

eVOLve

technical assistance for
leveraging volunteers

Corporation for
NATIONAL &
COMMUNITY
SERVICE



April, 2009

Dear Jennifer,

Welcome to **eVOLve: technical assistance for leveraging volunteers**. In this electronic technical assistance (eTA) brief, you will find tips and tools to help you leverage volunteers in your community. It is sponsored by HandsOn Network, a training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Quick Links

The Resource Center
CNCS
HandsOn Network
Points of Light Institute

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This Month's Quote

Courage is saying, "Maybe what I'm doing isn't working; maybe I should try something else."

Anna Lappe, *O Magazine*, June 2003

Ask Us

Do you have a question about working with volunteers or a suggestion for a future issue of eVOLve? Send it to HandsOn Network:

training@handsonnetwork.org

Advanced Volunteer Management Institute

Advanced Volunteer Management Institute

June 21-22, 2009

Hilton San Francisco

Cost: \$150

(\$125 for HandsOn Network members)



Are you equipped to lead your volunteer program into the future?

Are you looking for a high-level professional development experience?

Join world-renowned facilitators Martin J. Cowling, Susan Ellis, Linda Graff, Rick Lynch, Steve McCurley, and Betty Stallings in this engaging and enlightening exploration of advanced topics in volunteer program management for nonprofit, government and community organizations. Held in conjunction with the [National Conference on Volunteering and Service](#), this is the premier learning opportunity for experienced volunteer resource managers in the U.S.

- Explore cutting-edge approaches for effective volunteer engagement
- Focus on the challenges facing volunteer programs in our rapidly changing world

- Engage in individualized conversations with other advanced volunteer program managers

This is a unique professional development opportunity that allows you to explore the trends of today's volunteers. The AVMI offers 23 workshops on some of today's hottest topics, including:

- Creating Exotically New Volunteer Positions - *Steve McCurley*
- Change! Don't Just Talk About It - *Martin J. Cowling*
- Empowering and Mentoring the Next Generation of Leaders in the Field - *Betty Stallings and Susan Ellis*
- The Language of Leadership - *Rick Lynch*
- Risk Proof Your Volunteer Program - *Linda Graff*

Learn more and register [here](#).

Please [e-mail](#) HandsOn Network if you have any questions.

Dear HandsOn,

I have a successful volunteer program, which is continuing to grow. My dilemma is how do I continue to build an effective volunteer management program without exhausting myself?

The Answer Corner

Congratulations on your work thus far! Here are seven practical steps that you may find useful:

1. Invest in yourself.

Allow yourself one hour a week of uninterrupted development time. In that time give yourself space and permission to learn with your email program and cell phone both off.

Take the time to read or listen to practitioners in an activity that will boost your own personal knowledge. Another option is to attend an external training with trainers and leaders who will give you the space to gain many new ideas. Whatever method you choose, go to any training with the aim of gaining practical ideas you can immediately bring back to your organization and utilize. If you gain one good idea that increases your productivity or effectiveness, then the investment is well worth it.

2. Implement a strategy.

Many volunteer managers do not have a clear vision or focus for their volunteer program. They are then at the mercy of competing organizational priorities or worse fads dreamed up by key individuals.

Develop a strategy for your volunteer program. Know why your organization involves volunteers. Understand how you want the program to look in one year, three years, and five years and get your leadership to support that vision. Then work unswervingly towards it. Weigh every decision in the light of that strategy.

This may mean you need to be ruthless as a manager of volunteers. If something does not

build the strategy, you will need to set it aside.

3. Institute systems.

Your time is limited and precious. Every process in the volunteer program needs to have a documented system. Break tasks into steps. Every person should be recruited, followed up with and trained in the same manner. Many managers lose precious time because they spend time trying to work outside their own systems or because others do not know how the volunteer program functions. Every person in your organization needs to know and understand why and how these systems work.

4. Involve volunteers.

Some volunteer managers reduce their effectiveness by not involving volunteers in their own work. There are volunteers who may not want to work in direct service delivery within your agency but are happy to help build your volunteer program. These volunteers can be an extension of yourself. More importantly, some of the key tasks of interviewing, supporting, or following up with volunteers can be handed over to volunteer team members. Investing in these appropriately trained volunteers can multiply your efforts tremendously.

The use of volunteers in key roles sets an example to the rest of the organization. It also places volunteers in key roles in front of paid staff who may sometimes be reluctant to involve volunteers in their own work.

5. Measure impact.

A key part of your role is to know the impact of the volunteer program on the community you serve, on your organization, on your work and in the volunteers themselves. Many volunteer managers only measure their program on the basis of the number of volunteers or how many hours these volunteers serve annually. More important questions are:

- How did the volunteers change themselves and their community?
- How much does it cost to run the program vs. the benefit and outcomes?
- How can we serve our community better with volunteer assistance?

6. Issue policy.

Jenny* was continually rushing around her organization fighting metaphorical fires. Employees would call her in to solve a range of problems. This "fire fighting" meant she had less time to build her program. Stop fighting fires with clear effective policy. Ensure that your policy exists, is straightforward, and is adhered to.

7. Invoke help.

If you ever need help, ask for assistance. Resources in the form of peers, consultants, volunteer centers, and HandsOn affiliates are all there to help you build your program. Take time to look after yourself.

This issue is written in partnership with Martin J. Cowling, President, People First - Total Solutions. If you have three or more years of experience and would like to attend a dynamic, advanced-level training, please join Martin J. Cowling, Susan Ellis, Linda Graff, Betty Stallings, Steve McCurley, and Rick Lynch as they showcase their expertise as leadership faculty for the 2009 Advanced Volunteer Management Institute, June 21-22, 2009. For more information on schedule and sessions, please visit [the](#)

[conference website](#).

Resources

The Resource Center offers tools and resources such as the resources listed below. Go directly to the [Resource Center](#), click on the search icon, and enter volunteer management in the search box. You will find information such as volunteer management effective best practices and volunteer leadership.

For additional resources, please visit the following websites provided by our world-renowned experts and leadership faculty for the 2009 Advanced Volunteer Management Institute, July 21-22, 2009 in San Francisco, California.

- [People First, Total Solutions](#) - Martin J. Cowling, President
- [Energize, Inc](#) - Susan Ellis, President
- [Linda Graff & Associates](#) - Linda Graff, President
- [Stallings & Associates](#) - Betty Stallings, President
- [e-Volunteerism](#) - Steve McCurley, Co-Founder
- [Lynch & Associates](#) - Rick Lynch, President

Visit the the Resource Center to review [archive eVOLve briefs](#).

HandsOn Network Training Opportunities

Please join us for our upcoming webinar on ***Ask the Expert with Martin J. Cowling - Volunteer Management Best Practices***. HON will conduct the webinar on the **Thursday, April 30, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. Eastern**. During this session, participants will learn valuable best practices and tips on volunteer management. Participants will also gain additional insight on dynamic sessions during the 2009 Advanced Volunteer Management Institute. Martin J. Cowling, one of our world-renowned consultants for the Advanced Volunteer Management Institute, will facilitate this session . Martin J. Cowling is the President of People First - Total Solutions. Click [here](#) to register for this free webinar.

If you have any questions, please [contact us](#).



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