

Guiding Organizational Renewal

Quality development involves managing the organizational structures and functions of the volunteer system and its overall working climate.

You need to assess those parts of the organizational system which are important in encouraging a healthy, empowered climate for growth. Regular systematic communications, calendarization, planned replacement strategies, and an emphasis on team building are system attributes that need to be regularly evaluated and strengthened. Continuous growth in these areas will enable an organization to perpetuate itself by maintaining esprit de corps, encouraging retention of present volunteer staff, and facilitating replacement when volunteers leave the system.

Regular systematic communication is one of the primary attributes for a volunteer system. Creating regular and clear channels for announcements of dates, participating in the development of and explanation of policies, and recognition of accomplishments are important to maintaining awareness and motivation of all individuals.

Just as important is the development of a climate for open communication and appropriate channels through which issues and opinions can be discussed.

Calendarization or systematic scheduling is also important to the quality of a volunteer organization. A consistent system for setting dates allows others to be prepared, develops anticipation, and creates a sense of overall direction to all segments of the volunteer system. Regularly scheduling the planning of events on a 12 to 18-month basis encourages less frantic event implementation, less stress, and more quality program planning. Calendarization also allows replacement volunteers to fill in instead of operating from "scratch" since some planning has already occurred.

A **planned replacement** strategy is the next attribute for system renewal. Beginning with a regular review of present role descriptions, volunteers may be given the task of seeking their own replacements or the establishment of a replacement system through formal or informal procedures. Recruiting from within for more challenging positions helps build a base of experience for the future and keeps volunteers from becoming tired of a role.

A marketing approach can be systematically developed to reach out to the existing friendship networks of current volunteers. Or annual marketing to specific pools of volunteer recruits is another possible strategy.

The best attribute is **team building**. It enables all volunteers to develop the capacity to work together rather than in isolation. Team building helps volunteers create a sense of give and take, learn how to work out differences to attain a common goal, and to see the "larger picture" rather than just "the role." Teams can help plan, implement, and evaluate any part of the volunteer program.

A manager who can create a climate of mutual support and a feeling of "together we can do" will be able to accomplish the other attributes of renewal more easily.

Steps to Follow

- *Periodically check on communications channels to determine if they are open, two-way, timely, and relevant.*
- *Develop and use a system for regular calendar development which allows all levels of the volunteer system to plan in a timely fashion.*
- *Establish recruitment, training, and promotion policies which allow for planned replacement of volunteer staff.*
- *Use and support team strategies for planning, implementing, and evaluating the volunteer system's operation.*

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Volunteerism for the Next Generation

