

If It Acts Like a Manager, It Must Be a Manager

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The position of director of volunteers has a commonly accepted definition in the health, social service and cultural organizations in which it exists. The director of volunteers is the person who is responsible for assuring an adequate number of volunteers to meet the needs of the organization. While the position is commonly understood to entail management responsibilities, there is currently no common agreement as to what competencies or attributes are employed by the directors of volunteers to meet these responsibilities. There are repeated cries from directors of volunteers that they need to be treated as “professionals” and need to be given more recognition and respect for their special skills and abilities. However there is increasing recognition that the position is a valuable one within the organization, but more needs to be known about the people who hold these positions and the areas of competencies which they are expected by employers to demonstrate.

Are directors of volunteers “marginally accepted leadership of a marginally accepted workforce (volunteers)” as Ivan Scheier (1980) suggests? Do directors of volunteers still have to struggle to define their roles in organizations even though the career can be traced to the late eighteenth century? Although a great deal has been written which describes directing volunteers as a management position and as a professional career, how is the position perceived by those who hold the position and those who supervise them? One way of determining this is to look at the ways in which the director of volunteers is evaluated as an employee. If the position is seen within the organization as a management position, the employee evaluation will be done on management criteria.

A review of the classical management functions (identified by various experts) in conjunction with the acknowledged responsibilities of directors of volunteers is shown in the accompanying chart. This juxtaposition of management functions with the responsibilities of directors of volunteers shows that the position of director of volunteers carries management responsibility. However, as cited, much of the literature perpetuates the perception that there is a reluctance among executives of agencies and among directors of volunteers themselves to recognize or deal with the fact that they are indeed managers. The purpose of this paper is to argue that directors of volunteers should be perceived by themselves and by agency executives as managers, and to suggest ways in which to build this perception.

An employee evaluation based on management criteria would include those characteristics which measure a person's ability to perform management tasks. However, directors of volunteers may undergo employee evaluations which are based instead on program evaluation. Such an evaluation would measure the health of the volunteer program but not necessarily the management abilities of the director of volunteers. Now we return to our original statement: if the director of volunteers is recognized as filling a management position, the employee evaluation criteria will be that of management. (see following table)

Management Functions	Responsibilities of Directors of Volunteers
Planning: Determining in advance what will be done.	Develop goals and objectives. Implement board policies.
Organizing: Determining how work will be divided and accomplished.	Interview. Develop job descriptions. Use community resources. Develop resources for volunteer programs.
Staffing: Assuring there are qualified people to fill needed positions.	Identify needs and opportunities for volunteer service. Utilize various recruitment techniques. Schedule volunteers.
Directing: Getting people to accomplish tasks assigned to them by motivating, communicating and leading.	Provide orientation and training. Supervise volunteers. Develop volunteer recognition program. Establish lines of supervision.
Controlling: Evaluating to determine if events have conformed to plans.	Do written evaluations of job performance. Monitor volunteer program. Provide on-going evaluation of program.
Interpersonal roles: Serving as a figurehead, leader, liaison.	Work creatively within the structure. Promote volunteerism. Serve as a liaison between agency and community. Assure communication between staff and volunteers. Maintain good public relations.
Informational roles: Serving as a message center, monitoring and disseminating information, serving as a catalyst.	Enlist support of staff for volunteers. Maintain records. Be knowledgeable about trends and issues.
Decision maker: Allocating resources, negotiating, acting as group consultant.	"Hire," fire and assign volunteers. Identify service gaps.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

There are several criteria for evaluation which can be drawn from the functions of managers as outlined in the previously discussed chart. The commonly-accepted five areas of management responsibilities (planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling) could serve as a basis. Evaluations could be based on Drucker's concept of the manager's management of his or her own time, concentrating on results rather than work, and sticking to priorities (Wilson, 1976). A manager must also have technical and professional competence to run a department smoothly and see that employees carry out assignments. The manager must be a "competent subordinate" to his or her supervisor, or a good employee. Since the manager is the link between employees and administration, a good working relationship must be maintained with both. These dimensions of management as developed by Haimann (1973) can become criteria for evaluation.

Lopez (1968:280-282) has developed a checklist for evaluation of individual performance of managers. This includes such elements as:

Judgement. In executive situations it is necessary to deal with unknowns. A good manager should be willing and able to make quick judgements on the basis of a few, but not all, of the facts in a situation.

Skills. (a) in instructing others; (b) in planning; (c) in drawing from others the maximum in willing effectiveness.

Courage. When the going gets tough, how do you behave? Are you persistent, able to stick to a job, to work on it and to struggle through until it is finished?

Interest in people. An executive must be at ease with people from all backgrounds in personal relationships. How well do you handle hostile feelings towards others?

Cooperation. Even when in control, a good executive must be able to cooperate with others.

Acceptance of organizational responsibility. Capacity to grow. Acceptance of personal responsibility.

A study done in London in 1973 (Gill, Ungerson, Thaker: 51-52) pulled together the characteristics of management and set them into criteria for evaluation. These characteristics were:

1. *Assertiveness. Inclination to assert oneself so as to be an active part of a group effort rather than remain passive to the requirements of the task or situation. Tendency to push forward one's own interests or ideas, despite opposition.*

2. *Persuasive or selling ability. Ability to convince others of one's point of view. The logical presentation of this point of view in order to convince others.*

3. *Oral communication. The ability to speak with clarity, good choice of words and poise. The presentation should be interesting, articulate, and easy to understand. Good vocabulary, grammar, syntax and semantics are all important.*

4. *Planning and organizing. The ability to organize work activities. The ability To make an orderly approach to tasks. Use of guidelines in the approach to problems. Proper emphasis upon organizational structure, cohesiveness, and integration of ideas.*

5. *Sel!-confidence. Positive belief in one's self which is positive yet realistic. Control of emotions. Need for approval by peers, subordinates and superiors is not excessive.*

6. *Resistance to stress. Ability to stand up in the face of unusual pressure. Ability to resist the effects of uncertain or unstructured conditions o performance. Tendency not to be disturbed by opposing views.*

7. *Energy level. Ability to sustain a high level of work activity on a continuous basis. Physical endurance. Vigor. Does not tire easily. Active participation in group exercises.*

8. *Decision making. Ability to make decisions quickly and accurately. Decisions are based on a careful and balanced consideration of all available facts.*

9. Interpersonal contact. Sensitivity to the feelings of others. Makes a good first impression on others. Has political understanding, likeability and empathy.
10. Administrative ability. Accurate and reliable record keeping. Ability to properly delegate. Thoroughness. Attention to detail.
11. Originality and Creativity. Unusual solution to novel or imaginative organizational thoughts or ideas.
12. Mental alertness. The ability to deal with ideas at an abstract level, to learn and understand readily. The ability to perceive subtle relationships of importance.

MILWAUKEE SURVEY

In order to determine by what criteria the director of volunteers is evaluated, a questionnaire was developed and administered in 1981 to fifty agencies registered with the Greater Milwaukee Voluntary Action Center. This questionnaire included management criteria developed from the review of the literature with special emphasis on the work of Lopez (1968), Gill, Unger, Thaker (1973), Wilson (1976), and Haiman (1973). It also included criteria which would be primarily a measure of the health of a volunteer program taken from the work of Reigel (1977). The criteria were accompanied by a rating scale to measure the importance of each criteria in the employee evaluation of the director of volunteers.

The first eleven evaluation criteria were criteria for evaluating management personnel. They were:

1. assertiveness in being part of total staff efforts
2. oral communications
3. self-confidence
4. resistance to stress
5. ability to manage own time
6. decision making ability
7. interpersonal skills
8. administrative ability
9. originality and creativity
10. ability to supervise staff
11. budget making and monitoring

Six additional factors in the list of criteria in the questionnaire were measures of the health of the volunteer program. These six criteria were taken from a volunteer program evaluation manual developed by Reigel (1977). They are measures of the volunteer program's success rather than of the director's abilities because the total volunteer program is impacted by top management, clients, other volunteers, the staff and the board of directors, in addition to the director of volunteers. For instance, excessive turnover of volunteers may be due to lack of commitment of the organizational administration, time and resources allotted to the volunteer program. While these six factors are not an accurate measure of the director's ability, they can serve as information to help the director identify problems and take action to solve them (Reigel, 1977). These six factors are:

1. number of new volunteers recruited
2. number of volunteers giving service to the organization
3. total number of volunteer hours contributed
4. length of service of volunteers
5. the quality of service provided by the volunteers
6. the degree to which volunteers aid the agency in reaching its goals

The responses to this survey came to the following mean values:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Directors</u>	<u>Evaluators</u>
<i>Management Skills</i>		
Assertiveness	3.85	4.00
Oral communication	3.59	4.24
Self confidence	4.31	3.95
Resistance to stress	2.75	3.95
Manage time	4.79	4.75
Decisionmaking	4.39	4.41
Interpersonal skills	4.42	4.55
Administrative ability	4.15	4.10
Originality	3.47	3.79
Supervise staff	3.94	4.05
Budget making	2.41	2.71
<i>Program Evaluation</i>		
Number of volunteers	3.38	3.53
New volunteers	3.00	3.50
Volunteer hours	3.31	3.30
Length of service	2.69	2.68
Quality of service	3.94	3.89
Degree aid goals	4.68	4.29

The directors and evaluators essentially agree on those criteria receiving the ratings of highest importance and those of lowest importance. Evaluators did rate the importance of oral communications higher than did the directors. Except for oral communications, the directors and evaluators followed the same pattern when their ratings for each criteria were graphed. The evaluators consistently gave a rating of more importance to each criteria than did the directors.

The first eleven criteria, which are those on which managers can be evaluated, were given higher ratings in general than the second set of six criteria which are measures of the volunteer program. The two exceptions are budget making (from the management criteria) which was rated lower, and the degree to which volunteers aid the agency in reaching its goals (from the program evaluation criteria), which was rated higher.

The four criteria rated of highest importance by the directors of volunteers were, in descending order: self confidence, ability to manage time, the degree to which volunteers aid the agency in reaching its goals, and interpersonal skills. The four criteria rated of highest importance by the evaluators were, in descending order: the ability to manage own time, interpersonal skills, the degree to which volunteers aid the agency in reaching its goals, and oral communications.

The four criteria which received the lowest ratings from the directors, starting with the lowest rank and moving up, were: budget making, length of service of volunteers, the number of volunteer hours contributed, and, equally ranked, the total number of volunteers and the number of new volunteers. The four lowest ranked criteria by the evaluators, starting with the lowest ranked and moving up, were: length of service of volunteers, budget making ability, the numbers of hours of volunteer service, and the number of volunteers involved in the program.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study one can reach the conclusion that directors of volunteers in these agencies are evaluated on management criteria. Directors of volunteers and the people who evaluate them see the director as needing management skills and characteristics. If this existing perception is to be translated into acceptance among other managers and into the salaries and promotability which can be expected to accompany recognized management ability, directors of volunteers must concentrate on perceiving themselves and projecting themselves as managers. Unless Milwaukee is a unique situation, and that seems unlikely, directors of volunteers do not need to fight for proper evaluation; that is being done. However, AVA and other organizations of directors of volunteers as well as individual directors of volunteers should work to strengthen the management aspects of their positions.

Job descriptions for the director of volunteers should follow the same format and wording of other management level positions. Likewise, the recruitment and interviewing of directors of volunteers should be consistent with the process for other management positions. For instance, the placement and wording of a newspaper advertisement should be representative of the management skills required. We have all seen ads that say the only qualification is "ability to work with people." Organizations representing directors of volunteers should watch for such ads and protest to the employers. These organizations should also discourage people who lack management skills from claiming to be part of the profession. Funders should be alerted that "director of volunteers" is not a position for which the agency should be seeking funds to train an employee unless they treat other management and/or professional level positions the same way.

The individual self-development of directors of volunteers should not take place solely in the company of other directors of volunteers. The directors ought to seek out exposure to other managers and to the general body of knowledge about management. Membership ought not to be solely in organizations for directors of volunteers but ought to be also in the organizations in which other managers participate.

Directors of volunteers should perceive of themselves as managers and showcase the similarities in jobs and skills of their positions with other management positions. Those functions commonly performed by managers which are not always required of directors of volunteers should be developed. These might include budget making and other financial skills. A final comment is the obvious. If directors of volunteers are evaluated most heavily on interpersonal skills, time management and the ability to develop volunteer resources which aid the organization in reaching its goals, then the competent director of volunteers will consistently demonstrate a high degree of competence and increasing sophistication in these areas. Those criteria which the directors of volunteers see as most important should serve as a springboard to the further development of standards for the profession. Those criteria which evaluators see as most important should be utilized as ways of demonstrating to executive management the valid management skills and knowledge which competent directors of volunteers possess.

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