon the work and activities of other members, and a strong voice with which to advocate for community involvement by other businesses, non-profits, or governmental agencies.

Some form of a WVC exists in many major cities in North America. In Canada, Volunteer Centres have been the primary catalyst for bringing together interested representatives from major businesses in the community, large non-profit and charitable organizations such as universities or social service agencies, and government. In the United States, corporations have been the leaders in forming WVCs; the Points of Light Foundation has supported these efforts by creating a network of councils and a coordinating committee of WVC chairpersons.

THE WORKPLACE VOLUNTEER COUNCIL AS AN ORGANIZATION

The WVC is the most recent step in the evolution of an idea originating in the United States. American corporations took the lead in forming what has been known as either a corporate volunteer council (CVC) or business volunteer council (BVC). The choice of title often depended on how the members of the council defined themselves—whether as "corporations" or "businesses." Most consider these titles to be synonymous.

Corporate volunteer councils were

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formed through the inspired vision of corporate leaders interested in moving beyond the "begging hand" imagery that symbolized traditional relationships between business and the charitable sector. While non-profit organizations in communities with a CVC often were supporters of its activities, they were rarely members of it. With the creation in the United States of the Points of Light Foundation in 1990, a solid focal point for the coordinated development of corporate volunteerism and community service was established. In drafting *Principles of Excellence in Community Service* (Points of Light Foundation, 1993), the foundation established an action strategy for the business community and its employees to engage in "meaningful community service." The core principles, known as A Plan To A.C.T., are:

- *Acknowledge* that the corporation's community service involvement and its employee volunteer efforts contribute to the achievement of its business goals.
- *Commit* to establish, support, and promote an employee volunteer program that encourages the involvement of every employee and treat it like any other core business function.
- *Target* community service efforts at serious social problems in the community.

Associated with these core principles are numerous action statements that define the kinds of initiatives that will guide a business towards tangible results.

This action strategy forms what appears to be the first comprehensive plan to inspire and direct businesses to participate in community service in ways beyond simple financial donations. The Points of Light Foundation widely promoted the idea that community service was directly related to business goals. Up to this point, the usual business understanding of philanthropy was one-dimensional: to be a "responsible corporate citizen" a company should give back a percentage of corporate profits to the community. In 1995, when the Points of Light Foundation formally changed the name of one of its guiding committees to "Workplace Volunteer Council," the evolution of the CVC concept took a distinct step forward.

Over the years of experimenting with various CVC structures and activities, the primary learning has been that corporate volunteer councils can expand to include members from workplaces beyond private business, such as government, military, and health care. Many different workplaces can effectively and productively come together in a council format to begin to:

- discuss ideas about improving the community and mobilize employees and the workplace;
- problem-solve community issues and prioritize needs;
- determine common and individual workplace priorities for community involvement;
- learn from each other and share experience and resources;
- mobilize a total resource portfolio, including money, time, expertise, services, products, gifts-in-kind, and many other valuable and needed tangibles and intangibles such as political influence;
- address priority community needs in a concerted manner;
- be the catalyst for cross-sector partnerships; and
- aspire to something different than traditional donor-receiver relationships.

Early efforts demonstrated that the model being developed in the United States could not be duplicated in Canada. At least three fundamental differences between Canada and the United States had to be accounted for:

- While relatively young and quite small in the United States, Volunteer Centres are among the more established charitable agencies in many Canadian cities. For example, the Volunteer Centre of Calgary is more than 40 years old and has an annual operating budget of more than $800,000 (Canadian).

- Many of the issues being addressed by American corporations through their community WVCs were already established social programs in Canada. Different approaches to solving community needs had to be developed in Canada.
- The call from two American presidents (Ronald Reagan and George Bush) for increased business and citizen involvement in solving social problems was taken up by many prominent business leaders in America. In Canada, no such call was ever made and senior business leaders have not materialized to champion the cause.

Ideally a workplace volunteer council is an enclave, a safe forum where discussion and learning can occur among members. If a WVC cannot create a safe environment for frank discussion, it is very difficult to attract and retain businesses that want to: explore alternative kinds of resource-giving without being asked for donations; non-profit organizations that want to learn how to work effectively with corporations without being asked to sell their solid reputation for community service to promote a product; or employees who want to meet real community and corporate needs in their own way without feeling pressured by their employer or special interest groups.

MEMBERSHIP AND FUNDING

An effective council should state what it intends to achieve in the community and have a plan of action for achieving its goals. A strong statement of purpose is a powerful tool for a WVC, especially to recruit new members. As an example, the Calgary Workplace Volunteer Council (CWVC) has a charter. The 10 founding members of the CWVC devoted nearly a year to developing the charter. It serves both as a reference document and a recruitment tool. The charter provides basic information on the functions of the CWVC, its structure, the relationship between the CWVC and the Volunteer Centre of Calgary, and the services and resources to be provided by the CWVC to its members (Seel, 1995a).

In the case of Calgary's workplace volunteer council, the development of the charter helped the founding members come to a consensus about the values and vision that have since guided their work on the council. Over the year that it took to create their charter, members explored individual perspectives on corporate philanthropy, volunteerism and community development, as well as their own needs and expectations.

The business sector typically has the most representation on a WVC with charities and various government agencies rounding out the membership. Strong business involvement is key to the success of a WVC since the private sector usually is the largest employer in a community and has the capacity to grant flex-time during the day for employees to volunteer as part of community investment or corporate donations programs. In practice, however, representation from the three sectors varies depending on who are the largest employers in the community.

Recruiting and retaining representatives on the WVC is a key activity for the council which requires a commitment of time and resources by existing members. While new members actively may be recruited by existing council members, self-referral is not uncommon.

The funding of councils varies widely. In Canada and the United States it is not uncommon for members of a WVC to pay a membership fee to cover operational and service costs. Depending upon the WVC, various levels of membership may exist from which prospective members can choose depending upon their needs and ability to commit to the council. Membership rates vary from under $100 (Canadian) to several thousand dollars. A few charge thousands of dollars to cover staff time, program development, and other expenses. In most cases, member donations or a community Volunteer Centre pay for services such as photocopying and/or mailing costs. However, membership fees may or may not constitute a significant funding resource for the activities of the WVC. At the Calgary Workplace Volunteer Council, a foundation provided the start-up grant to cover anticipated expenses.

CONSTITUENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The partnership projects undertaken by a workplace volunteer council with which a volunteer administrator can become involved often are complex. It is important to understand the project from the perspective of the non-profit organization that will utilize volunteer talent, the employees who will be volunteering, and the businesses where the volunteers work. Central to planning is understanding who the constituents and stakeholders are and the different needs and expectations they have.

Stakeholders are external to the WVC while those who make up the council itself are its *constituents*. Another difference is that constituents of a WVC tend to be individuals representing an organization. Stakeholders may be individuals, but more commonly are organizations or groups of organizations such as non-profit agencies working with a particular high-needs group, educational institutions, or business affiliations such as economic development authorities or the local Chamber of Commerce. In each community the constituents and stakeholders will vary according to its predominant kinds of businesses and community services and the expressed interests of employees. Table I gives examples of the constituents and stakeholders of a typical WVC.

Keeping in mind the different roles and expectations that stakeholders and constituents have relative to the WVC, it is especially important during the formation of a council to recognize its goals and expected outcomes.

It should also be mentioned that as soon as a WVC member undertakes a partnership project in the community, theretofore unknown stakeholders likely will make themselves known. Stakeholders who were not partners in the project will want to know how to become a partner or may want to know why they were not selected by the WVC to be a partner. There are many sensitivities within the stakeholder group that vary with each community and may emerge as the work of the WVC and its constituents begins.

The constituents of a WVC have their own interests and concerns usually represented to a greater or lesser degree in the partnership projects members undertake with the community. Table II outlines the basic constituent interests and concerns associated with a corporate/employee volunteer program.

IMPACTS OF A WVC

A WVC can have a tremendous impact on encouraging and enabling volunteers from the workplace. As a result, a number of expectations exist about the role and impact of a WVC. These expectations, stated or unstated, have an effect on the volunteer activities being undertaken and therefore require the attention of volunteer administrators.

To begin with, stakeholders and constituents each have a perspective on what impact a council should have in the community and in the workplace. The results will vary depending upon how the WVC focuses its activities. Formative activities need to include open discussions between potential constituents as well as with the community or key non-profit agencies. Several crucial development questions need to be addressed in order to maximize the impact of the WVC. These questions have a thematic and practical aspect as outlined in Table III.

Stakeholders and constituents also have individual expectations about their involvement in volunteer programming.

TABLE 1.

Examples of Constituents and Stakeholders in a Typical WVC

Constituents	Stakeholders
• Individual business representatives • Individual non-profit representatives • Individual government representatives • Individual school board representatives • Individual representatives from affiliated groups such as the conference board, institutes researching philanthropy, etc. • Individual consultants, academics, and other professionals in the field of philanthropy and volunteerism • Individual representatives of the host organization	• The non-profit sector in the community • Subsets of the non-profit sector by issue area such as, poverty, counseling, health, education, seniors, youth, recreation, etc. • Board of education • Economic development authorities • Chamber of commerce or board of trade • Federal, provincial, state, municipal government • Business by industry type, such as oil and gas, transportation, service, manufacturing, etc. • Employees/retirees

TABLE II.

Common WVC Constituent Groups, Their Interests and Concerns

Constituents	Constituent Interests/Concerns
Company • Shareholders • CEO/COO • Senior managers • Department managers • Branch managers • Plant managers • Allied companies	• Can the employee find time to do his or her job and volunteer? • Will the employee's volunteer work cost the company anything? • Will the company get any benefit from the employee's involvement, such as publicity, skill enhancement, and community relations? • Should the company support the employee through grants or flex-time? • Will the community be healthier or safer as a result? • Will the company see a positive bottom-line return?
Employee • Social clubs • Employee groups • Unions • Department staff • Branch staff • Plant staff	• Am I doing something meaningful for my community? • Am I learning new skills that will help me in my work? • Am I making new connections and expanding my network? • Am I making a difference? • Am I improving the skills that I have? • Can I have fun? • Can I do this with my family? • Can I volunteer with some of my friends as a group?
Community • Non-profit agencies • Social service agencies • Community associations • Neighborhood groups • Politicians • Government Agencies • Funders • Citizens • Religious groups • Educational institutions • Advocacy groups	• Do we have the resources in place to meet the needs of our volunteers, clients, and staff? • Are we building strategic alliances between our agency, the business community, and other agencies in the community? • Do we have the skills necessary in our human resource base to provide an effective and efficient service to those who need it? • Will a partnership with a company mean that we have to change our mission statement and values?

Adapted from Seel, 1995b

These expectations vary depending upon whether it was the company that initiated the program or the employees who took the initiative. Table IV outlines the expectations associated with a corporate volunteer program initiated by corporate management and an employee volunteer program initiated by its employees.

By considering and addressing the range of interests and expectations of stakeholders and constituents, a WVC can initiate programs, services, and activities that will create an impact in the community. A planning process that solicits information from constituents and stakeholders about their expectations is key to generating impacts as well as developing a sense of cohesion around the council. Key points about impacts are that:

- They will vary depending on role, vision, available resources, community, stakeholders, and constituents;
- They need to be measurable, including quantitative results and statistics, qualitative results and cases or examples,

TABLE III.

Key Business Planning Considerations for a WVC

Key Questions	Planning Considerations
1. Why do we want to form a WVC?	• Before going through the effort of creating a WVC, is there strong support and sufficient resources to sustain it for a minimum of three years?
2. What is the purpose of the WVC?	• What achievements do constituents and stakeholders envision? • Is the primary purpose to learn how to mobilize employee volunteers, collaborate on special projects, develop partnerships, strategically address key community issues, and/or provide the basis for a tactical marketing initiative for a business?
3. What products or services will be offered to achieve that purpose?	• Will we create key tools or models for employee volunteer involvement? • Will we focus on providing consulting expertise to the members? • Who will develop or provide these tools or services? Do they have credibility?
4. Who are the customers of the WVC?	• How will we address potential customers: constituents, non-members, businesses, community agencies, other stakeholders?
5. How will the products and services be funded or paid for?	• Will members pay sufficiently to cover the costs of product and service development or delivery? • If the WVC's operational costs are subsidized by members or by an external funder, will this create an impression that the WVC's services should be free or available at minimal cost?
6. What is our three-year plan for resource and service or product development?	• What do constituents and stakeholders want us to produce or provide as tools? • What evaluation tools are in place to collect information on what has been done and what needs to be done?
7. What market research needs to occur prior to and following the launch of the WVC?	• Who are the most likely members and why? • What community issues most fit the interests, capabilities, and needs of the members? • What marketing message will attract new members and encourage existing members to stay?
8. How will the council be marketed?	• What marketing and communications tools are needed? • What are the key messages that need to be communicated to recruit, to sell, to promote?

TABLE IV.

Sample Stakeholder/Constituent Expectations Associated With Corporate and/or Employee Volunteer Programs

	Sample Expectations Associated with a Corporate Volunteer Program	Sample Expectations Associated with an Employee Volunteer Program
COMPANY	• The employees' allegiance to the company will supersede allegiance to the volunteer activity. • Resources will be allocated to short-term events only and not to long-term program development. • Evaluation will assess changes in public awareness of the company as a result of the sponsorship. • Events and programs will fit within the company's donations polices. • The community will acknowledge and recognize corporate participation in the event. • The public image of the company will be improved and new customers reached. • Corporate liability for events will have been considered and approved. • A cost/benefit analysis will be conducted.	• Cost to the company resulting from employee involvement, such as the time away from work, will not be excessive. • Cost of any required supports will be funded. • Program goals will align with business goals and values. • The program will be open to all employees who want to participate.
EMPLOYEES	• Employees will be consulted about the kinds of programs and events the company supports. • Release time from work will be given by the company for employees to volunteer at the sponsored events and programs. • Sponsorship will meet a business objective and a community need. • A good time will be had by all. • Employees will be recognized by the company for their participation. • The program and the company will receive positive coverage by local media. • Job security will be enhanced by participating.	• Employees will guide the development of the program through an advisory group. • Community agencies will be willing to help as partners. • A need in the community will be met. • New skills will be developed. • A good time will be had by all. • People will feel better at work. • Employees will be recognized for their volunteer work. • Upcoming events and program updates will be included in the company's newsletter. • The program will be evaluated to improve and enhance its impact on employees, the community, and the workplace.
COMMUNITY	• The program will be sponsored and/or utilize employee volunteers. • The program will be well received by the target group. • A client group will receive better service. • The company and its employees will be appropriately recognized. • An evaluation will be conducted showing cost/benefit and outcome.	• The program will be sponsored and/or utilize employee volunteers. • The program will be well received by the target group. • A client group will receive better service. • The company and its employees will be appropriately recognized. • An evaluation will be conducted showing cost/benefit and outcome.

Adapted from Seel, 1995b

formative evaluations or benchmarks, summative evaluations or milestones, and critical evaluations assessing equality of partnerships and changes in power;

- The expectations of constituents and/or stakeholders need to be balanced against what is achievable given the resources of the council and its membership.

Additionally, although assumptions about the scope and scale of the impacts should be stated ahead of time, there should be an acknowledgment that the impact that happens may not be what was planned for.

It must be understood also that very little accepted research exists to prove such intangible workplace impacts (often called "benefits") such as creating "healthier communities," improving relations with community/government, improving employee morale, attracting better employees, or improving employee retention.

PRIMARY TECHNIQUES USED TO CREATE IMPACT

Creating a meaningful and valued impact in the community is a goal and a challenge a WVC and its members must address. Foremost in achieving this goal is communication. A WVC depends upon constant and ongoing constituent and stakeholder feedback to evaluate past activities and partnerships and determine the best strategies to implement given existing and emergent community needs. It must ensure that the outcomes are widespread and positive for everyone involved, and establish a foundation for future activities.

There are many approaches that a WVC can take to create real impact in the community, on the volunteers from the workplace, and on the company or workplace itself. The Calgary Workplace Volunteer Council (CWVC), for example, has developed a range of strategies and services that enhance each member's ability to encourage and enable volunteer activities. These strategies and services include (Seel, 1995a):

- **Agency Awareness and/or Recruitment Fairs.** A promotional tool used to recruit and/or recognize employee volunteers.
- **Professional Development Series.** A planned series of workshops or lectures designed to meet specific constituent needs such as flex-time policies, project selection criteria, partnership strategies, etc.
- **Consulting.** One-to-one consultations with members including customized or general research into relevant issues, trends, topics, etc., to meet constituent needs; support to develop an employee or corporate volunteer program; recruitment and referral services; partner matching and evaluation; and research and support in writing policy for matching grants, employee or corporate volunteer programs, partnerships, etc.
- **Promotion of Member Activities to Media.** Promoting the impact and activities of the CWVC and its members through media contacts.
- **Library.** Collecting examples of corporate programs, statistics, issues papers, etc., from across North America.
- **Weekly Volunteer Opportunities.** This publication includes all new volunteer opportunities in Calgary for the week. The format is suitable for posting on employee bulletin boards in the workplace.
- **Institutes and Symposia.** Open sessions designed to bring stakeholders and constituents together. These activities build alliances and market and raise awareness in the community about the CWVC.
- **Facilitate Gifts-In-Kind.** The coordination of large gift-in-kind donations to the non-profit sector in the community.

Strategies to promote WVCs' activities and the activities of its members and enhance the capacity of volunteer administrators can include hiring a part-time staff consultant to work with members and the community and volunteer management courses. A 3 1/2 day entry-level course in volunteer management was developed by the Volunteer Centre of Winnipeg and brought to Calgary by the CWVC. The course trains more than 70 new and experienced volunteer administrators per year in the fundamentals of volunteer management. Volunteer administrators in non-profit agencies have become important participants in nearly every successful partnership.

The CWVC also identified an issue that would be a focus area: youth at risk. Working with non-profit agencies addressing this issue, the CWVC established a number of partnerships for itself and its members.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Being able to provide high quality services and measurable impact is a challenge especially since many councils are under-resourced. Quality is a subjective measure requiring constant definition by the stakeholders and constituents of the council. For example, consider the different quality needs of a manufacturing company, a major foundation, a hospital, and a counseling agency. Given that a WVC provides products, such as manuals or written materials, and services, such as consulting in order to promote the growth of sound volunteer programs in workplaces, quality assurance becomes a significant issue. Above and beyond being experts in volunteer management, volunteer administrators in community non-profit organizations must understand the basics of a quality assurance program. This will make them tremendous resources to a partnership project between the organization and the corporate workplace.

Each constituent or stakeholder of a WVC has a different perspective on quality depending upon what it is receiving or expecting from the council. Successful WVCs have shown how attention to service and quality requirements support long-term success. An effective approach for WVC managers and staff to follow is to produce goods and services in the style with which their membership are familiar. If member corporations, for example, use a particular style in producing brochures, the WVC can begin its quality initiative by working to produce materials and services that have a similar look and feel.

A community partnership must be able to demonstrate an impact on the WVC member's quality program. For example, Flint Canada, Inc., an oil field services company, wanted demonstrable gains in two areas of their quality initiative through community volunteer-based partnerships: team work and communications. The CWVC and the author were able to support partnerships with local non-profit agencies and their volunteer administrators that produced measurable gains in each area.

Being able to predict a member's quality needs comes with experience. The list below (adapted from Astbury, 1994) outlines some basic elements of a quality program.

- Ongoing communication with members about quality, services, and products.
- A clear WVC mission and explicit values.
- Long-term planning as well as short-term planning.
- Support of senior management.
- Strategies to address quality.
- Objectives that address quality.
- Knowing who the constituents and stakeholders are.
- Mechanisms in place to find out what constituents and stakeholders want.
- Clarity about roles and responsibilities for members and support staff.
- Clear descriptions of how WVC activities are conducted.
- Measurable standards for key services and products.
- Clear agreements with members about the service they are to receive.
- In place monitoring processes.
- Complaints procedure used positively.
- Corrective action taken if standards slip.

- Staff trained, supported, and motivated to meet their responsibilities.
- Regular reviews.

CONCLUSION

Workplace volunteer councils exist in various forms across North America. Through them increasing numbers of partnerships are forming to mobilize volunteers from the workplace. By understanding how a WVC operates and recognizing the challenges it faces, volunteer administrators can plan to proactively support or even initiate a council in their own communities. By sharing crucial volunteer management information with constituents of the WVC, professionals in the field of volunteer administration can help ensure that the evolving workplace volunteer programs meet the highest standards of practice. By engaging their local WVC directly, volunteer administrators can begin a dialogue between their non-profit agencies and WVC members that can result in a partnership that mobilizes significant numbers of employee volunteers as well as other resources for their agencies.

The reality is that more and more people are spending increasing amounts of time at work. The WVC is an innovative approach to balancing work with volunteerism. A WVC does this by helping workplaces develop strategies such as flex-time that allow employees to take time off during the day to volunteer providing they make up the time at a later date. The WVC concept could evolve into one of the most important factors to ensure that volunteer administrators have the volunteers they need to provide core services to their clients and communities.

An active WVC will create the expectation in its members that volunteer administrators understand a great deal about the corporate workplace, its goals and processes. By working together, volunteer administrators, a WVC and its members, the community, and employees from a variety of workplaces can generate new and innovative partnerships based on volunteerism that make real advances on issues facing communities throughout North America.

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ABSTRACT

This article defines and explains some key concepts associated with experiential learning and briefly describes several practical exercises. It is hoped that the perspective gained here will encourage volunteer administrators to investigate and use experiential learning in their work and, more importantly, in their lives as well.

Play, Parachutes, and Experiential Learning

Stephen Hobbs

INTRODUCTION

John Dewey (1938), one of the most noted contributors to the field of experiential learning, wrote, "all genuine education comes from experience." I would go so far as to say that volunteer experience is genuine education. When people are involved directly in volunteer activities, they have the opportunity to learn about themselves and the people with whom they are volunteering. They can acquire practical skills and gain a perspective on the intangible values associated with the activity.

Volunteer administrators have an important role to play in constructing experiences that enhance and encourage involvement in the tasks volunteers are assigned. Drawing from the theory and practices of experiential learning, they can develop and maintain meaningful volunteer activities that assist the organization as a whole.

Experiential learning is pluralistic. As a process it is discussed everywhere, yet it is from nowhere. It is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary as evident from this partial list of related fields: action science, action technologies, moral and ethical development, progressive education, holistic education, folk education, adventure programs, character training, on-the-job training, wilderness therapy, adventure based counseling, outdoor pursuits, experience-based training and development, vocational education, career education, clinical training, alternate education, service learning. This list provides terms for an ongoing literature search of the field. It highlights the wide-ranging use of experiential learning. More importantly, it can identify where there may be other experiential practitioners from whom volunteer administrators can learn.

Because experiential learning is from everywhere, it is eclectic. People hold different views of what it is, who should use it, how it can be used, and why. Effort is required to find the pearls of wisdom in all that is said about experiential learning.

A great deal is demanded of the experiential learning practitioner because there is so much to take into consideration. Not only must the practitioner ensure learning is taken from the experience, but also be fully aware of the safety of the learning method. In many ways, experiential activities take people out of their comfort zones. An experiential learning practitioner has to know how to deal with participants' discomfort.

The Association for Experiential Education (1994) defines experiential education as a "process" through which a learner gains knowledge, skill, and value from an experiential learning activity. In order to

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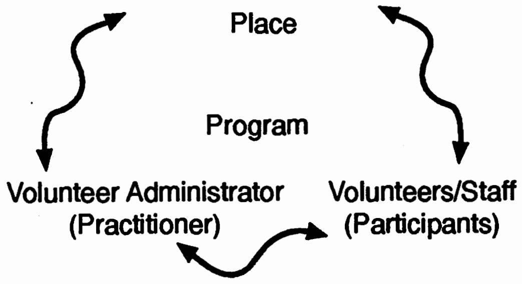
achieve these goals, I rely on the 4Ps Model and Kolb's Experiential Learn-ing Cycle. My 4Ps Model describes the relationship between the practitioner and the participants; the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle highlights four important questions the practitioner must ask the participants to help them make meaning of their experiences.

THE 4Ps MODEL

The 4Ps model (Hobbs, 1996b) highlights the structure and relationships associated with experiential learning. The structure has four main components about which a practitioner must be mindful. Not only must the practitioner understand what s/he brings to the experience, but also must understand the role of place, program, and participants.

4Ps Model



The *practitioner* must be conversant with the theory and practices of experiential learning. While some knowledge and skills can be learned through study, much of it should be acquired through apprenticeships and mentoring. Volunteer administrators who want to learn about experiential learning should work with a practitioner and/or take a workshop.

Place refers to the physical space in which the learning occurs. The volunteer administrator must be mindful of the impact of the physical characteristics of the space on the program and the participants: for example, location of the program (whether inside and/or outside), the time of year (particularly if outside), and whether it is possible to move tables and chairs inside a room.

Program refers to the experiential learning activities chosen to meet the learning needs of the participants. Depending on the learning objectives of the program, the place selected for the learning to occur, and the characteristics of the group, the practitioner should select activities that meet the group's needs while maintaining the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the individuals. In a volunteer setting, the activity can serve as an ice-breaker before a volunteer and staff training event or to help solve a problem a group of volunteers has encountered in working together as a team.

Participants are groups of volunteer administrators, staff persons, volunteers and/or a mixture of all three. These are the people who must make meaning from the activities. Jarvis (1987) suggests that "all learning has an experiential base ... [more importantly] life is about experience; wherever there is life there are potential learning experiences." The question becomes: Which experiences are meaningful? Which are meaningless? Discovering the answers to these questions is the responsibility of the participants working together with the practitioner.

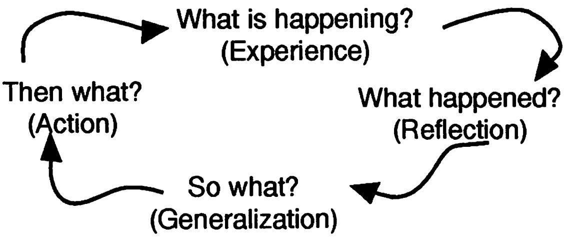
The patterns of interactions (shown by the lines with arrows) outline the relationships between the component parts. While they appear simple on paper, these relationships are complex and require attention by the experiential learning practitioner to ensure a successful program outcome. Paying attention to these relationships is the practitioner's contribution in support of the participants' learning. The wobbly lines highlight the fluidity of the model. Rarely in real life does a straight line best describe and explain the shortest or easiest route. Experience is not necessarily about straight lines and easy travels.

KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL

Kolb (1984) presents a model widely used to help participants make meaning from the experiential learning activity.

The model frames four questions a practitioner (volunteer administrator) can pose to help participants (volunteers and staff) gain insight into their learning before, during, and after their involvement in an experiential learning activity.

Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle



The "what is happening" question helps participants look at their current involvement in the experiential learning activity. Answers result in a list of facts that summarize what they are doing now. The "what happened" question provides time for reflection about what occurred. The "so what" question is used to generalize (create some rules/concepts) for possible use later. The "then what" question helps frame the action that will result from the generalization made.

METAPHORS

The metaphor of whitewater turbulence in a river has been used quite often to describe and explain an organization. Donnellon, Gray, and Bougon (1986) comment that metaphors create a "novel interpretation of experience by asking the listener to see one thing in terms of something else ... [and by that] create new ways of experiencing reality."

When using metaphors to gain insight into experience, the practitioner must be aware that some images may or may not be known by all participants. Both the practitioner and the participants must understand the image of the metaphor for it to work (Hobbs, 1996a). To use the whitewater metaphor it is useful if the experience of whitewater is familiar to all participants. Using metaphors supplied by the participants in the workshop can be helpful to support ongoing dialogue around learning from the shared experience. The metaphors are a reminder of the learning taken from the experience until such time as a new and/or improved metaphor is accepted by the participants that serves as a springboard for new learning. A balance beam and juggling can be used as metaphors to stimulate group activities until the group and/or team creates their own metaphors.

In a workshop the balance beam and group juggling activities illustrate problem-solving and build communication and trust. This not only reinforces the experiential learning and metaphor relationships, but also provides a needed break from sitting.

Balance Beam: A group of five people is given an eight-foot length of 2" x 4" lumber on which they must stand and follow the instructions of the practitioner. The rules require that the group stay in physical contact with the board. If any member of the group falls off the board, the activity starts again. An optional rule is if the heel and/or toe of a group member touches the ground, the activity starts again. A sample task is to ask the participants to arrange themselves on the board by birth month with January at one end and December at the other.

Group Juggling: A group is given the task of tossing a tennis ball around the group until a recognized tossing pattern is established. The person who first tossed the ball ends up with it after each member of the group has caught the ball once. Practicing the decided-upon pattern is important because when a second ball is added, the group members must follow the established pattern. Once the group has learned to toss two balls successfully, they are given a third ball and asked to repeat the pattern. With each success, another ball is added. The challenge is to juggle as many balls as there are members. The group can also be challenged to bounce the balls or reverse the pattern. A variation is to use a tennis ball container substituted for one of the tennis balls. This activity works best when the number of group members is five or seven.

Each experiential activity has a range of associated metaphors that serve as a way to gain meaning from the activity for real-world application. What the participants take as learning from the activity varies with the learning needs of the participants and the metaphor selected by the practitioner. The group juggling metaphor can be used to simulate the workshop participants' varied and sometime chaotic work environment and to present ideas related to the well-living workplace.

After trying the group juggling and balance beam exercises, the workshop participants are presented with more in-depth information. The process of briefing and debriefing, and the theory behind framing the experience are explained to them.

BRIEFING AND DEBRIEFING

In the briefing at the beginning of the program and preceding a specific activity, the practitioner provides a basic description and explanation of what is to occur without revealing the outcome. These briefing sessions provide sufficient detail to encourage the participants' involvement and cover safety concerns about their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. An essential element of the briefing session is to allow participants the opportunity to agree to the activity and express their level of commitment (Hobbs and Seel, 1997). To brief I:

- Collect Together—Help people relax, do introductions.
- Outline Program—Cover safety, review level of commitment to experiential learning.
- Request Agreement—Ask about willingness to become involved in the activity.
- Mindfulness—Draw attention to the importance of reflection while involved in experiential learning.

The debriefing aspect of experiential learning cannot be stressed enough. Without an appropriate debriefing, the learning may be lost and participants can become frustrated. Also, it ensures the activity itself does not become the message; in other words, the participants must understand that the activity and metaphor were the tools used to arrive at the learning. Stolovich (1990) provides one of several debriefing frameworks available to the practitioner. To debrief:

- Collect Together—Help people relax.
- List Facts—Recall events.
- Draw Inferences—Ask what happened.
- Establish Transfer—Draw parallels to real world.
- Make Generalizations—Create some rules/concepts to improve real world.
- Identify Applications—Figure out how to transfer to the real world.

PLAY AND PARACHUTES

Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf, and Edginton (1995) and Kraus (1990) regard play as a reward in and of itself, undertaken voluntarily, self-expressive, always pleasurable, and completely absorbing. While theorists and researchers view play among adults and/or children differently, the characteristics remain the same. For adults, play may be more purposeful in its outcomes while children see the purpose of play to be fun. What are its characteristics and relationship to "a simpler way" of organizing volunteer experiences? Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1996) describe this simpler way as "... a new way of being in the world. It requires being in the world without fear. Being in the world with play and creativity. Seeking after what's possible. Being willing to learn and to be surprised."

A playful way to view this simpler way of the world is by using a play parachute to illustrate the "connectedness" of the group while they play together. This activity is framed by Kolb's question, "What is happening?" To start, participants are given a short explanation on how the parachute can be used as a tool to solve several experiential learning tasks. Similar to the piece of wood used as the balance beam or the tennis balls juggled by the group, the parachute is the tool used by the group to solve tasks assigned by the practitioner.

Play Parachute: The participants pick up the parachute and spread themselves evenly around the outside edge. They perform simple warm-up tasks to begin to establish rapport, stretch the back and arms to reduce the possibility of injuries, and identify the range of movement required to play with the parachute. For example, participants are asked to stand as though their feet are planted in cement, bend at the waist as if to touch their toes, and then raise the parachute over their heads with arms extended. This task is repeated at least five times. Once comfortable, and still holding onto the edge of the parachute, the group must pass a soccer ball clockwise or counterclockwise around the edge of the parachute so the ball stays within two feet of the outside edge. To be successful the ball must complete one full rotation. The participants are expected to come up with several creative routes.

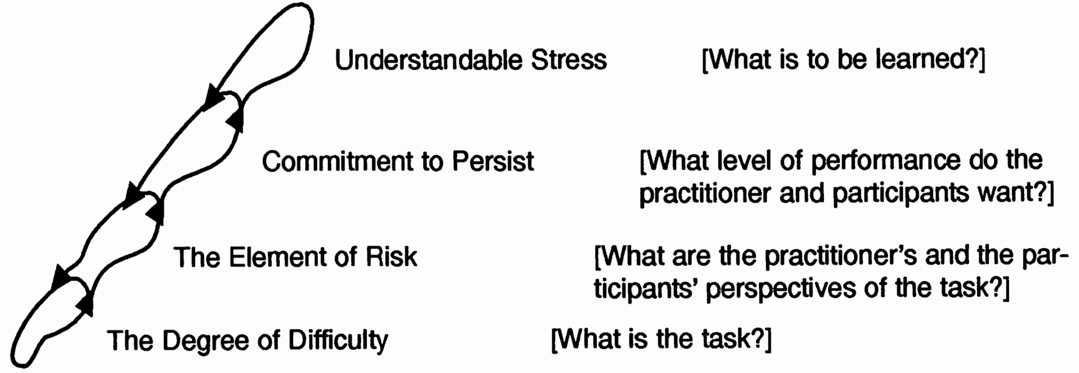
Solving an experiential learning task is successful in context to the instructions given. Solutions have underlying assumptions that lead to different levels of participation by members of the group. These assumptions and levels of involvement stimulate discussion in the debriefing. An important observation that never fails to amaze me is how adults begin to giggle, laugh, and play while finding solutions. Their participation in this play activity is truly wonderful to behold and speaks to "a simpler way" of organizing learning experience.

During the debriefing following this activity many questions are asked. One in particular is important: When is it appropriate for a volunteer administrator to use experiential learning? The group is asked to answer the question. Sample responses include: Experiential learning activities can be used as icebreakers and as a way to introduce the work of the organization to a new group of volunteers during their orientation or in training as a different way to learn material. During recognition events, the play aspect of experiential learning allows volunteers and staff to come together to have fun. It is another source of knowledge from which to obtain new ideas.

ACCUMULATION MODEL OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The Accumulation Model of Experiential Learning (Hobbs and Seel, 1997) serves as a reminder of what was presented and lists four important questions a practitioner needs to ask before and during an experiential learning event. There are two ways to work with the questions. The practitioner can move through the model

Accumulation Model of Experiential Learning


Understandable Stress
[What is to be learned?]
Commitment to Persist
[What level of performance do the practitioner and participants want?]
The Element of Risk
[What are the practitioner's and the participants' perspectives of the task?]
The Degree of Difficulty
[What is the task?]

in a briefing format from top to bottom or debrief by asking the questions from bottom to top. Accumulating learning frequently requires looping through the model to stimulate discussions that are multi-directional and non-linear.

ISSUES SURROUNDING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is seen as a way of learning and yet it is not given due credit by mainstream educators. In addition, the question of professionalism surfaces occasionally. Some people view experiential learning as a "grassroots" and "back to nature" understanding of real-world problems. They see the practitioner as skilled in the metaphor activities, but lacking the skill to transfer the learning that occurs to the "real world" of the participant. Coupled with this are safety issues of physical, emotional, and mental well-being especially in more active exercises such as high rope and low rope courses. A high rope course has participants balancing on wires, walking across planks, climbing in cargo nets suspended between large poles while harnessed to safety wires 20 to 30 feet in the air. A low rope course includes many of the same elements as the high rope course, usually two to three feet off the ground. In the workshop described in this article participants explore activities that are ground-based.

Directly linked to the question of professionalism is the question of research. What proof is there that experiential learning works? Within the academic realm ever more studies are being written that help describe, explain, and prescribe the learning to be gained from experience (see endnote on the *Journal of Experiential Education*). Intuitively, experiential practitioners know when experiential learning works because they see it in action. The trick is to convince participants to commit what they have learned to real-world situations.

CONCLUSION

Using experiential learning theory and practice, the volunteer administrator can develop new approaches to framing volunteer experiences that will encourage volunteers to remain involved with the organization. By maintaining a spirit of playfulness in what they do to ensure a simpler way of organizing volunteer experiences, they help staff, volunteers, and themselves create an environment that meets the needs of everyone involved. Experiential learning helps to achieve this goal.

ENDNOTE

For more information on experiential education, contact the Association for Experiential Education, 2885 Aurora Avenue #28, Boulder, CO, 80303-2252. Phone (303) 440-8844, fax (303) 440-9581. This association publishes the *Journal of Experiential Education*.

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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes the principles of asset-based community development and provides an assessment of it as a more relevant alternative than traditional methods of community development. The characteristics of asset-based community development and the requirements for new structures and roles in community capacity-building are explained, and critical barriers are identified. The article encourages volunteer administrators to apply what they already know to the larger context of asset-based community development.

Fundamental Principles of Asset-Based Community Development

Adrian Bohach

INTRODUCTION

Community development has become a hot topic. Citizens across a broad spectrum of society have begun to examine critically the *institutional* or *consumer* model of community development currently in place throughout North America. Within this model, community needs and services are determined and provided mostly by professionals, institutions, and government agencies. For many, the examination produces a failing grade. In addition, reduced government funding and reductions in government involvement in service delivery have led to a recent resurgence of interest in examining and defining community.

In the past, governments almost entirely set the agenda for the service initiatives in our Canadian communities. Not only did they set the agenda, often they funded, provided, and evaluated the services resulting from this agenda. Costly human services delivered by outside experts and bureaucracies tend to focus on clients with endless lists of problems and needs in a *system*. Although designed with the best of intentions, the system inevitably causes people with special needs to become consumers of services. Often the consumer is surrounded by staff who are paid to deal with problems and have control over the consumer's life. As in the case of developmentally disabled adults who are institutionalized, consumers often are labeled by their deficiency and become isolated from the mainstream of community. Unfortunately, as they become defined by their deficiency they can lose the ability to develop relationships in their lives that allow them to express their positive skills, talents, and capacities. We have seen this countless times in the way we treat our sick, the elderly, and persons with disabilities: large groups of people who may live in isolation, hidden behind the walls of government-funded institutions and services.

The institutional or consumer model of community development creates many problems for individuals, organizations, and communities. The individual has little incentive to become productive since a great deal of creativity is spent maintaining eligibility for benefits. For organizations involved in the system, creativity often is focused on maintaining the lifeline of the "fix" of grant money to fund the insatiable need to address perceived community problems and deficiencies.

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Society as a whole is held responsible for dealing with the "victims" of the problems and deficiencies. Typically, the response has been to bring in professionals to do a needs assessment. Once the problem is diagnosed, solutions are prescribed that usually take the form of a standardized program run by professionals. Communities become passive and silent as the important roles they played in the past are methodically stripped away and taken over by special interest groups, government agencies, institutions, and outside experts. For communities, the game is to learn how to respond to whatever is on the government's agenda.

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The desire for new models and a fresh approach has brought to the forefront *asset-based community development* championed by John McKnight and others.[1] This concept sets forth the idea that there exists within individuals, groups, and communities the capacity and strength to deal with their own issues. To work, asset-based community development should be ongoing, have no end point, and be locally controlled. This concept often is difficult to accept by those who have become accustomed to demanding evidence of results from, for example, short-term funded programs.

Asset-based community development strategy starts with a community's *gifts* and *assets*. Gifts are the skills, talents, and capacities of people within a community, while assets are the community's formal or informal networks and tangible resources. Both always have existed, but have not always been valued or identified as a basis for community development.

These community resources simply have gone dormant and atrophied in the face of the massive build-up of the social service system. Whether championed or reviled, asset-based community development forms the basis for an important discussion on the need to change the way community development occurs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The essential elements and sometimes unique characteristics that are the foundation for asset-based community development are identified below.

Gifts

The recognition that everyone has a gift is the basic building block and foundation for creating community. Every community, no matter how deprived and disadvantaged it may feel it is or be perceived to be, is comprised of citizens who have an endless supply of unique, positive, and valuable abilities that are their gifts. Communities that provide opportunities for citizens to connect so that the strength and effectiveness of their gifts are increased lay the rich foundation upon which communities can develop themselves. Using their gifts, a community's citizens can focus on areas of strength (the positive) rather than only focusing on areas of need (the negative).

Citizenship

When citizens actively participate in community and create new roles for its governance, important tangible benefits accrue. By shaping the values and vision of a community, citizens create self-governed programs that respond to the uniqueness of that community. Often "unofficial" and outside the mainstream, this independent action draws individuals from diverse backgrounds into decision-making to tackle issues of common community concern.

Individual Attention

This feature builds into any process of community development the notion that each person is uniquely valued and that each will be dealt with individually. Interactions are face-to-face and very personal. Individual attention creates the community connections through which people who are isolated or "on the fringes" may be brought into the very center of the community. This includes the people who are labeled elderly, persons with disabilities, immigrants, and the unemployed. Individual talents and productive skills are identified and connections made to the mainstream of community activity. In this way, community is built one citizen at a time.

The concept of individual attention often disturbs those who are used to the system. The system likes to put people into categories, slots, and programs with broad characteristics. It is hoped no one will fall through the cracks. But each person has his or her own gifts. Trying to fit each one's uniqueness into the assembly-line programming of the consumer model not only dehumanizes people who use these services, but also cuts them off from what they can contribute to their community.

Relationships

Strong ties between people are the foundation for community-based activity, planning, and problem-solving. Communities are driven by relationships. Decades of focusing on the weaknesses and needs of "the disadvantaged" have left communities in a fractured condition. People who are different from those in the mainstream are dealt with by a system where educated professionals are charged with the responsibility of handling them on behalf of the rest of the community. Neighbor no longer needs to count on neighbor.

Community-building based on the growth of personal relationships and the strengths and capacities of citizens bridges distances that can exist between individuals. Community is built by expanding membership beyond the relatively small group of traditional leaders to include many willing to deal with issues of common concern to all residents regardless of perceived differences among them.

Grassroots

Asset-based community development is bottom-up, or as John McKnight might say, "inside-out work" (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). It presumes that local citizens are better equipped to create a vision for their community and to plan for its fulfillment than outside experts. Therefore, local and independent ownership and control of the gifts and assets within the community must be fiercely guarded. Links are strengthened between citizens and existing community networks and associations. These community infrastructures and activities offer opportunities to create the relationships and bonds between citizens so necessary for this type of community development to work. The institutional infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, become valued as resources, assets that can be utilized to fulfill local agendas rather than serve as vehicles for outside control. Outside experts and government-run programs are held firmly accountable to local residents.

Community building within the context of an asset-based model usually does not rely on existing structures such as government programs, non-profit agencies, or political systems. Citizens start the new structures. Spinning a web of citizen relationships within a community, new structures are developed that operate outside the existing institutions and often will function independently of them.

New Role for the Professional and Institution

Recent research shows a growing distrust of professionals and institutions as well as an interest in self-direction, growth, and dignity.[2] This backlash often has put professionals and their institutions on the defensive. Professionals sometimes feel they are being attacked unfairly and made responsible for all the problems associated with the system. It is not necessary to attribute blame or justify prior actions. The important debate must focus on the roles that professionals and their institutions should play in the new order. Professionals must relinquish power and become community resources. They have many of the gifts of skills, knowledge, and experience that communities may need to move forward. Focusing on their gifts will unlock the wonderful resources they have to offer. To gain the trust and support of the community, professionals and their institutions will have to become comfortable in new roles that do not rely on power and control.

COMMUNITY IS A CO-CREATIVE ACT

As mentioned before, many important functions have been stripped away from communities and given to professional service delivery institutions in the institutional model of community development. As a result, the significance of community in our lives has diminished. There is a price to be paid for weak community: isolation, growing violence, dysfunctional families, reductions in our standards of living, and expensive health care.

To move forward and become co-creators of community rather than only recipients of services requires new conversations taking place and new relationships created. Old assumptions will have to be discarded in favor of new, constructive ideas of self-determination. These include:

- Seeing the gifts, strengths, and assets in our communities and citizens.
- Creating a process that connects these gifts, strengths, and assets.
- Empowering citizens and their associations to make decisions that affect their lives and the welfare of their communities. With real power, citizens will have reasons to talk to each other.
- Working toward cooperation rather than competition; breaking down fences around functional sectors such as health, education, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to assist citizens in forming joint initiatives with them.
- Recognizing that communities still will need assistance from the outside. However, outside experts no longer will direct a process, but will shift their role to support.
- Changing the roles of professionals, government agencies, and institutions so they become assets, tools, catalysts, and resources to communities.
- Giving citizen organizations and/or citizens with special needs direct access to public funds.
- Forming coalitions, associations, networks, and forums for citizens to find their own voices and solutions.
- Nurturing leadership at the community level.

BARRIERS AND LIMITATIONS

Let there be no illusion that moving from a service delivery/institutional model to an asset-based model can be done with ease. Some of the major barriers to asset-based community development include lack of process, lack of time, resistant non-profits and government agencies, negative attitudes and fear, short-term focus, and inappropriate funding patterns. Each of these barriers is discussed below.

Lack of Process

Communities often are unwilling or unable to take on the major role of directing themselves by defining their own vision and need for services. This leadership role has been given away to government agencies and institutions for so long that communities often are unable to assume the responsibility on their own. Like muscles, the skills, structures, and relationships necessary to create and support the internal conversations required for defining a local agenda atrophy due to inactivity. Many citizens want to take on this new role and not have it involuntarily thrust upon them through government downloading, but do not have any idea how to start.

Lack of Time

As the economy restructures, and those who still have jobs are required to work longer and harder, often there is little energy or time left over to invest into the community. Citizens may like and support the idea of asset-based community development, but because it is not placed high enough on their list of priorities, they fail to "walk the talk."

Resistant Non-profits or Government Agencies

Professionals within the system are extremely resourceful and effective at making the case for why they should exist and are needed. Some professionals genuinely distrust the community's ability to shoulder its own responsibilities. They believe their "clients" would be put at risk if not under their care, custody, or control. Others are fearful that shrinking involvement or fewer caseloads will translate into a loss of jobs. Fear of a loss of funds, turf, control, or relevance sometimes causes the organizations for which they work to respond by giving the illusion they have transformed themselves to fit the new model. Magically, and virtually overnight, whole government departments, programs, or institutions become "community"-based. To be fair, there have been genuine changes within some of these organizations. But very often, unfortunately, the change is not one of substance, but only of image.

Negative Attitudes and Fear

Many citizens, and especially those who have been labeled by their need, problem, or disability, and who are on the margins of society, believe they are alone, isolated and powerless to take on a challenge they perceive to be too enormous. In addition, some may not grasp the value and benefit afforded to them personally by a strong community and will have little motivation to get involved. Still others believe it is not their job and that "they" (meaning, others) should do something about it.

Focus on the Short-term

We have a bias in our culture toward valuing only short-term outcomes. Programs supported by traditional funding sources often are evaluated on short-term outcomes and impacts. This is inconsistent with the requirement of a long-term outlook for community development. Building community is a lifetime process that may not be supported by those who wish to see a "quick fix."

Funding Patterns

The vast majority of funding from all sources currently flows to the formal service delivery system. Most of these funds pay for the administration and delivery of programs that address problems, needs, or crises that continually arise. Very little money is used for community development, to expand opportunities, or for prevention. The result is that we continue to address problems at great cost, but with too little effect. Unfortunately, sponsoring locally-controlled initiatives is considered unsophisticated and risky. As a result, communities have trouble attracting funds.

IDENTIFYING THE RANGE OF COMMUNITY ASSETS

A well-known Chinese proverb states that, "a 10,000 mile journey begins with the first step." The first step in asset-based community development, not surprisingly, is to begin a conversation within a community to survey and identify its strengths and assets. Citizens themselves can do this or hire a professional to work under their direction. The strengths and assets then can be categorized into lists, or further developed into maps by plotting them across a community's space. This can be done over a fairly short period of time. Sometimes, however, the research required for a comprehensive community capacity study can take as long as several months or years.

The goal of this first step is to discover assets that can be used successfully as action planning tools to achieve the community's vision. Through this process, the community will discover its assets and capacities; create lists and asset maps that graphically identify community supports and their connections in order to develop a central resource base that can be built upon and used for future work; begin the actual "doing" work of community development; and mobilize citizen activity toward community action planning.

Examples of lists or maps that may be used in the process of identifying the range of community assets are listed below.[3]

- An inventory of the gifts, skills, and capacities of the community's residents.
- An inventory of the informal, volunteer, or grassroots organizations such as clubs, religious, and athletic groups within a community.
- An inventory of the formal institutions such as businesses, public institutions, and non-profits visible within a community.
- An association map: A list of all of the associations or organizations that interact, neighbor, or are resident within a community.
- What Once Was Here, But Is Not Here Any More: An historical listing of assets.
- Treasures: Anything a community treasures such as geographic, cultural, or economic advantages that a community may have.
- Not-So-Hot's: The negative, obsolete, decayed aspects of a community that possibly could be turned into an advantage.

A STORY: COMMUNITY-BASED ASSET MANAGEMENT IN ACTION

Stories often are used in asset-based community development work to illustrate ideas and possibilities. Stories capture the imagination and stimulate creative thinking. We find stories in books and articles, in meetings, and at conferences. Most importantly, we find they reinforce the one-to-one conversations among citizens in communities. Without these conversations, asset-based community development will not work. Stories show us how personal this work is. They also reinforce and affirm community ownership in the resolution of a problem.

McGrath is a small town in southern Alberta near the city of Lethbridge. Its roots and history are based on the pioneer spirit common to many rural communities. When something was needed in the community, citizens got together and created it. In the early years of this century, a growing population and poor roads to the nearest hospital some 40 miles away resulted in the community's desire for a local hospital. The community organized itself around the issue and proceeded to build and pay for its own hospital. The hospital was community-owned and governed by a local board until the 1960s when the provincial Medicare plan took over the hospital administration and operation. Although a local board remained in place, the effective control of the hospital was vested in the Department of Health in the province's capital, Edmonton.

The situation changed dramatically when recent provincial government budget cutbacks resulted in a proposal that the hospital be closed down because it was underutilized. The irony of the timing was amazing! The announcement came not long after significant renovations had been completed. An expensive new surgical suite had been built and improvements to the food preparation and ward areas had been made. However average occupancy rates for beds and number of surgeries were well below capacity. With modern-day improvements in roads and vehicles, a trip of 30 to 40 miles to a full service hospital in Lethbridge was not that significant and many local people preferred to travel the distance.

However, it was recognized that the loss of the hospital would be devastating to the community. Lost hospital jobs and fewer people visiting McGrath would create severe economic impact and might cause the community to wither away as many others had done before. The situation called for immediate action.

After much painful soul searching, rather than responding either in a passive or confrontational manner, community members mobilized and chose to take matters into their own hands and employ some of the strategies referred to previously in this article. Theirs was a Not-So-Hot situation. They began to look at how the community's negative circumstances could be turned around to its benefit and save the facility. They began to regard the hospital as "theirs" again. As a community asset, what was its best function? After doing a community inventory, the answers to this question produced some surprising results, including the following:

- Community members realized that there was no caterer in the community. Catering for weddings, anniversaries, and other events was done by out-of-town businesses. It made perfect sense to turn the hospital's kitchen area into a full service catering operation as well as a bakery.
- There was no day care facility that would accept children who were ill. Parents had to take off time from work to be with their sick youngsters. For a modest cost the surgical suite was renovated into a "sniffles" day care center where children could be dropped off as needed.
- A long-standing problem in the community had been the absence of a facility for senior citizens requiring a higher level of care. These elderly persons were uprooted from their community, family, and friends and sent to a facility in Lethbridge. At modest cost, the active treatment rooms were renovated to accommodate these people. The renovation allowed these elderly individuals to stay in a facility that was well equipped for medical emergencies and support, and was near friends and loved ones.

Yes, the community lost its active treatment hospital. But its citizens changed the hospital's functions to address more pressing community priorities resulting in a higher utilization of the asset. Moreover, the community's citizens now control and govern the facility and its future. Community members kept their asset alive, viable, and intact.

CONCLUSION

Volunteer administrators need to be aware of the changes taking place in community-building and how they will be impacted. They should reflect on how they can make new connections with the community and rethink traditional roles. For example, many volunteer administrators may not see themselves as directly involved in building their communities. However, volunteer administrators should recognize they are in a powerful position to influence the future of their communities by facilitating involvement and providing opportunities for citizens to express their desires for a better community. This implies a change of focus from the single organization to the larger context of the community.

Many of the concepts in this article will not be new to volunteer administrators. For example, it is not unusual for them to identify, harness, and sustain community assets such as volunteer resources. They also facilitate community connections and partnerships. Far more than their peers in the non-profit sector, these skills place them on the "cutting edge" of asset-based community development thinking. What may be new, however, is the opportunity they have to take a leadership role in this process. It is hoped that many will be encouraged to take on that role.

ENDNOTES

[1] Other thinkers, writers and practitioners in this area include: Jack Pearpoint and Judith Snow (Canada), Paul Martin Du Bois, Leland Kaiser, Frances Moore Lappé, and John O'Brien (United States), Ivan Illich (Mexico), and Paulo Freire (Brazil).

[2] See, for example, Kanter, D. and Mirvis, P. (1994). *The Cynical Americans*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. See also the *Market Vision 2000 Study* published annually by the Market Vision Group, Toronto.

[3] The first three items listed are borrowed from the work of John McKnight. The last four items were developed by Adrian Bohach.

REFERENCE

Kretzmann, J.P. & McKnight, J. (1993). *Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets.* Evanston, Illinois: Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research.

ABSTRACT

The world of the volunteer is changing very quickly. Organizations, governments, and communities want more from voluntary organizations — everything from new services to increased accountability. To survive in this tumultuous environment, volunteer administrators must help voluntary organizations think more systematically about the future. Strategic visioning helps volunteer administrators, board members, paid staff, and volunteers respond more effectively to change and increase the organization's ability to survive and succeed in a rapidly changing environment.

Strategic Visioning in Non-profit Organizations: Providing a Clear Direction for the Future

James J. Rice

INTRODUCTION

It is the author's contention that demands on administrators of volunteer programs are increasing dramatically. Everyone from the government to clients wants more from volunteers. Governments are restructuring the welfare system and pushing more responsibility onto voluntary organizations. Community members expect voluntary organizations to provide greater client choice by offering a wider array of services. Organizations want volunteers to help with everything from office work to fighting for more government support. As staff resources diminish, volunteers are being asked to do more. And fund raisers are facing increased competition as organizations try new ways to find resources. Volunteer administrators must plan for the future and help volunteers cope with these changes.

To survive in this tumultuous environment, volunteer administrators also must think more systematically about the future. This means taking time out of an already hectic schedule to consider where the organization is going and how it will involve volunteers to get there. To do this effectively, volunteer administrators must answer three questions: Will the demand for volunteers be the same in five years? What volunteer skills will the organization need in the future? How will future events affect the organization's ability to attract volunteers?

These are not easy questions to answer, but volunteer administrators can use strategic visioning to help explore the issues they raise. Strategic visioning is a tool that describes possible future conditions and determines how these conditions can affect the organization's ability to achieve its goals. By answering these questions, volunteer administrators will be better prepared to adjust direction, increasing the organization's ability to survive in a rapidly changing environment (Saxon-Harrold, 1990).

The purpose of this article is to persuade volunteer administrators to use strategic visioning as a way of preparing for the future. The process of strategic visioning extends the volunteer administrator's ability to see beyond the immediate pressures on the organization, develop a "picture" of how the services of volunteers can be used in the future, and to assess and analyze how events may unfold (Thompson, 1967; Wilson and Butler, 1985; Saxon-Harrold, 1990). By including strategic visioning in their

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repertoire, volunteer administrators can help organize the activities of volunteers more effectively. Strategic visioning empowers volunteer administrators to become more proactive in identifying dangers, better prepared to choose appropriate actions, and able to take advantage of changing conditions in recruiting and involving volunteers. On a more personal level, strategic visioning provides a way of offering more effective management for the volunteer department that allows it to become a player in the larger picture of where the organization is going.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC VISIONING?

Strategic visioning is the process of creating stories about possible futures. From these stories organizations can develop new ways of responding to changing events and create information systems that help in planning for uncertain futures. While not a blueprint, strategic visioning reveals a plausible scenario of what might occur. Organizations use strategic visioning to create coherent, unified, and integrated decisions about how to cope with threats coming from a changing environment (Hax, 1990).

Schwartz (1991) claims the process is like developing a movie script where the storyline makes the plot believable. The characters in the strategic vision are not people, but events that affect the way the storyline unfolds. As an example, we can picture how a decline in the birth rate might affect the demand for child care, or an increase in industrial accidents could dramatically alter the number of people needing rehabilitation. The analysis of the "story" and its implications for the organization provide the basic building block of strategic visioning.

When a volunteer administrator works on strategic visioning, he or she makes a commitment to become more proactive in managing the relationship between the volunteer department and the larger environment (Butler and Wilson, 1990). Through the formation of a strategic visioning team, its members and the volunteer administrator spend time thinking about how conditions in the environment affect the organization's ability to do its business. By turning their attention to future events, the volunteer administrator and the strategic visioning team strike a new balance between dealing with the pressures of current activities and thinking about outside forces that will shape the way these activities unfold. The strategic vision helps everyone on the team understand the changing nature of the environment and provides information that forewarns about potential dangers (Steiner, 1994; Ackoff, 1981).

The process also helps the volunteer administrator feel more in control of the relationship between the organization and its volunteers. Analyzing the way events can, and most likely will, turn out provides directions about where the organization is headed and how it can involve volunteers to get there. The more the team understands this, the more its members feel in control of the flow of events, and the more empowered they will be in taking on additional responsibilities. In addition, understanding the forces affecting the future encourages team members to focus on organizational capacities and to see the future in positive rather than threatening terms (Webster and Wylie, 1988).

Although the process is difficult, the payoffs are high. Strategic visioning helps non-profit organizations deal with change by giving them advance warning of future events. It provides them with a way of calculating risk by allowing them to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of their actions. It helps them deal with uncertainty by setting out multiple courses of action and permits them to analyze the implications of these options on the way the organization does business. Finally, it helps voluntary organizations negotiate such issues as service contracts with the government or wage contracts with employees by allowing time to work through the implications of different decisions on future costs.

By creatively developing plans based on the analysis of strategic visions, the strategic visioning team can help prepare the organization for any eventuality (Birnbaum, 1990). The more specific, appropriate, and actionable the plans, the greater the ability to use strategic visioning to guide action in the future (Simpson, 1992).

THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC VISIONING

The process of strategic visioning, while based on activities developed in the corporate sector, requires different resources if non-profit organizations are to use it effectively.

In Canada, as perhaps elsewhere, corporations have more choices than voluntary organizations. They can plan to increase their market share, introduce new product lines, or seek new investments. Non-profit organizations' actions may be limited. In Canada, government legislation often controls the services a non-profit organization can provide, its ability to create financial reserves, or its ability to expand into new program areas. The private sector can save and invest, use resources in new and experimental ways, or seek outside investment, but non-profit organizations operate under established budgets and must spend their resources within predetermined time frames.

The most important difference, however, is reflected in businesses' focus on financial returns and profits that encourage them to abandon unprofitable products or sell divisions that do not add to the bottom line. Non-profit organizations, in contrast, have a "mission" to serve particular clients whether their demands increase dramatically or not (Drucker, 1992). It does not matter to an organization like the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada if fewer children need assistance. The job of this organization is to work with families and other organizations to make sure every child has an opportunity to reach his or her potential.

Unlike corporations, most non-profit organizations do not have the luxury of hiring futurists who can develop detailed visions of what is to come. They must rely on the expertise of members of the strategic visioning team and limited staff time. All these considerations make it more difficult for non-profit organizations to develop strategic plans: they have limited resources, less control over the environment in which they operate, and limitations on their ability to change the products or services they provide.

Peter Drucker (1992) believes, however, that if they are to survive and flourish, non-profit organizations must develop more proactive attitudes toward understanding the future. They must move beyond present coping strategies to become more involved in understanding and analyzing the forces that affect them. Peter Senge (1990) claims they must create a "learning environment" that increases their ability to deal with change.

A learning environment gives the organization time to deal with the differences between "planned change," where it deliberately takes steps to alter services, "second-order change," where it is caught up in radical, multi-dimensional, multilevel, qualitative, and discontinuous change involving a paradigmatic shift (Levy and Merry, 1986). Senge believes a learning environment also exposes the organization's operating assumptions and current pattern of decision-making to encourage a reassessment of the use of existing resources. Examining current operations while exploring the future helps the organization develop a clear "fix" on where it is now and where it should go in the future.

A FIVE STEP PROCESS

There are five steps in the strategic visioning process: developing a strategic visioning team, describing the most important goal for review, identifying key factors that can dramatically affect this goal, creating scenarios that describe how the goal and key factors interplay, and developing information systems that help the organization plan for any eventuality.

Step 1: Developing the Strategic Visioning Team

To be effective in creating strategic visions, the volunteer administrator must gather a team of people who are interested in the future and have the necessary skills to work through the analytical process. Ideally this team would include about eight members: board members, paid staff, clients, key volunteers, and an interested outsider (to provide another perspective).

Often volunteer administrators find themselves working in isolation within large complex organizations where it is difficult to get the support of the executive director. It can be difficult to get the attention of senior staff who are concerned with many other issues and may not place a high priority on, or be ignorant of, the importance of the involvement of volunteers in the delivery of service.

Nevertheless, volunteer administrators should try to encourage organizations to become involved with the strategic visioning process. First, they can develop a preliminary strategic vision for their own departments. The vision can focus on issues directly related to recruiting, training, and placing volunteers. Second, the volunteer administrator can involve others in the process of developing future scenarios. Other department heads can be asked for their views and comments on the future and they can be sent a preliminary analysis for review and refinement. Finally, the volunteer administrator can present the department's strategic vision for the programs and activities of the volunteer department at a staff meeting. These steps should help build a cooperative environment within the organization for the process.

Step 2: Describing the Important Goals

Assuming the volunteer administrator can draw together a team, team members should first decide on what to focus. The team can focus on the program level, on specific services, or on the entire organization. The team must become familiar with current operations, identify clients, programs, resources, and goals. It prepares a preliminary report describing the present state of affairs and identifies how goals are met in the present environment.

Since preparing the report has implications for other people, the team must ensure that it builds support for its work within the organization: the report can be shared with other members of the organization asking for their opinions and ideas. The more effective the team is in describing the present situation in terms that most people can agree with, the more useful the strategic vision will be to the organization.

Using the preliminary report, the team selects one goal that is central to the organization's mission. The clearer and more precisely the team describes the goal and translates it into measurable terms, the more useful it will be in helping them know where the organization is going. The more critical the goal is to the organization's survival, the more energy team members will expend to complete the task (Langley, 1989).

When the board and staff of a senior citizen's housing organization decided to use strategic visioning, they developed a strategic visioning team that included a volunteer. They carefully examined the organization's mission statement and identified 10 possible goals (Rice, 1993). The team was asked to examine the effect the changing needs of the elderly would have on the organization's programs. The team reviewed the present operations and selected a goal that was most important given what they knew about the organization, its clients, and the way people outside the organization were responding to its services: to help keep elderly residents living independently for as long as possible. By clarifying this fundamental goal, they simplified and focused the process of strategic visioning.

In another example, a community health center used the findings from a health survey to zero in on a specific issue upon which they could take action. The strategic visioning team included two volunteers. The team used the survey's findings to help identify the most pressing needs in the community. The survey's findings suggested there were many people in the community who wanted help to reduce or stop smoking. This became the goal around which the team developed a powerful strategic vision that identified different proposals for action consistent with how the team believed future events would unfold in the community.

The widespread use of mission statements has made it easier to identify a major goal (Simpson, 1992). Mission statements create a clearer understanding of the forces driving a non-profit. Board members know the policy directions they must give paid staff. Paid staff and volunteers are better able to turn its goals into programs and services. Clear mission statements also help the strategic visioning team translate the organization's goals into identifiable performance indicators that show when the organization is achieving them.

Performance indicators can include the number of people served, the cost per unit of service, the hours of service, or other output measures used to link the activities of the organization to its mission. These performance indicators allow the visioning team to monitor the effect of changes in the larger environment and determine if the organization is achieving its goals (Taylor et al., 1996).

Step 3 : Identifying Key Factors

Once the team has identified the goal, it must identify the key factors that can affect it. Key factors are either predetermined elements that can be seen coming because of well known trends, or unexpected events that cause unforseen consequences.

Predetermined elements can be demographic trends with known rates of growth and decline. David Foot (1996) claims "demography is the most powerful — and most underutilized— tool we have to understand the past and foretell the future." He goes on to declare that "demographics explain about two thirds of everything." Organizations can use demographic trends such as population growth, birth and death rates, marriage and divorce rates, or the number of new immigrants to estimate the program or service demand they will face in the future.

As an example, over the past 30 years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of families in which both spouses work. In the mid 1960s, both spouses worked in 34 percent of two-parent Canadian households; by 1994, in 71 percent (Poulin, 1996). Almost every non-profit organization is aware of the changes that have transformed shopping patterns, the way families take holidays, the need for child care, youth and after-school programs, and many other aspects of daily living. The steady increase of dual-worker families has slowly altered the very nature of the community. Women's volunteering patterns have changed, involvement in community activities has been altered, communities that once had many people in them during the day are now largely empty as women go out to work (Rice, 1990).

Strategic visioning uses demographic trends—predetermined events—to create storylines about the future and help prepare organizations to deal with the resulting changes. For example, the percent of dual-pension families in Canada has tripled in the past 15 years. In 1994 their average income in Canadian dollars was $56,200 (Poulin, 1996). These dual-pension families have special needs and the resources to pay for them; organizations serving the elderly must provide different kinds of programs and services to meet these new needs. Where non-profit organizations responded to these demographic trends by introducing new programs and changing services, they succeeded. When they reacted late or ineffectively, they suffered by not being prepared. While creating a scenario based on demographic trends seems quite straightforward, many non-profit organizations do not have a clear understanding of the trends that relate to their services, or have not developed scenarios that describe how these trends will affect the services they provide.

Once identified, predetermined elements are easy to deal with. The team can build them into scenarios that define the need for programs and activities and describe the effect they will have on the organization. As an example, a non-profit organization examined the increasing number of judges sentencing young offenders to longer sentences. The strategic visioning team decided to examine the implications of this trend on the organization's ability to provide post-release services. If the trend continued, more volunteers would have to be recruited. This would have training and supervision implications. Evaluating these implications prepared them for the future.

In addition to predetermined elements, there are events that are more episodic in nature and come totally unexpectedly. These events are much more difficult to build into scenarios, but are essential if non-profit organizations are to prepare for what is becoming a more volatile future. A few years ago there was a tragic incident in a non-profit group home in Canada. A young, inexperienced person was left alone on night duty. During the evening she was attacked and killed. This sent shock waves through the group home industry. Charges and countercharges were made about the appropriateness of having an inexperienced person left on duty alone. In response, the government introduced legislation that forced group homes to place two staff members on duty at all times.

This unexpected event caught many group homes off guard and altered the way they functioned. Creating scenarios can help analyze how unexpected events like this can affect the ability of group homes to continue providing services in the way they do. What would happen if someone set off a bomb and destroyed the group home, or if there was food poisoning, or some other catastrophic event? A scenario about any of these events will help the organization deal more effectively with many eventualities.

Unexpected events do not have to be as dramatic as the murder of a staff member or the poisoning of residents. In a senior citizens' housing project many unexpected events can affect the way the organization delivers services: changes in the legislation affecting the health care system; changes in the availability of certain drugs; the emergence of new, unexpected diseases (Hollander and Becker, 1985). The visioning team needs to create scenarios around two or three unforseen events, identify how these events can change the services needed by seniors, and decide what implications these changes will have on the ability of the organization to achieve its goals.

Step 4: Creating Possible Scenarios

The next step is for the team to create two or three scenarios that describe storylines about the possible relationship between the organization's goals and the key factors that can affect them. This is the heart of the strategic visioning process and draws upon the team's knowledge of the organization, an understanding of its relationship with other organizations, and an assessment of key factors in the environment (Gummer, 1992).

The team members select a time frame over which they can describe the movement toward a goal and the key factors that can affect it. It is common to select the longest time frame possible. But the longer the time frame, the greater the possibility that changes will affect the outcome of the flow of events. Picking a shorter time frame that meets the needs of the organization is important. For many groups this is between two and five years.

Once the time frame is established, the team must select key factors to be included in the analysis. It is useful to select two or three predetermined events and to hypothesize about one or two unexpected ones.

In the example of the seniors' organization that wanted to keep its elderly residents living independently for as long as possible, the team developed two scenarios that examined this issue. In the first, they looked at the demographic trends that indicated both men and women are living longer and are generally better off financially. Then they found that historically the seniors' housing organization had many more women than men and most of the women were widows on limited incomes. These trends indicated the organization could expect in the future to house more men and couples, more women with their own pensions as well as survivors' benefits, and new residents who would be older and frailer when they moved into the housing project.

The analysis of these trends had profound implications. If the housing organization did not change the layout and size of its units it would be unable to meet the needs of new residents. After careful review, the organization discovered it could combine bachelor units into larger units for two people or for one person with space for a guest. A wider array of social programs specifically oriented toward couples and more support services, such as house cleaning and catering for people who were involved in leisure time activities and who now had more discretionary income, could be provided.

With plans in mind developed from strategic visions, they began to keep careful records of the requests for housing. They followed the change in seniors' income levels and slowly started to alter the layout of the building then began to consider new activities for them that could be carried out by volunteers.

The organization also looked at an unexpected event. The visioning team developed a scenario in which elderly people might die at a much younger age. In this scenario they described a new disease similar to Legionnaire's disease that can have devastating effects on the elderly. The team examined the implications for their organization. In the event of the deaths of many elderly people, there would be a reduction in the demand for housing. The team developed a storyline about how spouses would need support after the premature death of a partner and how surviving spouses would want to move into a smaller place to live. They looked at the implications such an event would have on paid staff and volunteers and began to assess what impact such an unexpected event would have on their organization. While no such event has yet happened—and it is hoped never will—the organization is prepared for any number of sudden and dramatic changes.

Both scenarios (predetermined and unexpected) encouraged the visioning team to think about what they are doing now and what they might want to do in the future. The two scenarios forced the team to rethink programs and services and to become more proactive in planning and preparing for the future.

Once a team creates its scenarios, it must go back and review its work to see if it is internally consistent. Do the different elements, activities, and flow of the storyline make sense? Are the introduction of key factors, whether predetermined or unexpected, plausible? Does the story hold together? In answering these questions, the team must brainstorm ideas, share new thoughts, create different possible storylines, and begin to forge alternative plots. The team must write up reports and discuss their implications with other people in the organization.

During the review it is helpful for team members to "push" the plausibility of the alternative plots in order to create new ways of understanding the forces described in the storyline. This allows all concerned to move beyond existing operating assumptions and begin "seeing" new possibilities for the organization. The team must get beyond existing filters to ensure it is not blocking important information that will help or hurt the organization.

The strategic visioning process encourages the organization to monitor the flow of information to see what is happening as new factors enter the environment. It also helps organizations learn how to deal more effectively with the information they are presently receiving.

Step 5: Developing Information Systems

The final step in strategic visioning is for the organization to develop information gathering systems that provide data upon which to assess the future. If an organization has created two scenarios—one in which the number of young people committing crimes increases, and the other where it decreases—it needs to know which scenario is more likely to happen. If it is gathering information from the justice system, the team will be able to monitor the trends over time. As the facts emerge from these data, the team can begin to suggest proactive steps to meet the future. These steps may include innovation, consolidation, and cooperation, based on careful planning drawn from the lessons of strategic visioning. The act of monitoring the flow of information forces the non-profit organization to orient itself toward the future and to increase its ability to respond to oncoming events.

By developing new information-gathering strategies that focus on changes in the environment, the organization strengthens its analytical ability. It increases its capacity to be sensitive to new issues that are relevant, and begins to alter fixed mind sets about potential changes in the future.

The analysis from the strategic visioning process describes how events could unfold and is written up in charts and narratives. Reports set out suggestions the organization can take to prepare itself for the future. The analysis often is presented in two or three different formats depending upon the audience. The volunteer administrator can prepare a summary report for the executive director or the board. This highlights the findings and draws one or two general conclusions about how new information can be used to guide the volunteer program and the organization.

A more detailed report can be provided to other members of the non-profit to encourage an ongoing dialogue between department heads about the effect future events can have on the organization. Perhaps the more detailed report's most useful role is that it helps produce Senge's "learning environment" that fosters an ongoing review and analysis. This report includes an analysis of the key factors explored, the potential impact on the organization's goals, and where to look for information to determine how the key factors are evolving. These reports provide a way for the volunteer administrator to deal more effectively with a tumultuous environment.

CONCLUSION

Non-profit organizations must develop a new orientation to the future. They must move beyond their present coping strategies and employ methods that allow them to understand the way the future will affect them. The strategic visioning process brings fresh insight to old problems and forces those responsible for running non-profit organizations to consider new alternatives for achieving their goals. Administrators of volunteer programs must advocate for strategic visioning within the organization. The important role of the volunteer program now and into the future must not be overlooked.

Frances Hesselbein, past national executive director of the Girl Scouts of United States, told a story to Peter Drucker (1990) that highlights the importance of looking for new insights into providing new services. Through 335 independent councils, the Girl Scouts provided services to girls from ages 7-17. The national organization, with assistance from its councils, studied the changes in American families and concluded there was a need for programs for younger girls. Changes in women's work patterns had forced parents to put young children into child care. One result was that by the time the children were five years old they had become familiar with organized programs. These young children were ready for a Girl Scout program, but none existed. Demographic profiles showed there were women who wanted to volunteer with girls, but did not want to work with teenagers. A new national program, Daisy Scouts, was introduced for five-year-old girls. Within a year this was one of the Girl Scout's most successful endeavors.

The demographics also indicated that by the year 2000, one-third of the population in California would be members of minority groups. In Southern California, Girl Scouts began experimenting with new models of how councils might reach out to children from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The organization was able to analyze the demographic data and developed a strategy for how it planned to meet the changing needs of young girls in the United States.

Strategic visioning provides organizations with new mind sets about how to deal with the future. It builds upon the recent activities most non-profit organizations have undertaken: developing mission statements, clarifying goals, increasing their understanding of clients, and building the internal strength of the organization. By incorporating these activities into the strategic visioning process, nonprofit organizations can go beyond innovation, collaboration, or confederation to become proactive in creating plans for the future. The strategic visioning process encourages volunteer administrators, volunteers, board members, and paid staff to develop new ways of understanding how the future is unfolding so they can deal with change more effectively and alter services to meet new needs.

A well-developed strategic vision encourages the organization to test its assumptions and reconsider traditional ways of providing service. It exposes limitations in information systems and reduces misunderstandings between volunteer administrators, volunteers, board members, and paid staff. Besides setting out alternatives, strategic visions help prepare the organization for surprising futures. The process allows the organization to better understand the role of all its constituents in future planning and staffing. Peter Schwarz (1991) claims that strategic visioning forces organizations to develop the "long view" and see things they have never seen before. The volunteer administrator who is part of a strategic visioning team and is encouraged to include key volunteers on it makes an important contribution to the recognition of volunteer work within the organization and has enhanced his/her role in the process.

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Letters to the Editor

THE JOURNAL *welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be as brief as possible and must include writer's name, address, and telephone number. Those selected may be edited for length and clarity.*

Mandated vs. Voluntary Service

To the Editor:

I am writing to carry on the spirited debate that occurred at the ICVA in Calgary in October 1996, and to respond to Susan Ellis' article, *Volunteerism-Specific Values: A Proposal for Discussion* (Winter 1996), and the letter to the editor it stimulated (Winter 1997).

I could not agree more with Susan Ellis. Having had considerable experience with volunteered-volunteers—sometimes called "volun-tolds"—I have found that if they are treated with respect, given useful and worthwhile duties to perform and an opportunity to grow, nearly all of them go on to complete many more hours than required.

As Susan says, the key is to give the person in this position the opportunity to grow and learn. I have heard stories from people on probation who did menial, make-work tasks on a repetitive basis, cleaned up after children in a day care center, shredded documents day-after-day without more interesting duties being offered to enliven the time.

I believe that almost anyone who is exposed to meaningful, useful, and worthwhile volunteer work can be "turned on" to it. We can educate about the work done in our facilities—get the word out. Does it really matter WHY people come to our agencies? If we can give them an opportunity to choose the type of work they want to do, and teach them to do it well, we are providing them with the chance to grow and learn. As Steve McCurley said in Calgary: Do we ask where the money comes from when someone donates a lot of it? No! We take it and are grateful. Why, then, should we question the original source or motivation of those who come to give time to help our clients and our community?

Naturally, we must screen all volunteers and not place inappropriate ones. However, just because individuals must volunteer because of a community service order or school course requirement does not make their volunteering inappropriate. Some of the longest-serving volunteers start as "volun-tolds" who provide excellent leadership and go on to become role models.

Anthea Hoare
Director, Volunteer Resources
The Toronto Hospital
Toronto, Canada

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I. CONTENT

A. THE JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of knowledge and inspiration about volunteer administration. Articles may address practical concerns in the management of volunteer programs, philosophical issues in volunteerism, and significant applicable research.

B. Articles may focus on volunteering in any type of setting. In fact, THE JOURNAL encourages articles dealing with areas less visible than the more traditional health, social services, and education settings. Also, manuscripts may cover both formal volunteering and informal volunteering (self-help, community organization, etc.) Models of volunteer programming may come from the voluntary sector, government-related agencies, or the business world.

C. Please note that THE JOURNAL deals with volunteerism, not voluntarism. This is an important distinction. For clarification, some working definitions are:

volunteerism: anything related to volunteers, volunteer programs or volunteer management, regardless of funding base (including government-related volunteers).

voluntarism: refers to anything voluntary in society, including religion; basically refers to *voluntary agencies* (with volunteer boards and private funding) that do not always involve volunteers.

If this distinction is still unclear, feel free to inquire further and we will attempt to categorize your article for you.

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A. Author must send four (4) copies of the manuscript for review.

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5. indication of affiliation with the Association for Volunteer Administration or other professional organization(s). This information has no impact on the blind review process and is used for publicity and statistical purposes only.

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