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Volunteer Engagement: The Five Rs to Excellence

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Preparation is Not Negotiable

- Before you embark upon our journey as a chapter leader, it is essential that you are clear on essential items:
 - Organizational goals
 - How the chapter works with the national organization
 - Your initiative's goals
 - What the chapter defines as success
 - What will you be asking of volunteers?



Chart your course first!



Before you can recruit volunteers or execute initiatives you must have a plan.



- Do you know your chapter's plan for 2018?
- Does your position/Committee have a specific role?
- Did you or a representative from your Committee have a seat at the table?
- Do you or your chapter lack a plan?
 - It's never too late!



Strategic/Operational Planning

Goal: To develop long-term clarity and consensus around a number of decisions.

1. "What is the purpose for this organization existing?"
2. "What are we trying to accomplish as an organization?"
3. "What path will we take to accomplish those things?"
4. "How will we know if it's working?"

Less about the answers to those questions - more important that you have a continuous conversation about what the answers will be.



Strategic/Operational Planning 101

- An all-inclusive, continual discussion & process
- Regularly referred to throughout the year
- Living document – it isn't "shelved" for the rest of the year
- Serves as the basis that new ideas/initiatives are considered.
 - There are many good ideas that do not fit within the strategic plan. These moments serve as points of reflection and discussion.
- Multi-year tool that enables future leaders to know objectives and understand what the organization feels is important.



What Does Your Chapter's Volunteer Structure Look Like?

- Are you a leader of a Committee?
- Are you flying solo?



The Importance of Committees & Sub-Committees

- Don't be a one-person show.
- Committee members bring diversity in backgrounds, expertise, knowledge and passion.
- Strength in numbers.
- Enables the Committee to focus on more than one initiative.
- **You are developing future leadership!**



The Case for Succession Planning

- Leadership succession planning in volunteer organizations is a critical and high-stakes endeavor.
- Too often organizations struggle to fill vacant leadership positions.
- The consequences of poor succession planning can be devastating.



Consequences of No Succession Planning

- Every organization (including chapters) has a unique culture and history.
- When there is a lack of succession planning organizations find it difficult to fill positions and often recruit individuals to serve in key roles who have minimal experience, few leadership skills or history with the organization.
- *Problems can develop when new leaders are asked to take on major leadership roles without significant prior involvement within the organization.*



Succession Planning Process

- Determine key leaders for whom successors will be identified.
- Identify the competencies of current key leaders.
- Select the high-potential members who will participate in succession planning.
- Interview and select a member for the new leadership position.
- Evaluate succession planning efforts & make changes based on experience.



Succession Planning

- Recruit for positions with a keen eye on leadership potential.
- Effective leadership is *not* about leaving your legacy. It's about continuing the vision and goals of the chapter and committee.
- Mentor, teach, coach, listen.
- Seek to replace yourself so that you can continue to grow and take on new challenges as well.
- Set future leaders up for success by gradually giving them more responsibility.



Five Rs of Volunteer Engagement

- Recruit
- Retain
- Review
- Recognition
- Reward



Recruit

- Define roles & responsibilities of volunteers
 - What skills, knowledge and passion are needed?
 - How might you communicate the value that this position brings to the initiative and the volunteer?
 - Where will you find appropriate potential applicants?



Recruit

- The Invitation
 - Personal invitation still most successful
 - Shorter-term roles can lead to higher level opportunities
- The Posting
 - This is a good way to engage members who are not active currently
 - Have a process in place on how to handle those who “apply”

Respond to all inquiries politely and quickly, with a defined process regarding next steps



Recruit

- Positive Experience
 - A potential volunteer's initial interactions with you can set the tone for their entire volunteer experience.
 - Don't leave volunteers "hanging" or wondering about next steps.
 - Be specific about goals, outcomes, what is expected of them, etc.
 - Become a partner with them in making sure they are put in a position that aligns with their interest and is rewarding for them.



Recruit

- Position descriptions are a must!
 - They add clarity regarding skills and knowledge required, time commitment, length of commitment, how the initiative benefits the organization, how often they must meet, etc.
- Be as specific as possible.
- Also allow for some flexibility – if you are not finding the right candidates, maybe you need to look at the position differently.



Retain

- This is your organization's opportunity to cultivate engaged and productive volunteers that can grow into influential leaders.
- Don't treat them like "free" labor, nor take them for granted – ever.
- Just like a career, look at how you can help great volunteers grow through progressively more challenging opportunities. Cultivate them.
- When volunteers find work satisfying, they stay motivated



Retain

- Managing volunteers isn't easy
 - Volunteer turnover and burnout is common. This weighs heavily on the staff and volunteers "left behind".
 - Difficulty in retaining volunteers often ties back to motivation.
 - Define a satisfying volunteer experience with set expectations so that all can succeed.
 - All volunteers are unique and have different needs/motivation.

The art of motivating volunteers with multiple motives is knowing how to utilize motivators and determine volunteer needs.



Review

- What motivates volunteers?
 - Values
 - Understanding
 - Enhancement
 - Career
 - Social
 - Proactive



Review

- Volunteer orientation is integral to success!
 - The more volunteers understand the organization and how it operates, the more they can align their actions with their volunteer role.
- Orientation session can lay important groundwork.
 - Volunteer Manual
 - Organization Review
 - Position Review
 - Duration Review
 - Training Review
 - Additional Review



Recognition

- Through continuous encouragement and support, the recognition given to your volunteers can play a pivotal role for both you and the organization.
 - Say “thank you” often and in different ways
- Key points to cover:
 - Be genuine
 - Be specific
 - Be timely
 - Be concise



Rewards

- Volunteers in America afford \$240 billion in unpaid labor annually.*
- Because volunteer needs and motivations are all different, think about different ways to reward each volunteer:
 - Personal Rewards
 - Professional Rewards
- Be creative!

**American Society for Association Executives*





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leadership!!!

Questions?