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Volunteerism Is Changing!

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We are living in exciting, complex, rapidly changing times. We are part of a small planet called Earth—closely interrelated to many nations and people. We are interdependent, dependent, and independent! We can do almost anything we want to, if we know our values and our mission and if we become more flexible, open, and caring.

The themes of our times could be summed up in the 10 Cs. They are:

Change
Challenge
Choice
Creativity
Competence
Communication
Cooperation
Collaboration
Courage
Caring

Our symbol could be the butterfly—evolving from a cocoon into a beautiful, free-flying creature. It unfolds and transforms; it is a spiritual symbol—a symbol of creativity and loveliness, and a symbol of new birth and life.

We, too, must evolve, and see how we can tap into the new, yet not lose all that has made us what we are, from the past and from the old.

This paper is divided into:

1. some global thrusts pushing us to change;
2. some implications for not-for-profit systems; and
3. linkages we must strengthen or develop.

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GLOBAL CONCERNS AND THRUSTS THAT AFFECT US

The first thrust is *Pollution*, both environmental and human pollution. Among the environmental concerns are those of acid rain, green space, the ozone factor, atomic energy, the preservation of the Rain Forest, and our waters and wildlife around the world.

Among the concerns that might be called human pollution are those of AIDS, hunger and starvation, substance abuse, stress and its effect on mental health, and homelessness.

It is clear that these concerns call for new actions and the drawing on a vast army of human beings interested in and willing to work on these challenges. They will need to include, as in the many places they already do, both paid professionals and volunteers.

Another global concern is the *Importance of Diversity*. It has become clear throughout the world that diversity is a rich resource that can be utilized in a variety of creative ways. Diversity includes: diversity of age, of race, of gender, of ethnic background, of religion, of people who are relatively well to those who are less abled, and people who are heterosexual as well as those who choose a homosexual lifestyle.

We see the importance of diversity through such revolutions and evolutions as the work of the Armenians to be an independent group, as well as similar strivings by the Palestinians, the Turks, the Israelis, the Basques, and the Blacks in South Africa.

We are seeing an emphasis on the importance of the beauty of difference, rather than the emphasis on conformity.

Population Planning in a crowded world has become another very important concern and item for action. It is calling on millions of volunteers and health professionals to help people understand and to accept cultural and belief differences in relation to population control.

The advent of the *Information Society* and the need to link people and systems through advanced technologies is another trend. There is the ability to acquire these technologies, as well as the opportunities to learn the skills to operate them. Part of the challenge is to know what technologies are needed by whom and how to mobilize the necessary human resources to operate these technologies for the best quality of life for all people.

Certainly, *Educational Concerns* are worldwide. There is the thrust through many literacy efforts to help children and adults learn to read. There is a growing movement that believes that there should be access to educational opportunities for all. These opportunities may be through television, radio, or through children and adult schooling opportunities. There is also a thrust to share knowledge gathered through research, so that the same research does not have to be done all over again in different places on the earth. Many more volunteers could be harnessed to make the leap from intention to action, so that educational opportunities can be available to more people in more places.

Collaborative Thrusts are certainly another visible dynamic. It has become clear that in order to contain hostility and violence, nations must collaborate. On another front, there is the need to link, so that open trade for goods and services can become a reality. It is clear through such organizations as the International Conference on Social Welfare, the International Association of Volunteer Effort, and the Red Cross, for example, that not-for-profit organizations are very much involved in linkage and collaboration in order to improve relationships between nations. But governmental bodies are also involved in such activities as space exploration and the problems of disposal of human and technological waste. The international industrial systems are also concerned with and involved in collaborative efforts.

It is clear that the nations of the world, and the people therein, are in transition. They are moving from the no longer to the not yet, and trying to keep that of the old and familiar which is still viable, and to become creative with those opportunities that have not been offered before.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY . . .
    . . . for developing from a cocoon to a beautiful butterfly.
    . . . for transiting from the no longer to the not yet.

Trends, pushes, concerns, and needs have implications for actions. Some of these might include the following:

Diversity

There is a need to do *creative tapping into the diverse human resources that surround us.* All people are potential volunteers, be they three or 103 years old, young, middle, or older; be they well or less abled; be they employed or unemployed; be they religious or not; be they native born or newcomer; be they economically well or badly off; be they very formally educated or less so. People of all colors, ethnic and national origins, and backgrounds of all lifestyles are waiting to be more involved in their own and others' welfare.

This also means *changing our use of language* to indicate colleagueship, equalness, respect, acceptance and caring. Let me give a few examples: "to use volunteers" must be translated to encourage volunteers to work with a particular organization, or to recruit volunteers to fill opportunities. But people do not want to be used. Sometimes we say we "allow" people to do things. A better concept would be "to encourage," "to invite" or "to support" people to do things. Often heard is the term "to reach out." Who is reaching out to whom? Why not talk about "opening opportunities" or "making new connections"? "The Handicapped" is the way that people are often described who are differently abled. This is not an empowering connotation, whereas "differently abled" might be much better. Things are either "black" or "white," meaning bad or good. Isn't time to find another way to talk about right and wrong, good and bad?

All this means that we must increase our sensitivity to how we describe situations and people, and try to "step into the shoes" of the people or situations that we are describing.

Meeting Technology

This also means that our *sensitivities to meeting patterns and meeting technology* need to be changed and sharpened. This includes the way people are invited, the time and timing of meetings, the refreshments that are offered, the seating, greeting and meeting patterns that are developed. It is clear around the world that a more participative mode is preferred to one that is nonparticipative. Indeed, there must be reciprocal learning opportunities between teacher and learner, instead of one-way transactions from teacher to learner.

Values and Ethics

Another implication is clearly that there needs to be *a re-examination and re-emphasis of our values and ethics.* It is said that 56% of all the hospitals in the United States now have ethics committees, and some have ethicists in residence. The volunteer world has to look at that model and be clear that the serious issues of liability, malpractice, honesty, and clear contracts with volunteer and staff may also be re-examined. Ethics and values need to be clear and explicit in the volunteer world, as they must be in the corporate and governmental world.

Collaboration

It is necessary to develop *competencies in collaboration.* Collaboration may be defined as an effort by disparate persons and/or systems to work together on agreed upon goals or projects. This means creative compromise, pooling of resources, keeping one's own identity while being open to change, and indeed doing together what would not be possible alone. Collaborative efforts might include the sharing of research data, the developing of family volunteering opportunities, the movement into public advocacy for a variety of causes, the collaborative educating of volunteers, be they service or administrative volunteers. In a productive collaborative effort there are some necessary competencies, such

as sharing of leadership, utilizing temporary systems/committees/groups, etc.; learning to listen to and use different points of views, changing meeting techniques and acquiring new skills, being clear that initiation of an effort does not necessarily mean ownership, and learning the art of recognizing the contributions of each of the parts of the collaborating body.

Leadership

It is necessary to *develop and transform leadership patterns, attitudes, styles, and competencies.* The modern leader needs a clear and understandable value and ethic system and a sense of mission that can be communicated. The leader needs to study and understand and use the environment locally, organizationally, nationally, and globally. A leader needs to have the ability as well as the excitement in visioning what can be and framing visions in terms of understandable actions. This means planning skills and the methodology that goes with developing participative, empowering, doable plans.

It is also clear that the modern leader needs to enjoy managing complexity and change, because there are multiple stakeholders, colleagues, clients, board members, staff and volunteer teams with whom to deal. Indeed, participants, both staff and volunteers, come "with many hats," or roles, and it is necessary to accept the fact that most participants have a variety of loyalties. It is also important for a leader to learn how to handle confrontations and differences, as well as hostility, in creative and productive ways.

The leader needs to promote and support creativity and learning in self and others since there is almost no way to keep up to date if this is not an important concomitant.

Humane human resource management competencies are also necessary. It is important to believe and then practice the belief that all people have resources and competencies and that systems must learn how to uncork these, like a good bottle of wine, slowly and caringly, and thus must build empowerment and trust in those with whom the leader works. Building teams of staff and volunteers in order to produce a service and/or product becomes increasingly necessary.

Perhaps an "Up Management" point of view, that is, seeing the possibilities rather than the problems and finding the strengths rather than the weaknesses in people and situations, will be necessary and empowering to the leader.

The modern leader must also be able to enjoy and celebrate and lift the work spirit to new and committed levels.

LINKAGES AND CONNECTIONS NEEDED IN THESE TIMES OF TRANSITION

In order to act on the above, it will be necessary to:

1. link skill and competence.
2. link democratic ways of work with effectiveness and productivity.
3. link analytic thinking with passion.
4. link altruism with accountability.
5. link leading and motivating with caring.
6. link problem-solving with conflict resolution.
7. link leadership with empowerment of others.
8. link artful use and selection of the old and traditional with the new and untried.
9. link carefulness with risk taking.
10. link concern and problem orientation with energetic possibility thinking.

This is a time of change, growth and vitality in the volunteer world, and as staff and volunteer, . . .

we are changing.
we are meeting the challenges ahead.
we are making appropriate choices.

we are creative.
we are creatively compromising.
we are communicating more openly.
we are cooperating more productively, and we shall collaborate with diverse people and systems.
we shall have courage to risk experimenting with the new; and above all,
we shall continue to lead in caring about all others, as well as ourselves.

As a new volunteer world dawns, we can celebrate our movement and progress
    from the there and then to now
    to a beautiful and bright future.

Perhaps we are on the verge of leaving the cocoon and flying!