

SUMMARY

On Saturday morning, October 29th 2011, Gayle Stewart (VP, WDRA) welcomed the approximately 15 attendees, to the last of the 8 public meetings on the WDRA’s recreational strategic planning process.

Ms. Stewart addressed 4 topics; *Volunteering, Leadership, WDRA Board and its Organizational charts*. Within that framework, we could think of better or smarter (although perhaps not the “best”) approaches in delivering our mandates (see Meeting #7).

1. VOLUNTEERING:

Ms. Stewart felt that the success of our business is firstly and fore mostly dependent upon the community volunteers. And, in order to successfully Recruit and Retain volunteers into the next 5 – 10 years, we may need to Restructure and Rethink our approach to volunteers.

With the onset of the Baby Boomers (now mostly those in their 50’s and early 60’s), there is a whole new wave of potential volunteers coming on stream. And there’s been a lot of work already done to understand what makes baby boomers tick. Research indicates four main reasons why they volunteer. They want to:

- Support a cause that they believe in.
- Make a contribution to society.
- Share their skills.
- Do something meaningful with their friends and colleagues.

They are motivated by:

- Commitment to a cause, and making a difference
- Building mental and spiritual personal development
- Desire to meet high expectations in a limited time
- Interact with other people who share interests and passions
- Concern for health and well-being

Baby boomers don’t necessarily identify with traditional images of volunteers. Some of the major challenges that baby boomers face relative to volunteering:

- They don’t have enough time. Theirs is known as a sandwich generation – caring for children and aging parents simultaneously leaves less free time.
- They don’t have time during traditional work hours.
- Many baby boomers work full-time and many work past the traditional retirement age of 65. Unless their employers have a corporate volunteering program, these volunteers can’t always be available when you need them.
- The clichéd image of a kindly white-haired volunteer clashes with the way baby boomers see themselves – more youthful and dynamic than their parents.
- They don’t want to do routine or menial volunteer tasks.
- With less free time, many of today’s volunteers expect challenging and meaningful work that reflects their skills and experience.

“Volunteers should be considered an integral human resource at all levels of the organization, including program design... I don’t think there is an organization in the country that has a recruitment problem. What they have is a job design problem.” – Linda Graff

More and more, volunteers want a mission-linked, productive, satisfying work that allows them to use their skills and experience. They want; short-term work, flexible schedules at convenient locations and opportunities to volunteer on-line. To meet their needs, job design is key. Just like in the for-profit sector, job design for not-for-profit workers should include:

- job-sharing,
- flex time,
- telecommuting,
- job rotation,
- and part-time work – all options that will appeal to baby boomers.

A resource by Volunteer Canada, called ***A Matter of Design —Job Design Theory and Application to the Voluntary Sector***, explains that job design refers to the way tasks are combined to form complete jobs. “Using job design principles results in clear job descriptions, a motivated workforce and successful completion of tasks...both the organization and the volunteer have a shared understanding of the work to be done.”

RECRUITMENT is always an issue. Baby boomers are busy people. There is lots of competition for their attention and their time, so we’ll need strategic and targeted recruitment efforts. Reach and connect to baby boomers through **key influencers, like their peers**. If we have baby boomer volunteers already involved in your organization, they are the very best recruitment ambassadors. Research shows that word of mouth promotion is one of the best ways to recruit volunteers. Encourage current baby boomer volunteers to spread the word and encourage others to get involved. Baby boomers are highly influenced by expert opinion. Use evidence-based research findings or testimonials from experts or high profile members of the community.



Recommended General Recruitment Messages

2. LEADERSHIP:

“Communities get better when their leaders do”

- Communities need to invest in building community leadership and citizen engagement **at the grass-roots level** that will ensure leaders who inspire rather than demand and require.
- First, leaders should be ***agents of change***. Leaders will be those who have the passion and motivation that is respected by others so that barriers can be addressed and overcome.

- Leaders will also need to be committed to **continuous improvement and innovation** both for themselves and others. That of course doesn't happen without strong values, a moral compass, and a code of conduct that reflects those values.
- It is not about the influence that results from formal positions of authority. It will instead be more about influence that comes as the result of someone who is driven by values and conveys vision, passion, and a **commitment to shared or distributed leadership**.

Comments from audience: caution here that volunteers need to understand how decisions are being made by decision makers, or they could become frustrated and disengage from the process.

- Part of that will be the result of paying attention and responding to the trends and issues impacting our communities. In other words, being able to sense possibilities while others are stuck in outdated thinking.
- Another competency is about being a leader who is optimistic, proactive, and a **big picture thinker**. That big picture or systems-approach is essential because the issues in our country and our communities are **too complicated to be solved by any one sector or silo**.
- While leaders are examining that big picture, there is **an expectation** that they would pay attention to, and **apply creative responses to** the social, economic, environmental, and technology trends and issues that have the potential to impact our communities.
- Community leaders aren't expected to do it by themselves. Instead they should be **catalysts for encouraging citizen responsibility** and for engaging and cultivating community ownership. That means that while leaders will need to facilitate change, they also should believe in the power and possibilities of individual contributions.
- There is a demand for leaders who will be **advocates for quality of life** and understand that the most important investments that can ever be made will be those made in our children, our families, our health, our environment, and our social infrastructure.
- Leaders must also be able to **plan effectively**. This typically will mean using a community building or community development approach that engages others in a process that will result in **visionary yet pragmatic plans** that **resonate** because they are an innovative response to real community needs and priorities.

Question: how can we help current leaders be better and help new leaders improve?

3. **WDRA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND TEAMS:**

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON:

- Engagement of more members of the community. Volunteers want small tasks, short term commitment, getting their toes wet before jumping into the pool, forming partnerships, job satisfaction.
- Managing change. A culture of openness and receptiveness to new ideas, change and continuous innovation. Change is inevitable and a key to long term success.
- Succession planning. Key to sustainability & success.

- Recognition of excellence/value of volunteer. See www.volunteer.ca. Recognition Programs that work use:
 - **Praise.** Individuals who are motivated to volunteer by praise typically enjoy recognition for their talents and like being singled out for their accomplishments. Since these volunteer efforts are readily seen by others, offer them public recognition at an event, a recognition spot on the Web site or in the Newsletter.
 - **Affiliation.** Individuals who are motivated to volunteer for affiliation enjoy opportunities to get together with others with similar beliefs, backgrounds, and goals, and don't often find working alone very satisfying. As a result, you should recognize the efforts of these volunteers through social get-togethers, Group or being part of a team name-badges, or a public posting of all your organization's volunteers.
 - **Accomplishments.** Individuals who volunteer for a sense of accomplishment enjoy seeking concrete evidence of their work and like practical, tangible projects. To recognize these volunteers effectively, offer them certificates of accomplishment at specific stages in their work should be noted or a completed project should be especially noted.
 - **Power and influence.** Individuals who are motivated to volunteer for power and influence typically like persuading people to see or do things their way, enjoy showing people a better, easier way of accomplishing an objective and like positions where they can help make decisions or train people. These volunteers will most appreciate titles or rank insignia, a special parking spot, or involvement as a speaker at your organization's workshop.

Comments from audience: Regarding the "Volunteer of the Year" award presented annually by the WDRA. The name is a misnomer as it reflects more a "Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award". The way it stands now, many good dedicated volunteers are left out of such a recognition program. WDRA needs a new policy on this.

Comments from audience: suggested that a word of Complaint will carry a much greater weight than a word of Praise. So when dealing with volunteers, we need to deal with the positive and be forward looking. Dealing in past issues only tends to waste time and energy. Any criticism needs to be based on performance or product, and not personal.

- Sustainability for the future.

Comment from audience: It would be helpful if Board Members and the community at large better understood what volunteers do that makes a difference. That is to say, what does a volunteer give back to the community; how is volunteer work measured? A better definition of the contribution would be very helpful in promoting and retaining volunteers in the various jobs that they do.
- The organizational functionality.

Is the management team best structured to produce quality work?
Are people in place to implement future desired and required changes?

4. ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTING:

Ms. Stewart posed the question; is the WDRA Board of Directors structured well enough to handle future demands, if not existing demands? What if the strategic planning process recommends significant changes to the delivery of recreational services, based on future community needs? Is the structure in place to handle that?

Note: Click [WDRA Draft Organization Chart](#) on the History: Strategic Planning Summaries webpage to view the organizational chart.

To initiate discussion only, Ms. Stewart presented a draft organizational chart, (as per attached), that showed existing positions (red rectangles), plus 4 new positions (red ovals); Ice Booking Coordinator, Adult Programming, Children's programming, and Sports Program Chair (revision of Sports Coordinator).

She also threw out a few other suggestions; a) All financial volunteer work under the Treasurer, b) Special Events Chair with a permanent "*Standing Committee*" so volunteers can build skills and take ownership of a part of the whole (as per rectangles under Special Events), and c) Adult, Children's and Sports Programming positions needed to respond to the new community needs and priorities and involve more volunteers at the program design stage.

Comments from audience: some felt that enlarging the size could make it unwieldy and hamper decision making. It was agreed though that any decision should wait until new requirements are presented by the Ad Hoc Committee, and authorized by the existing Board. In the meanwhile, and until constitutional changes can be proposed at the April Annual Meeting, some temporary changes (new chairs- non-voting) can be made on temporary basis, as required.

Other comments: Ice-Booking job could be a paid position. A youth representative should be added to the organization chart. Perhaps more professional support could help improve the Board's work load; a paid program planner for example.

Ms. Stewart adjourned this the last of the public meetings put on by the WDRA Board, and turned future deliberations and final report writing over to the Ad Hoc Committee.

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