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EDITORIAL

You, our faithful subscribers are no doubt thinking that it has been awhile since you received your last issue - "The 10th Anniversary Issue" celebrating the success of this truly unique Canadian Journal. That issue's editorial extolled the virtue of how we have maintained the focus of our initial vision to unite the profession and to provide a forum for critical thinking around the issues affecting managers of volunteers. "No doubt the Journal will be around for a long time to come" we promised and those sentiments have not changed!

Over the past year, with the retirement of some of our long-serving committee members and costs of printing and mailing increasing since 1992, we have had to review our administrative procedures. Our sponsor, CAVR, also underwent a year of reorganizing their database and with over 60% of our subscribers receiving the Journal through their membership, our production was affected. These developments have encouraged us to look at various options that have become available through the technological advances in today's communication world. Part of this means that we are sending you a survey and we need your opinion so please take the time to send it back to us.

This is a really interesting issue that we have put together for you on 'Career Paths for Volunteers'. We have been working very hard at becoming computer literate and this is the result of our first foray into the world of Internet publishing. It is in a PDF file and you will be able to open it with Adobe Acrobat Reader, which you can download for free at www.adobe.com/acrobat/readstep.html.

Thanks for your support and feedback - your dedicated Editorial Team believes that the Journal has an important role to play in promoting volunteerism across Canada by sharing your knowledge, experience and creativity with each other and we are looking forward to hearing from you.

Chris Jarvis is Chair of the Editorial Team

CAREER PATHS FOR VOLUNTEERS

by Barb Gemmell

"A career isn't just the destination, it's also the journey."

I began my research on the topic of career paths with a review of a number of excellent websites on career assessment, planning and trends. A career path today often looks very different than even five years ago. With change being a constant, the notion of picking one's occupation and sticking with it rarely applies. Managing one's career is now a lifelong process that may take many different routes and often ventures into new territory. Many of the jobs of the future have not yet been invented! It is important to remain flexible, and to reexamine one's skills, the environment and the viability of one's career goal often.

One's career path not only involves having the specialized skills and training relevant to a chosen area of work, but also a number of employability skills. Core skills that have been identified as essential in the workforce today include skills in reading, writing and numeracy, oral communication, thinking skills, ability to work in a team setting and computer literacy. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has produced a list of nine essential skills. One can link to these on www.careerpathsonline.com by clicking on 'skills' or on www.hrdc-drhc.ca.

Downsizing, delayering and mergers result in fewer opportunities to 'move up' the career ladder. The trend today is to broaden one's skills and 'move sideways'. As noted in *Generations at Work1*, there is a need to build a broad range of diverse transferable skills. "This includes learning a variety of work processes, accepting increased responsibility, ensuring one is knowledgeable, has strong problem solving and people skills and is skilled in the use of information technology." Studies have shown that one's strengths in these skill areas aren't necessarily linked to academic marks. Developing one's skills through practical experience is the way to advance today.

The initial step in the career planning process begins with self-assessment of one's skills and abilities, interests and attitudes. Based on the results of this, career exploration then takes place by focusing on the targeting of specific career goals. An action plan is often developed. Career preparation may include specific training and the personal skill development necessary to meet the requirements of the position as well as the preparation of a resume for marketing. Even when employed, the career planning process does not end. The priority becomes career management as one must remain current and periodically assess personal satisfaction. If it becomes necessary to consider a career change, the career planning cycle begins again.

Volunteer activities improve employment prospects

During the career planning process, individuals often look to volunteering to explore different career options, to refine current skills and to learn new ones, and to enhance one's resume. The results of the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (www.nsqvp.org) highlight this trend.

The second most important reason given for volunteering, with an 80% response rate, was to use one's skills and experience. Approximately 60% were interested in exploring their strengths and 23% looked to volunteering as a way to improve job opportunities. The latter category more than doubled with younger volunteers aged 15 to 24 where 55% gave this as a reason for volunteering.

When asked about the personal benefits of volunteering, 79% agreed it had provided them with interpersonal skills such as understanding people better, learning how to motivate others, and learning how to deal with difficult situations. For 2/3 of respondents, communications skills such as public speaking, writing, conducting meetings and public relations were enhanced when volunteering.

Career planning is a priority today as an employee. However I am not certain it receives as much attention when volunteering. The stages in the career planning cycle are similar in both situations. Some volunteers may have a career plan that includes targeting a particular organization with specific assignments and opportunities for advancement in mind. For many volunteers the administrator of volunteer resources or a supervisor will initiate their career path.

A Personal Inventory – The First Step

The completion of an application and an interview are two of the initial steps when one decides to volunteer. Questions will be asked in order to develop an inventory of skills, abilities, interests and motivations for volunteering. One of the tools available to assist in accessing one's core skills is "The Skills Inventory" in Youth Cyberstation at www.youth.gc.ca. In addition to assessing strengths, it is important to think about values. Work-related values such as flexibility in volunteer hours, an opportunity to be creative or part of the decision making process and the possibility for a variety of tasks or advancement need to be discussed if they will have an impact on the decision to volunteer. Taking time to reflect on one's interests and preferences is a necessary first step in the career planning process for a volunteer. The answers to these questions will make it easier to find an appropriate placement.

The age and life stage of a volunteer provides an additional challenge for the administrator of volunteer resources. At each stage there are unique personal needs and developmental characteristics that must be recognized and respected in order to provide the most positive experience for volunteer and organization. For teens, volunteering offers a chance for career exploration, provides an opportunity to learn about themselves and to develop skills to add to a college application or job resume. Having the resources to support, encourage and train is essential when working with teens. The young adult can work with minimal direction, but will look for a range of volunteer activities as a way to expand skills and will want to network and meet others. As one ages, lifestyle and personal aspirations have significant impact on volunteering. There is generally a desire to utilize one's skills and expertise and a commitment to lifelong learning. However career advancement into leadership positions, for instance, may not fit with the volunteer's personal priorities. Some volunteers may be reluctant to advance to another position or assume additional responsibilities. A look at

personal energy and commitment to career development are key when planning a volunteer's career path.

The impact of position descriptions on placement

Written position descriptions or terms of reference are the link to effective placements. The administrator of volunteer resources reviews the positions to determine the essential skills and qualifications required for each and then matches to the volunteer's strengths. Decisions are also made about what skills are 'trainable' once the volunteer is placed. Communication about expectations is crucial! One must ensure that skills required in the volunteer position complement the volunteer's motivations and personal career plan.

Personal development is an on-going process, which begins with orientation, on-the-job learning as well as ongoing education and professional development. An organization that offers training and other opportunities for volunteers to learn and develop also needs to ensure they have positions that volunteers can be 'promoted to' or volunteers will often leave. The volunteer's supervisor must be prepared to stay 'in tune' with the volunteer's needs and interests. Many volunteers are not satisfied to keep doing the same job because they are good at it over the long term. Creating new challenges and offering a chance for personal growth can enhance the retention of volunteers seeking new experiences.

Interpersonal relationships are also a critical component of one's commitment and involvement. Much of the recent research indicates employees do not leave companies, they leave managers. Volunteers definitely look to the administrator of volunteer resources and other staff as role models of the organization's values and the primary link connecting them to the organization. Access to a skilled or knowledgeable person is particularly valuable to a volunteer's work on a day-to-day basis. Strong staff/volunteer relationships can offer opportunities to exchange information, take risks in trying new things and provide two-way feedback. By reinforcing the value of volunteers and staff working together, an organization encourages volunteers to stay involved and consider advancement.

Career pathing for volunteers requires an organization's commitment to a strong performance management process. The systems and procedures to assess performance periodically, to check on how things are going and, if necessary, revise the volunteer's 'career development plan' need to be in place. Delivering effective performance feedback takes time, effort and skill. Making reference to observable behaviours and actual results of a volunteer's efforts are important when deciding on the next step. Volunteers who demonstrate a willingness and ability to assume different responsibilities and adapt to changing expectations are generally very well positioned for career advancement. An enthusiasm for and commitment to learning new tasks and skills also indicates an opportunity for a 'promotion'. Discussions must take place to ensure the volunteer's personal goals and career plans are

consistent with the organization's opportunities.

This is an even bigger challenge with the short-term and episodic volunteers. For many administrators of volunteer resources and staff supervisors, there is little time to connect to discuss what's working and what's not, to provide appreciation for the work done and to look at future possibilities. Creative approaches to this may involve experienced volunteers advancing in their careers to be coaches and mentors of new volunteers. Being asked to take on more responsibility is a demonstration of trust and a definite motivator for the volunteer desiring career advancement.

Working with a volunteer to redesign a position to include additional responsibilities such as assisting with on-the-job training or coaching a new volunteer is just one possibility. Perhaps the volunteer has specialized skills, or has recently acquired training that would be valuable in coordinating a pilot project or leading a new initiative. A unique position can be designed. Periodic reassignment to learn different approaches to working with others or broadening one's skills in a particular area may be part of a volunteer's career development. If this is not possible within your organization, collaborate with other organizations to offer the volunteer a variety of experiences. It is important to remember that each time a volunteer's skills, values or interests change, self-assessment and a new phase of career planning begins.

The administrator of volunteer resources has a key role in the career paths of volunteers. It is unlikely the administrator has the time to be directly involved in all career planning and management. However, a key responsibility of the administrator is to ensure others are knowledgeable about the career path process and have access to the necessary resources to assist volunteers. Staff and volunteers must be kept current and familiar with the specific opportunities available for a volunteer's personal growth and development. Taking time to research and share employment trends can offer different options for consideration when looking at a volunteer's career path. Career planning and management are on-going priorities for the administrator and the organization. As noted in the opening paragraph of this article, "managing one's career is now a lifelong process that may take many different routes and often venture into new territory." One's volunteer career is no different.

1 Zemke Ron, Raines Claire, Filipczak Bob, Generations at Work - Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers and Nexters in Your Workplace, Performance Research Associates Inc., 2000

*Barb launched Gemmell Training & Consulting in September 2000 offering customized consulting, facilitation and training services. She has a monthly electronic newsletter that provides tips and resources.
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CAREER PATHS FOR VOLUNTEERS IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

by Monica McLure, Susan Blakelock and Jane Batterink

Volunteering in an English as a Second Language program has numerous advantages for the ESL program, the classroom teacher and the volunteer. However, there are also some inherent pitfalls, which everyone should realize in order to have a realistic view of what volunteering can and cannot offer.

For an administrator, having volunteers in an ESL program can be an effective recruitment tool. The administrator has a chance to screen potential new teachers in a non-threatening way and will often develop a sense of loyalty to a long-standing volunteer, thus opening the door to employment should an opportunity arise. An administrator can ascertain the volunteer's flexibility, ability to relate to adults and sensitivity to a multicultural student body. An administrator can also weed out unsuitable candidates, e.g. those whose own emotional needs are impediments, whose expectations of the students are unrealistic, or who's past experiences are a hindrance in the classroom.

Volunteers who are found to be suitable may discover, however, that job openings are limited. Teaching ESL in our program has tended to be a long-term career choice for many of our ESL staff, which results in little turnover from year to year. (Almost without exception, we all began as volunteers). In the current climate, volunteers will occasionally find themselves "in the right place at the right time", but they should realize that not every volunteer will be hired. With the explosion of interest in the field of teaching ESL and the plethora of courses available to become TESL certified, there are many more potential volunteers than there are opportunities.

For both teacher and administrator, a committed volunteer can be a real asset in the classroom. Volunteers who are able to work independently and treat the work as if they were going to a paying job are worth their weight in gold. The administrator gains flexibility in placing students in classes, especially in smaller programs where classes are multi-level. The teacher gains an extra English-speaking teacher in the classroom to assist with group work or to work one-on-one with students. This can have disadvantages as well. Teachers who are naturally eclectic in their approach often find it constraining to adhere fairly rigidly to a pre-planned lesson for the sake of the volunteer who needs the structure in order to cope well. ESL teachers often find it difficult to prepare all of the necessary material for the volunteer to use in small group work. Being responsible for the volunteer in addition to regular teaching duties can be very stressful for the teacher. Most administrators also work under time constraints and the organizational details of working with volunteers are just one more thing to do.

For the volunteer, working in an ESL program provides a rich hands-on experience in the classroom. One of our current staff members said, "I learned to do the job as a volunteer. It was good for me and good for the Board, because I learned how to do the job as a volunteer, and you knew what you were getting when you hired me." Volunteering can be a great sensitizing opportunity as the volunteer comes into contact with many immigrant communities. Our ESL program is a microcosm of the world and as such is an excellent training ground for learning tolerance and inclusivity.

Volunteering in an ESL program enables potential teachers to learn "the tricks of the trade." The volunteer is able to practice working with students without having to be responsible for day-to-day lesson planning or having to do more teaching than he or she is ready for. The volunteer can also observe a variety of levels and teachers. In this way, the volunteer can be exposed to a wide spectrum of teaching styles and classroom dynamics. He or she learns to deal with people of different cultures and backgrounds and to recognize the strengths and unique needs of adult learners. Meanwhile, there are intrinsic rewards in knowing that one's efforts are making a tangible difference in the lives of the students.

Volunteering also improves one's organizational and time-management skills. It teaches people how to get a point across without speaking a word of English!! An ESL volunteer has the unique opportunity to introduce students to Canada and also to learn about different cultures from around the world.

Another benefit is that a program coordinator is able to connect the volunteer to the wider network of ESL contacts that he or she has established over the years. Prospective ESL teachers can figure out where they would like to work and develop their own contacts with others in the field. By trying a variety of levels, they can discover which levels suit them while broadening their teaching experience.

The employability skills of a successful ESL teacher can be modeled and honed in an ESL classroom under the supervision of a seasoned veteran. Communication, problem-solving, adaptability and working with others are all skills, which are practiced on a daily basis. Whether these skills are used in paid employment in the ESL field or transferred to any multicultural work setting, the experience gained will be invaluable to the volunteer in the future.

Monica McClure is the LINC/ESL Co-ordinator for Continuing Education, Durham District School Board in Ontario. Susan Blakelock and Jane Batterink are ESL Teachers and together they have over 50 years of ESL experience with adults.

WHY UNPAID WORK PAYS OFF

by Stephanie Pollock

Have you ever had moments in life when you know you'll look back and cringe? Moments that even while actually experiencing them you think, "This is not pretty. I won't forget this for a while."

I give credit to my father for providing me with one of my life's (to date - I'm sure there'll be more) biggest cringe moments. As a student of the University of Calgary's communications program, I was anticipating the month of May, like all my other student peers, with pure panic. My goal was to acquire a 'coveted' summer student position. A position that would give me the practical skills to bring meaning to my years of theory based knowledge.

It seemed this might become a reality when I learned that my father, through his contacts, landed me a job interview at the City of Calgary. A marketing summer student position was up for grabs and I wanted it desperately.

Back to my cringe moment, the job interview. I remember it like yesterday. I pulled up to the building at exactly 8:50 a.m. for a 9:00 a.m., appointment. My arrival time would generally be irrelevant, were it not for the fact that I was back in my car, heading home at exactly 8:55 a.m. And yes, I did have the interview.

My father had convinced me that my enthusiasm for the position would certainly be enough to get the job. It was not. Qualifications were secondary to attitude he promised. They were not.

In the interview, I was asked to present my portfolio of writing samples. When all I could produce was the resume and cover letter he already had, I knew I was in trouble. Suffice to say, I did not get the job.

I left the interview feeling completely humbled, embarrassed and incredibly frustrated. At home, I went through a five-minute crisis. Yes, I reasoned, it was time to change majors. Obviously I was not cut out for communications. Perhaps I should consider a career in psychology, sociology, botany or quantum physics - I did not care.

Luckily, this insanity dissipated quickly. When I realized that my inability to even perform the simplest of mathematical equations might disqualify me from the physics field, I took another look at communications. I decided then that it was either sink or swim. I could give up and pursue something else or I could go full force toward my goal of a successful communications career. I decided to swim.

And so, with adrenalin driving me, I called every not-for-profit organization I could think of. Eight voice mail messages later, I finally spoke to someone in person. "Oh, did you see our ad at the University? We've been hoping to get a communications student. Come in this afternoon and we can chat," said Anette Jorgensen, Volunteer Resources Coordinator for the Canadian Red Cross.

Within the hour, I was in Anette's office having an interview. Minutes later, I was in my future boss' office signing on as a public affairs volunteer. Days later, with knees knocking, I handed in my first public affairs assignment. What a coup, I finally had my first portfolio piece.

Jo Williams, public affairs coordinator for the Red Cross, gave me a variety of volunteer assignments enabling me to get experience in all forms of communication. She gave me excellent feedback and provided me with the tools to learn and improve my skills. In the past two years, I've done public speaking, media relations, special events planning, writing and committee work - all as a volunteer. I've met amazing people and developed a large network of contacts.

The Red Cross has not been my only volunteer role. Instead, it has led to a succession of amazing volunteer opportunities. I've been involved with YMCA Calgary's International Department, sat on Realm magazine's online editorial advisory board, helped with various special events and I am the media representative for Women for Women in Afghanistan (W4WA).

W4WA, managed by volunteers, has been instrumental in my career development. Void of the hierarchical structure found in most organizations, this group encourages volunteers to focus and work within their area of expertise. As I was the only one with direct communications training (albeit limited), I enthusiastically took on all media relations. A position, I dare say, I learned on the job.

In December 2001, W4WA was privy to have Dr. Samar, an Afghan physician, present to a Calgary audience as part of a cross-Canada tour. Aside from assisting with a variety of logistics, I was handling all media requests. Having dealt with media a few times, I felt somewhat confident handling this piece. Or so I thought. The night before Dr. Samar arrived in Calgary, she received a phone call from her son in Pakistan, informing her that she had just been named one of five Deputy Prime Ministers of Afghanistan's new interim government.

To say that media interest increased would be a gross understatement. As three separate phones began ringing for me, I thought I was surely in over my head. In fact I was, but somehow, I made it through. That experience, challenging to say the least, has given me the confidence and knowledge to now effectively deal with media.

Last month, after two years of both rewarding and challenging volunteer work, my efforts finally paid off. I am now the new Assistant Public Affairs Coordinator for the Canadian Red Cross. I have no doubt that my volunteer work directly contributed to receiving this exciting position.

My friends and family label me the 'professional volunteer'. They encourage me to let go of some of my volunteer work now that I have a full-time position. But after two years plus of volunteering, I could never hang up my volunteer hat. I see volunteerism as a win-win situation. Organizations benefit from my time and talent and I in return, have a brimming portfolio and

a deep understanding of a variety of issues, organizations and people.

So thanks Dad. Were it not for your naive confidence in my power to persuade, I would not be where I am today. Which, as a side note, is exactly where I'd hope to be when I started as a volunteer two years ago.

Stephanie Pollock is the Assistant Public Affairs Coordinator for the Canadian Red Cross in Calgary, Alberta.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Leadership and the New Science, Margaret J. Wheatley, 1992, Berrett Koehler.

Leaders Who Make a Difference: Essential Strategies for Meeting the Nonprofit Challenge. Burt Nanus and Stephen M. Dobbs. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

Leading Beyond the Walls, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith & Iain Sommerville editors, Druker Foundation Wisdom to Action Series, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999.

The Inventive Organization, hope and daring at work, Jill Janov, 1994, Jossey-Bass Publishing.

The Breakthrough Strategy, Using Short-term Successes to Build the High Performance Organization, Rober Schaffer, 1988, Harper Business.

Websites:

Canadian Social Trends: <http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/social.htm>

Organization Development Network: <http://www.ODNetwork.org/>

Leadership.gc.ca - good site and good links

Daneil Yankelovich & Steven Rosell, www.ViewpointLearning.com. Includes references to Yankelovich's "Mastering the Art of Dialogue" and other important stuff for dealing with the challenge of reconciling actions with personal values, community challenges and effective collaboration.

Canadian Community Leadership

The following Canadian cities have initiated Leadership programs: Vancouver, Calgary, Victoria, Hamilton-Wentworth, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Windsor, Ottawa, Kitchener-Waterloo, Regina, Red Deer and Winnipeg.

For more information log on to:

<http://www.mcconnellfoundation.ca/initiatives.e/community.html>.

A NEW LESSON IN LIFE

by Noelle Grosse

After more than three decades of teaching, Gordon Brown retired in 1994, but he was not ready to close the book on his career.

At 58, Brown embarked on a new chapter in his professional and personal life by accepting the challenge and adventure of a volunteer teaching post in Africa. From 1996 until 2000, he volunteered through Voluntary Service Overseas as a teacher-trainer in both Zambia and Ghana.

"I thought I would like to work in another culture" Brown recalls of his decision to head overseas "and there was the adventure as well."

In June 1996, Brown left his home in Nanaimo, British Columbia and headed to Livingstone, Zambia to work as a Science Teacher-Trainer at David Livingstone College. The college, which trains teachers for the country's elementary school system, had requested volunteers due to critical shortages of trained instructors. Brown became the acting head of the science department, which he says gave him the opportunity to introduce new teaching techniques to students at the college.

"At first, they wanted me to teach by writing things down for them to copy" he says. His students were used to rote learning with no emphasis on independent inquiry or analysis. Brown encouraged his students to ask questions and participate and he saw some of his graduates try these techniques in their own classrooms. He also worked to prepare them for the realities of teaching in rural Zambia: one teacher for as many as 80 students, often in an isolated school, with few resources besides a chalkboard.

"My students were eager and anxious to learn" he says. "The staff were receptive to new ideas and liked to do new things but sometimes their economic conditions got in the way."

Brown was on a steep learning curve as well and had to develop creative teaching techniques to overcome an absence of resources, unlike what he was accustomed to in Canada.

"You have to be ready to be resourceful and solve problems on your own" he says. He recalls teaching his students to use a plastic bag and rubber elastic to demonstrate the function of a human lung and diaphragm.

Like many VSO volunteers, Brown lived in a small house on the college compound with his fellow teachers and some 300 students who boarded there. Like many schools in Zambia, Livingstone College aspired to achieve its motto, "Education with Production", by operating self-sufficiently, which meant that teachers and students maintained a large vegetable garden, raised animals and operated a maize grinding mill on the college grounds. Every member of the college community had a responsibility, including Brown.

"I was in charge of the impala compound" he recalls with a laugh. He worked with local Department of Wildlife officials to bring up the herd, though he admits that it was tough at the beginning.

Living alongside his students meant that Brown was part of their social lives as well. "My students were really excited to share their culture". "They would take you to weddings, funerals and invite you to their homes."

There were many challenges but Brown feels that he made an important contribution to the school. He is especially proud of his work helping to start a program for disadvantaged students whose parents could not pay parent-teacher association and

uniform fees required by Zambian schools.

Brown returned to Canada in 1998 but soon headed back to Africa for another VSO placement in the West African country of Ghana. He returned to Canada in 2000 and continued his work in teacher education as a student teacher supervisor at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo. Brown's work involves classroom observation and conducting seminars to provide support and evaluation of the students' experience.

Brown continues to apply his overseas experience in the classroom and has developed two presentations, *Schools in Zambia* and *Village Life in Zambia*, as well as a CD on Ghana, which he presents to service groups, retired teachers and various schools.

Brown is returning to both Zambia and Ghana this summer and will continue to gather materials for his global education work. "With the help of my former colleagues, I plan to use photographs and short video clips to depict the life of a particular child in each country." He hopes to develop an educational website to share the story of the people with whom he lived and worked, sharing ideas in order to build a fairer world.

Noelle is currently the communications officer at VSO Canada's national office located in Ottawa. She is a former overseas intern, having worked in Sri Lanka through South Asia Partnership in 2000.

DEVELOPING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

by Sandra Woloschuk

Today's volunteers know that they can use their experience to obtain and develop a skill set easily transferable to employment opportunities. They are a talent pool that managers of volunteers should tap into for recruitment purposes. In order to successfully recruit, recognize and retain volunteers seeking employability skills, we need to understand the skills they seek and why they want to develop and document their skill set.

The Conference Board of Canada is an association whose members primarily include representatives of national corporations. The Conference Board's purpose is to be a "catalyst to engage business and education in partnerships that foster learning excellence to ensure that Canada is competitive and successful in the global economy". The Board defined employability skills as "the generic skills, attitudes and behaviors that employers look for in new recruits and that they develop through training programs for current employees. In the workplace, as in school, the skills are integrated and used in varying combinations, depending on the nature of the particular job activities".

In 1994, the Conference Board published the *Employability Skills Profile*. They identified three key skill areas: academic, personal management and teamwork. Academic skills are the ability to write and communicate effectively, think critically and use technology and information from a variety of sources and fields. It is expected that most of these skills will be acquired through formal education and study although volunteer experience can play a role in

developing these skills. Personal management and teamwork lend themselves particularly well to the volunteer experience. Personal management skills include having a positive attitude and behaviour, as well as being responsible and able to adapt. Teamwork skills focus on the ability to work with others to achieve a common goal. Most volunteer services provide ample opportunities to gain experience in these skill areas.

Knowing the skill sets that employers are looking for can become a valuable tool in a manager of volunteers strategic plan. When developing a recruitment campaign, written materials could refer to The Conference Board's profile and match it to the skills gained through the volunteer opportunity. If a volunteer position includes skill based learning opportunities, but the position's description does not clearly describe them, then a re-write of these descriptions will be required. It will clearly indicate to potential volunteers that the opportunity to develop these skills is available. A position description is a powerful marketing tool for recruitment if it clearly lists the employability skills that may be acquired on-the-job.

Using this approach, managers of volunteers will aid in the preparation of employment resumes by making available a descriptive list of duties, including the skill-set used for each volunteer position. Volunteers can incorporate this information directly into their resume. Providing this information may also be helpful when an employer calls for a reference check. If both the manager of volunteers and volunteer has used the same action verbs and skill definitions to describe the work performed, the potential employer will receive a similar message from the resume, an interview and a reference. Telling volunteers that you provide this type of information for this purpose is another message that can be used in a recruitment campaign.

This type of savvy marketing and recruitment are necessary to compete in the volunteer resources market. Job seekers today are taking a very active role in preparing for their employment opportunities. John G. Kelly, in *Hire Learning: Your Canadian Recruitment Guide*, says that "new-age job aspirants have designs of their own, and with the advent of user-friendly computer software and personal communications equipment, they are quite capable of stalking an organization and taking advantage of a job opportunity to manage their own entry into the organization to satisfy their personal career goals and objectives."

Managers of volunteers need to position their services to appeal to volunteers trying to manage entry into a specific job market or organization. The idea of job seekers 'positioning' themselves to be prepared for a particular employment opportunity is one that Kelly places on high priority: "there are two critical factors that the individual must deal with in choosing the organization that can provide the job opportunity or job choice.... The first is to identify the actual organizations. The second is to position oneself so as to obtain a job offer." A key aspect of that 'positioning' is to obtain the necessary skill set required by the potential employer.

Recognition of volunteer services and the specific skills acquired are vital

components of a written employability skill set summary or 'portfolio'. Managers of volunteers can assist in this portfolio development by providing documentation that certifies any training received, the skills used on-the-job, the length of time service was provided or a certificate that recognizes teamwork or the advancement of responsibility.

By defining the knowledge, skills and abilities that career seekers can gain through volunteer service, managers of volunteers can help volunteers to position themselves on a specific career path. Managers of volunteers validate employment preparedness in a tangible fashion by providing detailed letters of reference or certificates that recognize successful completion of training. Volunteers can then develop a portfolio that fully and clearly illustrates their transferable employability competencies.

1. The Conference Board of Canada, *Employability Skills Profile. What Are Employers Looking For?*, The Conference Board of Canada, 1994.
2. Ibid.
3. Kelly, John G., *Hire Learning: Your Canadian Recruitment Guide*, CCH Canadian Limited, 1997: pg. 115.
4. Ibid., pg. 116.

Sandra Woloschuk is the Manager, Alumni Relations at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. The article is based on Sandra's experiences and research as the manager of a volunteer program for university students who are developing their career paths.

NEWS BITS

The Joint Regulatory Table (JRT) completed its review of Canada's regulatory framework as it relates to the Voluntary Sector, and in particular to registered charities. The report entitled *Strengthening Canada's Charitable Sector: Regulatory Reform*, has been released.

It can be found at:

http://www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/joint_tables/regulatory/index.cfm

PEER EXPERTS

Scenario:

Many volunteers choose volunteering as a method of learning new skills that could possibly enhance their career paths. What steps as a Manager of Volunteers would you take that would ensure that a volunteer's goals are being met?

Response

One of the advantages of volunteering is the flexibility that this activity affords both the volunteer and the organization, which is taking advantage of volunteers' skills and time. It can be a win/win situation for both parties as long as the expectations of each are transparent.

It is just as important for you, as an effective manager to ensure that your own requirements are being met, as it is to meet your volunteers' personal goals. Should the two be complimentary, the situation is ideal.

As the contractor, your organization has the responsibility to outline its expectations first. This is generally done in the form of the assignment description, which should be complete and final before recruitment for the position begins. Among other things, the assignment description should clearly outline the essential requirements of the position. It's only fair that you should define your need before engaging someone to fill it!

The volunteer who is considering applying for a position in your organization has the right to be fully informed about what your real expectations and needs are. They should be afforded the opportunity to examine the assignment description and to question any details that are unclear. If they decide to proceed with an application, they should be expected to outline how they meet the essential requirements as you have laid them out. Unless the selection of your organization's volunteers is handled in this manner, you risk the possibility of a serious misfit between your volunteer and the assignment he or she is attempting to undertake on your behalf.

If you can afford the resources, or your organization has the mandate to "train" its volunteers in new skills, then certain of the skills required to complete the task at hand could be deemed to be "negotiable", rather than essential. Again, this should be pre-determined while you are creating the assignment description. The interview would be your opportunity to discuss an applicant's goals and the possibility of your organization's assistance in achieving them. There are usually many opportunities for a volunteer to learn or to perfect skills in addition to those, which are essential when coming into the job.

Diana Boudreault is the Coordinator of Volunteer Resources for the Ottawa Police Service, which currently involves 500 volunteers.

Response

The desire to learn new skills through volunteering is a very strong motivation and often the basis for a high level of commitment on the part of the volunteer. It is up to the Manager of Volunteers to ensure that this motivational need is met and that the motivation fits the volunteer opportunity being offered.

As with all volunteers, the manager must determine the expectations of the potential volunteer during the interview. The more specific this understanding, the more likely success of the volunteer placement will be. At this point, it is essential to let the volunteer know what can be accomplished and what is not reasonable. If the volunteer's expectations cannot be fulfilled and the parameters of the position cannot be redesigned, it may be necessary to refer the volunteer to another organization.

Having determined the volunteer opportunity will match the volunteer's motivational needs, the manager must ensure that everything is in place for follow up. Is there an appropriate workstation for the volunteer? What training will the volunteer receive? Will (s)he be coached for the position and by whom? Will the outcomes of her performance be assessed? Will the volunteer be given the opportunity to demonstrate initiative or will the job be simply routine?

As soon as the volunteer comes on board, a clearly defined action plan will be needed to ensure the volunteer's skill level is improving. Appropriate orientation and training are essential first steps. Often an experienced volunteer can be assigned as a coach and mentor to the new volunteer providing assistance and hands-on help with the tasks. In addition to routine tasks, if the position can offer an opportunity for the volunteer to demonstrate initiative, greater job satisfaction and increased learning will be effected. For example, a volunteer wanting to improve computer skills may work diligently on data input, however, a chance to design a manual might create much more interest and enthusiasm. If the volunteer is allowed to demonstrate initiative, the chances of building a relationship between the volunteer and the organization are increased.

As well as clearly defined outcomes are, an evaluation system must be in place to ensure the volunteer is not only learning new skills but also performing them correctly. Some pre-determined objectives along the learning curve can help the volunteer progress towards the learning goals and also give the manager feedback on progress. This will also give the volunteer a sense of moving towards his/her goals.

Often a volunteer who is learning skills with a view to a career will move on once those skills are achieved, however, a volunteer who is provided with a clearly defined learning opportunity may well decide to stay with the organization, or at the very least, recommend her friends to the organization. A wise manager will offer a variety of skill development to encourage the volunteer to develop an attachment to the organization. In the best of all worlds, both the organization and the volunteer benefit from this style of volunteering.

Joy Murray, Manager of Volunteer Resources for the Canadian Cancer Society in Vancouver, B.C.

JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

Objective

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views on a specific and predetermined theme.

Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

Submissions

All manuscripts will be accepted on diskette or via e-mail in either Microsoft Word or Word Perfect. Submissions should be written according to "Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press. External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee.

The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

Format and Style

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	Words	Pages
Lead Article	2000	5-6
Secondary Article	700-800	2-3
Book Review	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

Advertising

Limited advertising space will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team.

Guidelines:

1. Only ¼ page and ½ page ads will be accepted.
2. Ad must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Job ads are not recommended.
5. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.

LOOKING AHEAD

June 8-10, 2003

The National Conference

Community Volunteering and National Service

Points of Light Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland - Baltimore Convention Center

to contact Points of Light Foundation: conference@pointsoflight.org

June 12-14, 2003

Vitalize Conference

SHAW Convention Centre

Edmonton, Alberta

to contact Vitalize: vitalize@gov.ab.ca

December 5, 2003

International Volunteer Day

UPCOMING THEMES

Record Keeping

Emergency Response Volunteer

Humour in Management of Volunteer Resources