Volunteer leaders are a key element for every nonprofit organization. The challenge by most organizations is “How do we get more leaders?”

Think of leadership development as a pipeline in which interested volunteers enter and knowledgeable leaders exit. To increase the pipeline output, you create funnels (initiatives) to encourage leadership. Broaden the pipe so that an ample number of volunteers enter the stream.

If your leadership development is down to a trickle, consider these initiatives.

**Pose the Question** - Ask! - Every leader remembers who asked him or her to consider a leadership role. Surveys report that members feel overlooked when they are not asked to serve. Make a list of potential leaders and have respected, experienced leaders make personal contact.

**Board Member Guests** – Invite members to observe the board in action.

**Shorten the Leadership Ladder** - Not every volunteer wants to give three to nine years to ascend a leadership ladder. Shorten the path. Find positions without the prerequisites of committee service, officer positions, and chairman of the annual convention, for instance. Amend the bylaws to fast-track leadership.

**Organizational Chart** – Members want to know how and where they fit in as leaders. An organizational chart depicts the hierarchy, relationships between board and committees, and the flow of information.

**Progressive Training** – When you identify the skill-sets associated with leadership, you can build progressive courses.

**Transparency** - Nobody wants to join a board that appears secretive. Adopt the principle of transparency in the organization. It is characterized by open meetings, access to information, collaborative efforts and respect for new ideas and people.

**Leadership Orientation** - Board members who receive no orientation will sit quietly for many meetings until they feel that they understand governance expectations. A good leadership orientation increases confidence and understanding of volunteers. Design an orientation program that benefits volunteers on your board as well as the other organizations on which they serve.

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Transitions & Recognitions

Phyllis Snodgrass of the San Marcos Area Chamber has announced that her new Executive Vice President is Robert Watts, former Executive Director of the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce and CVB.

The Greater Dallas Chamber of Commerce is now known as the Dallas Regional Chamber under the leadership of their new President James C. Oberwetter.

Welcome Mary C. Evans, is the new President of the Cy-Fair Chamber of Commerce.

The new Director of the Round Top Chamber of Commerce is Laurie Fisbeck.

Following the now retired Pat Adams, welcome the new Executive Director of the Mount Pleasant/Titus County Chamber, Natalie Davis.

The new Director of the Brownfield Chamber of Commerce is Tory Decker Hook.

The new Executive Director of the Camp County Chamber of Commerce is Lynda Stringer.

Congratulations to Paco Mendoza, the new Executive Director of the Zapata County Chamber of Commerce.

A long time friend and Past Chair of TCCE has returned to our profession. Please welcome Diane Holland, CEO of the Magnolia Parkway Chamber of Commerce.

The new President at the Schertz Chamber of Commerce is Christie Bourquin.

The new President at the Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce, is Frances Rushing, formerly the CEO of the Schertz Chamber of Commerce.

Increase Leadership

Celebrate Leadership – Those who contribute time to the organization deserve recognition. Do you promote the prestige associated with leadership? From photos on the website (“Meet the Leadership Team”) to a printed brochure introducing stakeholders to the leaders.

Board Manual - Give leaders the documents they need to govern. From bylaws and articles of incorporation, to the strategic plan and budget - volunteers are handicapped without the information. Some organizations format the board manual in a notebook, on a thumb-drive, as a CD-ROM or maintain it on password protected website as a virtual manual. Be sure to include written job descriptions for officers and board so they don’t have to learn by trial and error (board job descriptions are available at www.nonprofitcenter.com.)

Leadership Development Committee - A nominating committee traditionally focuses on current year potential leaders. Organizations are expanding the role of the committee to a broader Leadership Development Committee. Duties include identifying the slate of candidates, facilitating a board evaluation process, participating in orientation and updating the board manual.

Young Leaders Forum - Young leaders often have more time and energy. They are eager to test their skills. Organize a group of motivated young professionals. Many organizations find the young professionals to be a self-governed council or committee that is willing to undertake fund-raising and special projects.

Position the Call – In many cases it’s all about how you ask for volunteers. The Special Libraries Association (SLA.org) posts “Why Seek a Leadership Position.” If the call for volunteers looks the same every year, then you might get the same minimal response.

In closing, to quote Peter Drucker, “Leaders grow - they are not made.” The process to develop leaders should be a continuous effort of board and staff (most organizations include it in their strategic plan.) Mix and match these strategies to improve the flow of new leaders in your organization.

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www.nonprofitcenter.com  • bob@rchcae.com

Bob Harris, CAE, is the author of Association Management 101 Online©; creator of the Association Self-Auditing Process© and co-author of “Building an Association Management Company.”