The Do’s & Don’ts of Volunteer Leadership

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What we’ll cover today

• The top issues facing volunteer leaders today
• The optimal volunteer/staff relationship
• The importance of the strategic planning process & the plan itself
• Do’s & don’ts to keep in mind
The Top Issues Facing Volunteer Leaders Today

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The Do’s & Don’ts of Volunteer Leadership
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

- Fuzzy direction
- Competition for valuable time
- Lack of volunteer engagement
- Limited resources
- The challenge of reacting to a changing environment
- Risk tolerance
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

Fuzzy direction from above

- Is the assignment clear?
- Is the budget understood?
- Do committees understand how they fit into the grand plan?
- Has the importance of driving the strategic plan been emphasized?
- Is the reporting pipeline understood?
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

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MEETINGS

NONE OF US IS AS DUMB AS ALL OF US.
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

**Competition for valuable time & attention**

- You’re competing against:
  - Family
  - Work
  - Personal interests
- Don’t forget those handheld devices that suck up everyone’s attention!
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

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The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

Lack of volunteer engagement

• Everyone is busy & stressed
• The challenge of capturing the imagination
• Do conference call meetings work?
  – What are they really doing on the call?
• “I’ll only work on what’s important to me”
• The dreaded multi-tasker
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MULTITASKING
THE ART OF DOING TWICE AS MUCH AS YOU SHOULD
HALF AS WELL AS YOU COULD.
The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

**Limited resources**

- We’re in a time of pressure on:
  - Budgets
  - Manpower
  - Precious time
- The challenge of getting the job done!
- Leaders have to make sure the task isn’t impossible!
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The top issues facing volunteer leaders today

• The challenge of reacting to a changing environment
  • How do you evaluate changes?
  • Who owns keeping their finger on the pulse of the changing environment?
  • How long do you have to evaluate new challenges & reprioritize?
  • The challenge of reacting to change in a timely & meaningful way
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**Risk tolerance is changing**

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- The challenge of the “it absolutely, positively has to be right” mindset!
- Managing the need for innovation in an era of low risk tolerance is critical
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It’s always better to try a swan dive & deliver a colossal belly flop than to step timidly off the board while holding your nose.

» Tom Peters
The Optimal Volunteer/Staff Relationship

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The Do’s & Don’ts of Volunteer Leadership
The optimal volunteer/staff relationship

• Who’s in charge?
• The challenge of “member led & staff driven”
• The importance of trust
• Tips when you’re working with staff
  – Candor
  – Set expectations on your preferences
  – Ask for their opinion & advice
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The Importance of the Strategic Planning Process & the Plan

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The Do’s & Don’ts of Volunteer Leadership
“What if we don’t change at all ... and something magical just happens?”
The strategic planning process & the plan

• The plan should guide current activities & priorities
• The plan should be a living document that recognizes the changing environment
• What’s the right horizon for your plan?
• Who develops the plan?
  – The Board vs. a dedicated committee
  – How do committees influence the plan?
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- Developing the plan vs. getting into the weeds of how it gets done
- Who owns management of the plan?
- Dealing with extraneous priorities that impact advancing the plan
- The plan should guide the budget
- Deadline targets should be realistic
- The plan’s scope should be reasonable
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Do’s & Don’ts To Keep In Mind

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Do’s & don’ts to keep in mind

• DO be consistent
• DO have a plan of priorities & action
• DO maintain open communication up & down the line
• DO engage the leaders below you in key decisions
• DO ask questions
• DO work to cultivate leaders to follow you
Do’s & don’ts to keep in mind

• DO constantly assess your effectiveness as a leader
• DO commit yourself to make a difference
• DO come to meetings prepared
  – Read the advance materials
  – Think about the issues
  – Form opinions (but be prepared to change your mind)
Do’s & don’ts to keep in mind

• DON’T waste time
• DON’T avoid controversy & risk
• DON’T drive your own agenda
  – Facilitate & channel discussion without dominating the conversation
  – Listen more than you talk!
• DON’T minimize resistance to change
• DON’T be unprepared!
Do’s & don’ts to keep in mind

- DON’T hesitate to percolate ideas up the line
- DON’T shortcut the strategic plan
- DON’T hesitate to be a change agent
- DON’T forget to have fun as a leader!
  – There are challenges, but there’s personal growth too!
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My Gift to You!

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Questions, Comments, Observations

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