Social, economic, political, and technological changes in the last quarter century have changed the volunteer sector. This publication identifies some of the trends and the issues they raise for the emerging profession of volunteer management. Volunteers are more diverse than ever in age and background. Volunteers' motivations and expectations are changing. Some individuals volunteer to support their careers and gain new skills. Many individuals must budget their time commitments and desire one-time or short-term opportunities. Professionals accustomed to working within competently managed organizations constitute the fastest growing segment of the volunteer force. Although the 1997 Volunteer Protection Act grants volunteers immunity from personal liability in certain circumstances, volunteer managers still need risk management policies and procedures and liability insurance. "Virtual volunteering" is a new concept that enables volunteers to provide services entirely online, thereby giving opportunities to those who might find onsite volunteering difficult due to disability or work schedules. Volunteer managers must be concerned with developing valuable, meaningful assignments and matching volunteers with them, and they are being challenged to recruit, orient, recognize, and supervise a diverse and nontraditional volunteer pool. Volunteer management is becoming increasingly professional, with a literature base, professional societies, and formal education. (Contains an annotated bibliography of 23 print and online resources and a list of 5 organizational resources.) (MN)
Social, economic, political, and technological changes in the last quarter century have changed the volunteer sector. This publication identifies some of the trends and the issues they raise for the emerging profession of volunteer management, concluding with a list of resources.

The Volunteer Pool. Volunteers are more diverse than ever in age and background. Longer life expectancy, higher levels of formal education, and early retirement have increased the numbers of older adult volunteers. Many employers strongly encourage and support volunteering in their workplace (Seel 1997). Service learning and mandatory community service for high school and college students have increased volunteering among younger people (Parsons 1996). As funding cuts have affected nonprofits' budgets, national initiatives such as the Points of Light Foundation, the Corporation for National Service, and the Presidents' Summit for America's Future are attempting to broaden volunteering ("Presidents' Summit 1997"). Volunteers' motivations and expectations are changing. Some volunteer to support their careers and gain new skills. Many have to budget their time commitments and desire one-time or short-term opportunities.

The fastest growing segment of the volunteer force consists of professionals accustomed to working within competently managed organizations" (Fisher and Cole 1993, p. 4), and they want a say in the organizations they support (Morris and Caro 1996). Mandated community service for offenders or welfare recipients has also expanded the volunteer pool (Bradner 1997).

Risk Management. A litigious society has increased individuals' concerns about their liability as volunteers. In 1997, Congress passed the Volunteer Protection Act, which grants immunity from personal liability in certain circumstances. However, volunteer managers still need risk management policies and procedures and liability insurance (American Society of Association Executives 1997).

Technology. "Virtual Volunteering" (1997) is a new concept that enables volunteers to provide services entirely online, allowing those who might find onsite volunteering difficult due to disability or work schedules to participate. The Internet also provides innovative ways for volunteer managers to recruit, post opportunities and information, and communicate with colleagues (Hawthorne 1997).

Management Issues. Given these trends, volunteer managers must be concerned with developing valuable, meaningful assignments and matching volunteers with them. They are challenged to recruit, orient, recognize, and supervise a diverse and nontraditional volunteer pool, including offsite and online supervision. They must be able to use technological tools and, given shrinking and budget restrictions, be sensitive to relationships between paid staff and volunteers (Scheier 1993). Volunteer management is becoming increasingly professionalized, with a literature base, professional societies, and formal education (Fisher and Cole 1993).

Resources


The presence of full-time volunteer coordinators at Volunteer Maryland! sites had significant qualitative and quantitative impact on those sites.


Issues include scrutiny of nonprofits' tax-exempt status, challenges from small businesses, the right to advocate in Congress, volunteer liability protection, and mandated community service by students and welfare recipients.

Caudron, S. "Volunteer Efforts Offer Low-Cost Training Options." Personnel Journal 73, no. 6 (June 1994): 38-44.

Employers are finding that worker involvement in volunteer activities provides growth opportunities that may not be found in on-the-job training.


Identifies the critical link between top management and the success of volunteer programs. Shows how to develop vision, tap resources, manage legal and risk issues, and assess the economic value of volunteer contributions.


Explains how to design volunteer assignments to attract the most qualified people, examines the influence of organizational image on recruitment, and suggests ways to increase the diversity of the volunteer base.


Describes the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of professional managers of volunteers.


Describes the major libraries, websites, and other Internet resources related to volunteer management.


Citizens serving on government boards and commissions expressed interest in receiving training on identifying and analyzing issues, understanding community resources, parliamentary procedure, group process, and listening skills.

Lundin, S. M. “When All Else Fails: Releasing a Volunteer.” Journal of Volunteer Administration 15, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 15-18. (EI 538 738) Policies and procedures that volunteer managers should have in place when it becomes necessary to terminate the services of a volunteer are discussed.


Parsons, C. “How to Make Service into Service Learning.” Journal of Volunteer Administration 14, no. 3 (Spring 1996): 35-38. (EI 538 734) Volunteer managers face new challenges in ensuring that assignments of service-learning students are designed to enrich their academic coursework.


Sexton, P. Day Care Link—Building Blocks for a Literate Community. 1996. (ED 401 529) Shows how to operate an off-site volunteer program, addressing screening, placement, training, orientation, appreciation, and recognition.

Silver, N. “Organizational Culture and Volunteer Programs.” In At the Heart: The New Volunteer Challenges to Community Agencies. San Francisco: San Francisco Foundation, 1988. (N 1988 6875) A key element in ensuring the “fit” of volunteers with an organization is socializing them to the organization’s culture.


“Virtual Volunteerism.” Impact Online, 1997. (N 1997 9872) Describes ways that people can contribute time and expertise entirely through cyberspace. Explains how virtual volunteerism expands the volunteer base and how volunteer managers can use the Internet to market volunteer opportunities.

Organizational Resources

Association for Volunteer Administration, 10565 Lee Hwy., Suite 104, Fairfax, VA 22030-3135; 703/352-622; fax: 703/352-6767; e-mail: avam@washingtongroupec.org; http://www.txserver.org/ava.html. Publishes Journal of Volunteer Administration.


Sound Volunteer Management, 5954 First Ave., NE, Box 413, Seattle, WA 98115-2012; 206/525-2104; fax: 206/525-3320; e-mail: volunteer@halcyon.com; http://www.halcyon.com/prague@vww/vw/vpmage.htm.


VOLUNTEERS listserver: join by sending the message SUBSCRIBE VOLUNTEERS followed by your full name to listserver@listserv.aol.com

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