

***A Time to Be Bold Symposium Notes  
Maplewood, 12/4/2009***

**Questions Addressed to Panel**

Moderator: Bonnie Esposito, Community Volunteer. Panel members:

- Streamlining volunteer intake  
*Janene Riedeman, Director of Volunteer Services, St. Cloud Hospital*
- Partner with staff to maximize volunteer role in achieving mission  
*Jean Nierenhausen, Director of Volunteer Services Minnesota Historical Society*
- “Take the bulls by the horn” - How to get control on responding to the shifting environment  
*Gail Peterson, Senior Director of Volunteer Services, Courage Center*
- Gaining management support  
*Deb Waggoner, VP of Human Resources, Courage Center*

*What can volunteer programs offer for skill-building for job hunters?*

Many opportunities for volunteers to get technological skills, computer education, retail experience in gift shops, customer service, and planning in key departments. In hospitals can get medical experience. Provides great networking opportunities by encouraging volunteers to talk with key staff. Can offer leadership development and resume building.

*Can volunteer programs help with staff cuts?*

Important to get “ducks in a row.” Get buy-in from staff through education and communication. Volunteer program here to help them, not take away jobs. See Susan Ellis’s December 2009 Hot Topic –“When the Ax Falls” Budget Cutting and Volunteers - at <http://www.fluctu8.com/podcast-episode/when-the-ax-falls-budget-cutting-and-volunteers-81041-31709.html>

*Please give more details HR & Volunteer Services working together.*

- 1) Same orientation and education (staff and volunteers).
- 2) Leadership development
- 3) Systems – use their skill sets, combined trainings. Bring volunteers and staff together.

Use HR as a resource. For example, HR annually asks departments about staffing needs. At that time information about volunteer needs can also be asked. This information can be used by volunteer program to incorporate strategic and skilled volunteers in new ways. As other examples, HR looks at volunteer orientation for ideas and HR is excellent for consultation when there is a volunteer performance problems. Advice to look to staff policies when drafting volunteer policies.

*How are you able to be the change?*

Continually ask yourself this question: What is the best way to do this?” Open self to looking at new possibilities. Brainstorm possibilities. Create new volunteer positions out of interviews. One panel member said that she does not like change. She recognizes that in herself and gives herself extra time to get use to new ideas. She asks self: “What am I afraid of? Why am I reacting that it won’t work?”

## Strategy Work Sessions: Main Points

### Streamlining volunteer intake

*Janene Riedeman, St. Cloud Hospital, facilitator*

*Marlene Johnson, New River Medical Center, reporter*

- Survey current volunteers to see how they perceive intake and for suggestions to improve system.
- Create decision point areas in intake and orientation on whether you go forward with the volunteer. For example first have a brief phone interview, then if go forward go to group orientation that covers mission and vision and some things that might be barriers such as dress code which gives volunteers a chance to week themselves out if it is not for them.

### Other ideas from note sheets:

- clear expectations from the beginning on website, in handbook, in all written resources
- intentional about process
- involve volunteers in changing the intake process
- thoughtful placement of decision points, i.e. dress code, drug and alcohol screening, terms of service
- reinforce training topics that are crucial
- “chosen” volunteer trainers that can represent your program well and establish good habits/positive attitude with new volunteers. Get trainer feedback about new volunteers
- Telephone screening early in the process

### Advocating for the volunteer program

*Sandy Bergeron, Children’s Hospitals and Clinics, facilitator*

*Jessica Ponthan, CommonBond Communities, reporter*

Part of role is to educate the rest of the organization on the value of volunteers.

- Use of language – need to use business language when talking to management.
- Have an advocate other than yourself to tell the story
- ,Pinpoint key volunteers and clients to help with telling the story.
- Provide \$ figures and numbers to help see value and hold yourself accountable to them.

### Other ideas from note sheets:

- Use data to support positions with leadership
- Tailor message/language to audience
- Educate staff/ leadership on concrete value and contribution of volunteers
- Have a leader engage volunteers
- Enriched/high skill opportunities take volunteer coordinators’ time
- Change the “profile/picture” of the volunteers by collecting data about volunteers (age, education, experience, etc)
- Use examples: “would your daughter want to volunteer to push a button?” (unfulfilling opportunity)
- Convert hours to FTE

- “HR manager of Unpaid employees”- frame the job by using language/title
- Get the message right and who delivers that message is important
- Use pilots to test opportunities
- Ask “would you do that?”
- Include learning opportunities in job descriptions
- Define goals /objectives of volunteer department- directs data collection
- Be proactive not reactive

#### How to decide “yes” or “no” to opportunities

*Polly Roach, Mentoring Partnership of MN, facilitator*

*Terry Straub, Master Gardeners, reporter*

See Polly Roach’s excellent grid on assessing resources and how critical opportunity is to mission.

#### Other ideas from note sheets:

What has changed?

- \$ down
- Silver tsunami
- Staff cuts
- Staff productivity- new technology
  - o Shift in volunteer requests/opportunities
- “desperate” requests= volunteers as band-aids
- Needs vs. reality
- Maintaining positive staff relationships
- Using face-to-face instead of email to help them understand
- Share responsibility
- Created a document defining expectations
- Desperate calls from clients- more time on resources/retention

Strategies

- How to you up the stakes?
- Define scope of decision making- who can decide what?
- Concept: look at stakes vs. resources

#### Partnering with staff to maximize volunteer role in achieving missions

*Jean Nierenhausen, Minnesota Historical Society, facilitator*

*Judy Lykins, Century, reporter*

See the survey that Jean developed for the Historical Society (in handouts) - Distribute short surveys annually among staff. Allows you the ability to say no to unplanned projects and to begin conversations with staff. Distribute info to management regularly.

#### Handling perception of volunteers replacing paid staff

*Gail Peterson, Courage Center, facilitator*

*Maury Clipperton – PPL, reporter*

Watch our language, use words: enhance, augment, help, and grow capacity.

- 1) Use the right verbiage
  - a. Enhance
  - b. Augment
  - c. Grow
- 2) Talk about position descriptions not job descriptions
- 3) Having the conversation with staff and volunteer program department about staff job descriptions vs. position descriptions

#### Tapping into job seekers as volunteers

*Bonnie Esposito, Community Volunteer, facilitator*

*Kathy Hayes, Courage Center, reporter*

Be flexible. Give them small, meaningful projects. Find a good match. Have them make a commitment to follow through with the work, even if they find a job. Help them with a career transition or break into new field.

1. Flexibility
2. Small project and commitment to finish
3. Volunteering might open new direction in career
4. Find best fit- match
5. Have volunteering project centered, not open ended

#### You are not alone - Options for additional resources

*Kristin Schurrer, HandsOn Twin Cities, facilitator*

*Vikki Krekler, Guthrie, reporter*

Attend trainings is important both if new to field and in the field longer. . Get staff on board on how to best manage volunteers.

#### Other ideas from note sheets:

Lack of resources:

- Impact NOW program
  - o Eliminate costs
  - o Keep volunteers involved
  - o Project leader- orientation, leader of volunteers
  - o Team of volunteers- regular or episodic
- ING- skill-based volunteering

Affiliation:

- Temporary fix for non profits
  - o Grass roots
- Build management
- What more can you do with volunteers
- Workshops/trainings

Build Capacity:

- Disney- give a day, get a day
- Scholarships/grants- provide resources to find the fit for your org
- Corporate projects- Target, General Mills, SAP, AmEx, etc

What can we do?

- Establish needs of volunteers, volunteer coordinators, staff, org, etc
- MAVA VRL Series (feb 3 and 10, 2010)
- Hold discussions on needs of various players
- Understand the importance of volunteers
- Volunteers make the organization stick together (non profit “glue”)

Tapping into corporate volunteers

*Sue Piva, Cummins, facilitator*

*Sharon Severson, Junior Achievement, reporter*

- Sue Piva from Cummings talked about trends:
  - Emphasis on skill-based volunteering and skill-building volunteering.
  - Tell businesses partners what your needs are.
- Realize the corporation are also cutting back and looking for team building events that turn into volunteering events (JA's Bowl-A-Thon).
- Don't forget about smaller companies.
- Be competitive—work on relationships to find a mutual need.