

Chapter 5

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

This chapter addresses the following topics:

- ❑ Characteristics of Excellence
- ❑ Motivating Volunteers
- ❑ Recognizing Why People Volunteer
- ❑ Essential Leadership Skills
- ❑ Why Volunteers Are Essential for Chapter Survival
- ❑ Creating a Chain in Elected Leadership

Overview

Associations are made up of members—groups of people who voluntarily come together to solve common problems, meet common needs, and accomplish common goals. Only by working together under innovative, effective leadership can these members solve problems, meet their needs, and achieve their goals.

The hallmark of a successful chapter is continual renewal through ongoing leadership development. And while we all know that natural talent contributes to leadership skills, leadership does not come naturally. Leadership combines skills and attributes that can be learned and improved upon. Studies indicate that about 2 percent of the members of any group have the capacity to be leaders. Leaders emerge in two ways—either by coming forward themselves (that is, volunteering) or through a carefully planned process of seeking them out.

To ensure an ongoing leadership base, the chapter must identify the people with the greatest potential (who may or may not [volunteer](#) their time) and guide their development. Leadership development begins with understanding what makes a good leader, and then learning to recognize those traits. Next, identify and involve potential leaders in the chapter; then reward them and give them opportunities to enhance [their potential](#).

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENCE

According to a recent study, three critical elements are needed for excellence in nonprofit organizations: a sense of mission, the presence of a strong leader, and an involved and committed leadership.

Mission

A clear sense of mission serves as the focal point of [commitment](#) for members and leaders. It is also the guidepost by which your chapter's success can be evaluated. In essence, it defines how your members' world will change as a result of the chapter's efforts. The mission of a chapter should be aligned with ASHE's mission, which can be found at the beginning of this handbook.

Presence of a Leader

Successful organizations need an individual who truly leads and who creates a culture that enables and motivates others to work together to fulfill the group's mission. The best leaders have clear goals, a vision that looks beyond today's crisis, the ability to develop strategies to achieve this vision, and the capacity to involve others in the process. They must also have the courage to make extremely difficult decisions and a willingness to take risks and challenge the status quo despite what others may think.

Involved and Committed Leadership

While most chapters are headed by a president—a single individual who is the official group leader—chapter leadership should be a shared experience. With an involved and committed group of volunteer leaders, your chapter is more able to relate effectively to your members and to ASHE. Your leadership group also provides a bridge to the larger health care community.

As a volunteer leader, you can successfully involve the members of your chapter through the following activities:

- Regularly gather information from members about what they need, want, experience, and expect from your chapter.
- Provide members with a continuous stream of information about what you are thinking and the rationale behind it.
- Provide quality programs and services that serve their common interests.
- Motivate voluntary participation by offering opportunities for members to achieve whatever benefits they consider important.

MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

Essential Elements

Nine elements contribute to the creation of an environment where members are motivated to participate. The conditions for motivating volunteers exist when people have the opportunity to do the following:

- Use their special knowledge and skills
- Give their life purpose and significance
- Help others
- Be recognized and acquire status
- Feel useful and needed
- Develop new skills
- Participate in enjoyable activities
- Gain competencies and visibility that advances them in work or social arenas
- Use leisure time and reduce loneliness and boredom

RECOGNIZING WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER

People will join your chapter when it meets their needs and interests. They get involved in the work of the chapter for somewhat different reasons. Many want to achieve specific goals. Others are motivated by power, and they want prestige and authority and to influence others. Still others are motivated by the need to interact with other members. By understanding what motivates people to become involved, you can successfully place them in the appropriate volunteer position.

How to Reward and Praise

The kinds of satisfaction people gain from being involved in a chapter are as diverse as the people who volunteer. Self-satisfaction for a job well done is important. But acknowledgment and praise from friends and colleagues stimulates the desire to continue working hard. Among the ways to reward hard work are awards, certificates, pins and plaques, and public recognition and thanks. You know best the culture of your chapter and can predict which of these will work.

The Difference Between Leading and Managing

“Managing” and “directing” are often used interchangeably. When we think about a manager, we think about someone who presides over the process by which an organization or a group functions, who allocates resources wisely and makes the best possible use of people. Leading conveys a more visionary and less technical concept. Those who lead must be able to focus on vision and values. Leading requires long-term thinking, the ability to understand and motivate people, and intuitive political skills.

Being a leader and being a manager are not mutually exclusive. Although some leaders cannot manage and some managers cannot lead, true leaders have the ability to lead and manage. Chapters need leader/managers who are able to blend the positive qualities of each aspect.

Control vs. Motivation/Inspiration

The leader/manager focuses less on controlling what people do and more on getting things done through other people. That involves identifying their strengths and creating an environment where they will be motivated to work toward achieving individual and group goals. Leader/managers begin with a vision of where they want to go and then communicate the benefits of working together to those they want to influence.

Those who are successful are able to inspire others by painting pictures that capture the imagination. They have the ability to create, through their behavior and their words, an environment in which others want to follow them.

ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

The skills described in this section are those typically depicted as management skills. The added dimension leaders bring to these management skills is their ability to involve others in the process of getting work done. Leader/managers help people turn their potential into performance.

Leadership/management skills include:

- **Planning and organizing**—establishing goals, developing a specific plan, soliciting input and support from members for realistic time frames for achievement, identifying who does what.
- **Listening**—keeping in touch with members' needs and expectations.
- **Selling**—selling ideas to others and involving them in implementation.
- **Delegation**—giving members more responsibility, encouraging them and rewarding creativity.
- **Communication**—communicating effectively both orally and in writing, being able to speak in public and to write in a clear, brief, and benefit-oriented style.
- **Problem solving**—helping people learn how to help themselves rather than solving their problems for them.

Furthermore, potential leaders should be open to criticism, sensitive to people, and willing to change. As a leader, your ability to be flexible and adapt to a variety of situations will be augmented if you are aware of and comfortable with your own limitations. A good leader doesn't need to be able to do everything by themselves or to be all things to all people. They learn how to delegate, realizing that the end goal can be reached via a variety of roads and understanding that being right is often less important than being involved.

WHY VOLUNTEERS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR CHAPTER SURVIVAL

About 20 percent of the people in any given group are actively involved while the other 80 percent wait for things to happen. You need to focus your attention on the 20 percent, most of whom will be your potential leaders and volunteers. Leaders cannot do all the work that is required to move the chapter forward. Actively seek out those who have demonstrated a ready willingness to work, and quickly involve them. A good way to identify potential leaders and volunteers is to ask them to create a Volunteer Resume. This will allow you to equally assess each person's individual skills, experience, and leadership ability. Then, identify specific opportunities for each individual so they feel more attached to the chapter. This will be a great challenge and will call upon all your leadership skills.

Take the Time That's Offered

Leaders who give freely of their own time frequently find it hard to remember that not everyone may have the same flexibility. Job, family and career demands, as well as differing lifestyles, all limit the discretionary time members have to give.

As a leader, you must be creative about breaking volunteer tasks down to accommodate the differing schedules of your members. The rewards for making this extra effort are great, for the end result will be the involvement of more volunteers and an increased infusion of new energy.

Create a Positive Volunteer Experience

One of the most important tasks of established leadership is to provide a thorough orientation to new leaders. By acquainting them with the history of the chapter, issues of concern, and ground rules for behavior, you will help

them succeed. They need a clear understanding of expectations to perform well. When expectations and benefits are described early on, people will meet them.

In those few situations where expectations are not met even after extensive coaching, you need to shoulder the burden of leadership, thank the volunteer for serving, and suggest that they may want to volunteer at another time when they will be able to meet the demands of the situation. Even this dismissal of a volunteer should be carried out in such a way that it is a positive experience for the [volunteer](#).

Creating a Chain in Elected Leadership

The greatest reward of leadership comes from being a mentor and encouraging protégés to move into leadership positions of their own. In most chapters this happens by working through the chairs.

The Value of Working Through the Chairs

Once you have identified potential leaders, give them opportunities for involvement. One of the best ways to start is to have someone serve as a committee member under the guidance of an experienced leader. Throughout the term of the committee, those individuals who have shown promise can then move on to chair the committee and then continue to move up the chapter leadership ladder.

Chapters frequently place a high value on leaders gaining experience before rising to the presidency. People who have had progressively increasing responsibilities and are experienced in key areas of chapter decision-making usually have sharpened their skills and bring more to the process. However, it is important to maintain a balance between developing sufficient experience and knowledge about the issues and spending such a lengthy apprenticeship that they lose interest.

In addition, while experience and knowledge of the history of the chapter are important, fresh ideas and innovative thinking can revitalize an organization. Therefore, chapters should encourage those with fewer years of experience in the organization to become involved in leadership, and then provide opportunities for them to move up the leadership ladder. This is the most effective way to identify potential leaders and maintain a quality pool of experienced volunteers.