

The Mission Driven Volunteer

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Imagine this.

One of your members has a great idea for a new service your association could provide. It's innovative, exciting, squarely within your mission, and likely to have a significant impact on the future of your profession.

She contacts one of your staff, who walks her through the simple, well-documented process of preparing a short proposal that includes resource requests, which she is then able to take directly to your Board at their next monthly call. After a brief presentation and discussion, your Board votes on – and approves – the proposal during the call.

Your staff member then provides the newly appointed task force leader the dossiers of your available ad hoc volunteers, which list their skills, interests, and availability, and helps her post a call for additional volunteers through your various communications channels.

The task force leader selects her team, works the project (with staff administrative support), and in six months, has a business plan for the new service, including a market analysis of the demand and a thumbnail budget, ready for Board consideration. When the Board approves moving ahead, the task force passes the reins to member volunteer subject matter experts who will work with your staff to make your new service a reality.

Does this sound too good to be true? It's not magic, but it does require a fundamental change in how you think about volunteering. In this whitepaper, we'll show you how. ✨



Problems with the Current Model

The Committee Model Is Broken

For too many of our organizations, the previous example seems truly an unattainable dream. Reality looks more like this:



All of these, we would argue, are artifacts of a committee-based volunteer system, in which a large number of standing committees is confined by regimented meeting schedules, processes, charters, terms, and structures.

This model is pathological for several reasons:

- It ignores the reality of generational differences.
- It handcuffs organizational decision-making.
- It limits opportunities for involvement.

Generations: Good News, Bad News

In 2008, ASAE published *The Decision to Volunteer*. As reported on page 43, Generation X and the Millennials were lagging Baby Boomers significantly in both whether or not they volunteered at all and also in level of commitment required by the volunteering they did do (ad hoc versus ongoing/committee versus Board-level).

EXHIBIT 5.1

Age

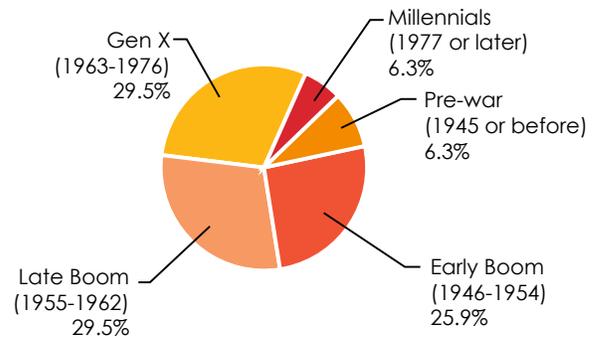


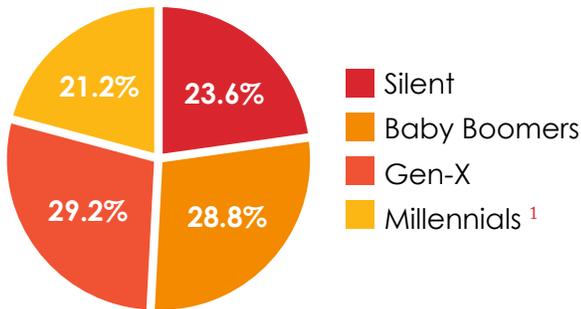
EXHIBIT 5.12

Cosponsor Level of Volunteering by Age

	Pre-war (1945 or before)	Early Boom (1946-1954)	Late Boom (1955-1962)	Gen X (1963-1976)	Millennials (1977 or later)
	%	%	%	%	%
Governance	9.5	10.5	8.0	6.5	6.2
Committee/ongoing	12.3	11.2	9.0	8.1	5.7
Ad hoc	25.2	20.0	18.4	17.3	14.3
None	53.0	58.3	64.6	68.1	73.8

Reprinted with permission from *The Decision to Volunteer*, © 2008 ASAE.

By 2011, that had shifted, with Gen-Xers leading among all generational cohorts in volunteer participation.



That's the good news.

The bad news is that Gen-Xers, currently in their core parenting years, are focused primarily on community based volunteering and/or volunteering that relates directly to their children, particularly in the areas of teaching, coaching, tutoring, and mentoring.² They are much **less** likely to volunteer professionally by serving on boards and committees.³

This may also be related to the fact that Gen-Xers, generationally inclined to independence and self-reliance, are impatient with traditional volunteerism models, with their focus on structure and stability, in which the organization decides what tasks committees will perform, and change comes only slowly and incrementally. An entrepreneurial generation requires an entrepreneurial model of volunteerism.

According to Nancy Macduff, in *The Multi-Paradigm Model of Volunteering*:

“In organizations that want volunteers to fit their definitions of what it means to volunteer, the entrepreneur will not fit. In fact, entrepreneurs who try to work with an organization are often rebuffed, thus leaving and going it alone. Managers and organizations historically have not learned how to deal with these volunteers nor understand how such lone activities fit with volunteering. Meanwhile entrepreneurs work hard on their own time without compensation to facilitate radical change one person at a time....They neither seek nor appreciate being managed and are nonconformists. But they may be willing to lend their ideas to a cause if allowed to work independently.”⁴

Meanwhile, the Millennial generation, the oldest of whom, at 30, are just entering their career-focused years, are volunteering in “record numbers” and are interested in leadership positions that make the most of their professional skills.⁵ Unfortunately, those professional skills are still being developed, and most early career professionals lack the personal resources to assume positions that require significant time and financial

1. <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/rankings.cfm>

2. http://www.serve.gov/stories_detail.asp?tbl_servestories_id=627

3. *The Decision to Volunteer*, pp. 44-45

4. http://www.volunteertoday.com/ARCHIVES2007/4Q06%20Workshop_Macduff.pdf

5. <http://blogs.volunteermatch.org/volunteeringiscsr/2012/07/03/the-2012-millennial-impact-report-harnessing-generation-y-for-csr-and-evp-success/>

investments, and may not yet have the clout within their organizations to persuade their employers to provide this type of support.

Furthermore, according to the *Volunteering in America* study referenced above, volunteer retention rates are declining. The JF Fixler Group posits:

“...[W]e think that’s only half of the story....We (and others in the field) have been talking for years about how volunteers are seeking shorter-term assignments, flexibility, and project-based work. So, isn’t this trend, in part, a manifestation of the new generations of volunteers? The challenge at hand is not about how to re-invent your retention strategies, but rather it is about how to create – and sustain – a dynamic culture of volunteer engagement, in which volunteers can come and go as their schedules and your opportunities align.”⁶

This also aligns with the findings of *The Decision To Volunteer*, in which “I do not know of any volunteer opportunities that can be done electronically or virtually,” and “I do not know of any short term assignments for volunteers” ranked among the top five reasons given for not volunteering.⁷

To sum up, while younger, upcoming generations are willing and enthusiastic volunteers, they seek different kinds of volunteer experiences that their predecessors, ones that are less about structure, position, and prestige, and are

focused instead on independence, meaning, impact, and “getting it done,” none of which are easily accommodated by the traditional committee model.

Decision-Making: Slow, Inefficient, and Unoriginal

Generally speaking, committees set their major strategic directions, and concurrently, make most of their major decisions, once a year, with perhaps a mid-year check-in for adjustments. That means that, at best, a committee can consider an innovative idea at a time when it can actually provide the approval to move forward every 6 to 12 months. If the committee is interested in addressing something that requires Board approval, this can easily stretch into a multi-year process, as the committee decides to tackle a project, researches the project, presents it to the Board, waits for approval, gets approval, and then can actually begin work. In the meantime, the original opportunity is long gone.

The traditional committee cycle encourages lengthy deliberation, which is not always a bad thing. In routine situations, where inputs and outputs are predictable, research indicates that we benefit from additional time to analyze and decide.⁸ The normal committee cycle is well adapted to these types of decisions.

But in new situations or crises, we need “active learning,” in which we make some decisions immediately, test, learn, and then iterate in the next round. It may be trite to mention that the pace of change only continues to accelerate, but that doesn’t mean it’s not true. Unfortunately, the traditional committee model is ill-suited to the rapid decision-making and experimentation required to craft innovative responses to new situations.

6. <http://www.jffixler.com/volunteering-america-2011-generation-generation>

7. *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 103

8. <http://econsultancy.com/us/blog/10568-why-slow-decision-making-is-often-best>

And even the decisions that do get made by committee may not be good ones. The more time we spend together in committee meetings and on calls, the more we'll collaborate, and the better our outcomes will be, right?

Uh, no.

According to a 2012 *New York Times* article, "The Rise of the New Groupthink":

"...[D]ecades of research show that individuals almost always perform better than groups in both quality and quantity, and group performance gets worse as group size increases....People in groups tend to sit back and let others do the work; they instinctively mimic others' opinions and lose sight of their own; and, often succumb to peer pressure."⁹

This groupthink process is exacerbated when the same volunteer positions keep being rotated among the same cast of characters year after year. It is further reinforced by the consensus-based decision-making model many committees demand, where all committee members have to agree, or at least agree to present a united front once the decision is made public.

Even worse, all this dysfunction happens in committees that have clear tasks they are charged with accomplishing.

Then there's the problem of "zombie" committees,¹⁰ in which members spend a majority of their time consumed with busy-work, pulling limited organizational resources (staff, time, money) away from mission-related projects all because, as standing committees, they're required to do **something**.

Limited Opportunities for Involvement

The optimum size of association boards is a hotly debated question in association management. But whether your organization's answer is 10 or 100 or 1000, it's never "infinity." There are only so many seats at the table.

"But wait!" you say. "My biggest problem is recruiting enough volunteers, not having so many I have to turn some away. I *wish* I had that problem."

That's the other limit on involvement: by defining volunteering narrowly as "committee service," we confine our pool of available volunteers only to those who can meet the demands of that committee service, which can be significant. Committee service generally includes promising to attend in person and virtual meetings for at least a full year. That, in turn, requires the ability to get release from paid employment to attend to committee duties, and, likely, financial resources to travel, since many organizations (and employers) do not reimburse committee travel. It also requires the willingness and ability to sacrifice time that could be spent on other pursuits (personal or professional) to committee work and committee travel.

Gen-X parents are often unwilling to sacrifice family time, and early-career Millennials lack the seniority to compel their employers to allocate resources. And we wonder why we have trouble attracting early and mid-career professionals to serve, when the only option we give them for involvement is joining a standing committee.

So if standing committees are no longer an effective way to approach volunteering, what is? 

9. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/15/opinion/sunday/the-rise-of-the-new-groupthink.html?pagewanted=all>

10. <http://highcontext.com/2010/05/04/have-you-killed-your-sacred-zombie-cow-today/>

Mission Driven Volunteering

“Volunteering is at a threshold of total change. In the next decade we’ll be looking at something entirely different.”

Margaret Bell of Volunteering Australia
2012 International Association for Volunteer Effort World Volunteer Conference

Bell’s prediction is already unfolding as we see clear changes in volunteering driven, in part and as she noted, by young people’s attitudes that are going through a “seismic change, as human rights, environmental impact, and other global issues take precedence over material concerns.”

A number of research studies and innovative volunteer-supported projects reinforce Bell’s prediction, providing us with a new working definition for volunteerism: **giving one’s time and talent to drive mission.** This new definition draws on two intrinsic motivations to volunteer, with the focus on the **outcomes of volunteering** and the **functions needed to drive those outcomes.** This turns the image of volunteering, which traditionally starts with a Board and trickles down or begins with the job title and then the description, upside down.

Why now? In part it’s due to generational changes, but the answer is really found in technological advances, particularly around the Internet, social media, and mobile, which both facilitate and increase demand for ad hoc and virtual volunteering opportunities.

Volunteering Myths Revisited, Volunteering Truths Revealed

ASAE’s *The Decision To Volunteer* provided the association world with the first ever serious research study into association volunteering and, in doing so, struck down a number of myths that have hampered effective volunteer management.

Myth #1: Association volunteers are largely self-serving. People only volunteer to meet their own needs, e.g., to improve their professional skills or standing, to build a resume, or to garner professional acceptance.

Truth #1: The top four reasons given for volunteering for an association are all outward-facing, beginning with “I feel it is important to help others” and “I can do something for the profession or cause that is important.”¹¹ In other words, volunteering is mission-driven. *The Decision To Volunteer* described this as *pro-social volunteering*: “because volunteer motivations are mixed, volunteerism is best viewed as a pro-social rather than a self-sacrificial activity – it benefits others but does not restrict the volunteer’s own possible benefits.”¹²

Myth #2: The main deterrents to volunteering are items outside of the control of organizations, e.g. a given potential volunteer’s personal situation.

Truth #2: Most of the reasons people don’t volunteer are tied directly to poor volunteer management and, in fact, the study concluded that “organizations could increase volunteer retention and reduce turnover by investing in volunteer management practices.”¹³

According to *Associations Now*, a study published in the June 2013 issue of the *American Sociological Review* provides further support for the argument that poor management negatively impacts volunteering. Matthew Baggetta, Professor of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University and coauthor of “Leading

11. *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 24

12. *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 24

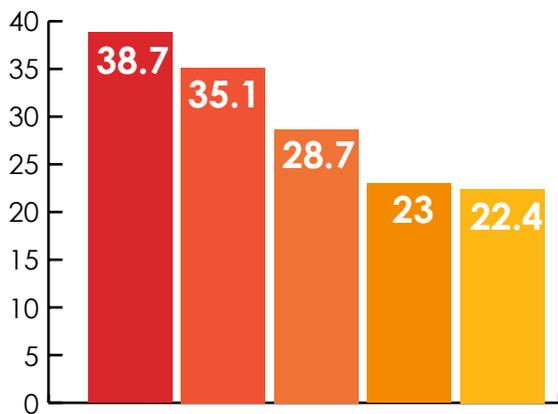
13. *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 12

Associations: How Individual Characteristics and Team Dynamics Generate Committed Leaders,” noted that a key deterrent to commitment is those endless meetings.

“More time in meetings meant less committed volunteer leaders. ‘If a team spent substantial proportions of their collective time in meetings, generally speaking, individual members of that team would give less time overall.’”

In other words, the more time spent away from directly advancing the mission of the association and the more time spent on administrative trivia, the greater the volunteer dissatisfaction.¹⁴

Top Five Inhibitors to Volunteering¹⁵



- 1. Lack of Information about Opportunities to Volunteer
- 2. Conflict with other volunteering activity
- 3. Never asked to volunteer
- 4. Lack of information about virtual volunteering
- 5. Lack of information about short-term assignments

Myth #3: The decision to volunteer is largely spontaneous, triggered by a call for action.

Truth #3: As *The Decision To Volunteer* researchers found, volunteering – or not – is a calculated decision, in which individuals weigh the task, the time investment, and their own personal needs. In other words, the decision to volunteer is a *choice*, and when considered in light of the first two myths, it’s one made based on the ability to further the mission of the association through a meaningful opportunity that provides clear results. Or, as we call it, **mission-driven volunteering**.

Top Five Drivers to Volunteering¹⁶

1. It's important to help others
2. Do something for profession/ cause important to me
3. Feel compassion for others
4. Gain new perspectives
5. Explore my own strengths

14. <http://associationsnow.com/2013/06/study-looks-at-what-drives-volunteer-leaders-commitment/>

15. *The Decision To Volunteer*, pg. 103

16. *The Decision To Volunteer*, pg. 23

What is Mission-Driven Volunteering?

It begins with a volunteer role and philosophical approach that draw their significance from the organization's mission rather than from a particular title or level in the committee structure. Mission-driven volunteer roles are built around what the association needs to accomplish, not what positions the association needs to fill. A significant contributor is changing your mindset to building teams around projects, not the fiscal year. Function first; form second.

How this plays out in any given association is unique to each situation. As shown in the three case studies below, mission-driven volunteering can result in a broad overhaul of the governance structure, or it can produce a philosophical shift in which volunteering is seen as intrinsic to widespread member engagement rather than to only a subset of highly involved members. In any case, it's about allowing members to design their own engagement in ways that connect to the association's mission and to their own skills, abilities, and passions.

The hallmarks of a mission-driven volunteer program include:

- Projects are evaluated based on how they contribute to mission.
- Structure is built around project-oriented teams rather than the budget cycle.
- Volunteers are selected based on competencies and skills rather than for position title, tenure, or political reasons.
- The litmus test for maintaining standing committees is breadth of oversight (e.g., fiscal oversight, leadership development/nominations) or legal requirements (e.g., state or federal laws requiring an executive committee).

- It embraces and enables micro-volunteering (more on this below).
- It democratizes volunteering, allowing more people to participate and for those volunteers to create their own opportunities.

Embracing the New Philosophy: Adhocracy as a Governance Model

“Adhocracy: A flexible, adaptable, and informal organizational structure without bureaucratic policies or procedures.”

Dictionary.com

The application of adhocracy to business models is credited to Alvin Toffler¹⁷, who predicted that adhocracy may replace bureaucracy in his 1970 book *Future Shock*. Robert H. Waterman, Jr. then devoted a book, *Adhocracy: The Power to Change*, to the subject giving business – and associations – a road map to embracing adhocracy. He wrote:

“Consider the difficulty America and its institutions seem to have coping with change.... Bureaucracy gets us through the day; it deals efficiently with everyday problems. Trouble is, change ignores conventional bureaucratic lines.”¹⁸

17. <http://www.jfs.tku.edu.tw/15-2/A03.pdf>

18. *Adhocracy: The Power to Change*, pg. 17

While few associations have formally adopted adhococracy as a governance model, a growing number are using it to refashion their committee structures. The most common application is to replace standing committees with task forces or short-term groups, which, as the Oncology Nursing Association case study below demonstrates, dramatically increases both opportunities to contribute and actual participation.

Embracing the New Philosophy: Micro-Volunteering

What is micro-volunteering?

- “Easy, quick, low-commitment actions that benefit a worthy cause” (Help From Home¹⁹)
- “Convenient, bite-sized, crowdsourced and network managed” (Sparked²⁰)
- “The act of voluntarily participating in day-to-day situations that occupy a brief amount of time” (University of Guelph Student Volunteer Connections²¹)
- “Serving the association...on an as-needed basis”²²

“Micro-volunteer,” “episodic volunteer,” “ad-hoc volunteer” – regardless of the title, the concept is the same. It is about contributing time and talent in small, convenient increments. The common characteristics of micro-volunteering jobs are:

- Mission-related
- Discrete and/or small
- Non-hierarchical
- Of the moment
- Synchronized mass mobilization

- Does not require an application process, screening, or training period
- Takes only minutes to a few hours to complete
- Does not require an ongoing commitment

It is useful at this point to note that according to *The Decision To Volunteer*, micro-volunteers, or volunteers performing ad-hoc roles, make up the largest percentage of volunteers at 59.5 percent. They contribute 49 or fewer hours per year and contribute most frequently in ways related to content (research, conducting literature reviews, analyzing data, preparing background information for regulators and press, reviewing proposals) or teaching and mentoring.²³

Micro-volunteering has caught on, as witnessed by the explosion of volunteering sites. An NPR interview with Jacob Colker, co-founder of the San Francisco-based Extraordinaries, which delivers on-demand, on-the-spot microvolunteer opportunities through mobile phones, noted:

“... Microvolunteerism is perfectly suited for the Millennial Generation. They are used to text messaging, MySpace, Facebook, get-in, get-out, instant gratification. For them, going out and cleaning up a park — that’s not necessarily attractive to them. As we introduce them to the warm fuzzy feeling of doing good [through small mobile calls for action], that will increase awareness.”²⁴

19. <http://helpfromhome.org>

20. <http://hello.sparked.com>

21. <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~svc/>

22. ASAE – *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 28

23. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=106118736>

24. ASAE – *The Decision to Volunteer*, pg. 28

Micro-volunteering provides one more key benefit: it is a gateway to deeper engagement with an organization or association. *The Decision To Volunteer* highlighted this, noting that ad-hoc roles are often the entry point for new volunteers who later go on to become volunteer leaders. While we can't know for sure if micro-volunteering is merely a trend or a permanent change, the UK-based Institute of Volunteering Research released a paper in 2012 in which they reported that 83 percent of micro-volunteers would recommend it to friends and family, and 95 percent plan to continue micro-volunteering in the future.²⁵

Some of the best examples of harnessing the power of micro-volunteering include:

- ASAE Town Square: <http://collaborate.asaecenter.org/volunteer/> (open-volunteering made easy)
- WAMU Public Insight Network: <https://www.publicinsightnetwork.org/> (example of adhocracy in action)
- NASA Citizen Scientists: <http://science.nasa.gov/citizen-scientists/> (example of adhocracy in action) 

25. <http://www.volunteerweekly.org/the-rise-of-microvolunteering/>

Case Study: Maryland Association of CPAs

“Our goal is to be the catalyst, not the hub.”

Tom Hood, CEO, Maryland Association of CPAs

Their biggest gathering doesn't look like a volunteer event to many, but to Tom Hood, CEO of the Maryland Association of CPAs (MACPA), it is indeed. Twice a year, MACPA hosts a series of town hall meetings to convene members for updates, education, and conversation. To Hood and his leadership, what's actually happening is volunteering: through conversations and sharing, members are creating content. The association shares the latest trends and issues facing the CPA profession, and members share their insights. MACPA's town halls are designed to facilitate member engagement. It's all part of a plan to be, as Hood says, the catalyst rather than the hub.

This much broader definition of volunteering is an outgrowth of a collaborative strategic process MACPA went through in 2000, which flowed from a dramatic “reinvention plan” crafted in 1999. This reinvention plan was undertaken to better align the organization with its vision. MACPA was responding to three warning signs: volunteers were expressing some dissatisfaction with the traditional structures of committees and chapters; new and younger members weren't participating; and members were less inclined to engage in the critical challenges facing the CPA profession. About the same time, Hood attended a 2000 ASAE think tank session on “community as strategy,” which prompted him to consider this question: If member value relates to community, and the core of the association is the community, was MACPA leveraging its community effectively to generate member value?

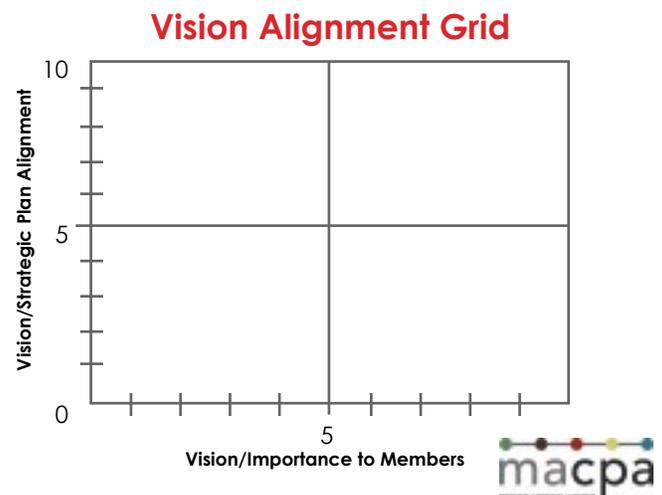
The facts suggested otherwise. First, while the organization had a clearly articulated strategy designed to advance their mission, the leadership identified key strategic needs for which they lacked dedicated resources. Second, the organization was spending an extraordinary amount of staff time and resources supporting committees

and chapters that were not working towards those identified strategic needs, and attempts to encourage them to take up more strategic projects were failing miserably.

Those two observations prompted a call for a paradigm shift. “We needed to move resources from standing committees to projects that mattered,” said Hood. And they did, but the “they” was not the Board or some subset of members, but rather all the stakeholders: members, leaders, grassroots, and staff. That is where being the catalyst rather than the hub made the difference that mattered.

Reimagining the Volunteer Role

MACPA called a volunteer meeting at which each of the committees and member groups assessed their activities, evaluated alignment against the MACPA strategic plan, and uncovered any misalignments. Working with a grid where the X-axis represented high value to members and the association and the Y-axis represented alignment to strategy, the volunteers posted each of their activities in one of the four quadrants.



The results were surprising. The lower left quadrant, which represented activities that were low value to members and unrelated to MACPA strategy, was filled with sticky notes. Only a few sticky notes made it into the other three quadrants. It was a “eureka” moment.

In response, MACPA formed a task force, divided into teams of under-35 year old and over-35 year old stakeholders, to tackle the question of what to do. The two teams worked independently. The team of young professionals harnessed technology to work, while the older team relied on traditional face-to-face meetings. Surprisingly, both groups came to a similar conclusion: pull resources away from committees and chapters doing low priority work and refocus those resources on activities and projects that were in the high-high quadrant. This eventually ushered in a complete governance restructuring, including a leaner Board and a reorganized staff, and a shift in the organizational philosophy of volunteering.

The philosophical shift may be the most significant part of the story. MACPA moved from a volunteer structure based on tradition to one based on engaging members in the mission of the organization. MACPA redefined their role from *reactive*, asking members what the association should do next, to *proactive*, engaging members in an ongoing dialog about the future. This drove MACPA to break down formal structures and volunteer terms. Committees, for example, are no longer required to have monthly meetings or fulfill checklist requirements. Rather, they focus on sharing and networking. Chapters need not offer a laundry list of services and hold time-consuming elections. They focus on delivering what members want most: low-cost continuing education.

Under this new vision, volunteer groups live by two tenets: be self-organizing around vision and mission, and be sustainable; expect no life-support. MACPA eliminated many of their rules and allowed the groups the freedom to use whatever titles and selection processes worked.

As part of this new volunteer vision, MACPA actively developed low commitment opportunities that drive

Examples from MACPA Town Hall Meetings:

- What Are CPAs Thinking? Insights From our 2012 Town Hall Meetings (<http://www.macpa.org/blog/3102/what-are-cpas-thinking-insights-from-our-2012-town-hall-meetings>)
- Top Seven Issues Facing Young Professionals (<http://www.macpa.org/blog/1541/top-7-issues-facing-young-professionals-and-what-we-are-doing-about-it>)
- What Keeps CFOS and Finance Pros Up At Night (<http://www.macpa.org/blog/1750/whats-keeping-cfos-finance-professionals-up-at-night>)
- Top Seven Leadership Challenges Facing CPA Firms (<http://www.macpa.org/blog/1779/top-seven-leadership-challenges-facing-cpa-firms>)
- Want to Solve Your Generational Issues? Talk to Each Other (<http://www.macpa.org/blog/3230/want%20to%20solve%20your%20generational%20issues-%20talk%20to%20each%20other>)

the mission, such as a lobby day in the state capital, community projects, online content contributions, and the town halls discussed above. By actively promoting and welcoming volunteers, MACPA has created stronger member alignment with the association. They took resources away from a limited inner circle of volunteers and redeployed them to expand member engagement. Hood estimates that, today, more than 25 percent of MACPA's 10,000 members are volunteering or engaging in some small or large way.

Hood believes that, as Jim Collins says, associations could well be the roadkill on the information highway if we don't move from being organizations that are well-managed to becoming networks that are well-led. Being well-led requires us to empower the community of volunteers in our associations. 

Case Study: National Fluid Power Association

“I don't know that most association members view their associations as the engagement opportunity that we'd like to think they do.”

Eric Lanke, CAE, CEO, National Fluid Power Association

Stop us if this sounds familiar. Over the past five years, the National Fluid Power Association (NFPA) noticed that the number of people raising their hands to volunteer was declining, and those that did volunteer had less time and energy to devote to their volunteer tasks. NFPA also noticed that, while they were focused on attracting CEOs into volunteer roles, they were having less and less success at that level.

The issues of fewer people volunteering, and less time from those who do, are familiar ones to most associations. We've all felt the impact of the increased pace of change and increased demands of the business environment, partially driven by recession-related staff reductions, and of the generational issues mentioned above. According to NFPA CEO Eric Lanke, that's been exacerbated in the fluid power industry, particularly at the C-suite level, by

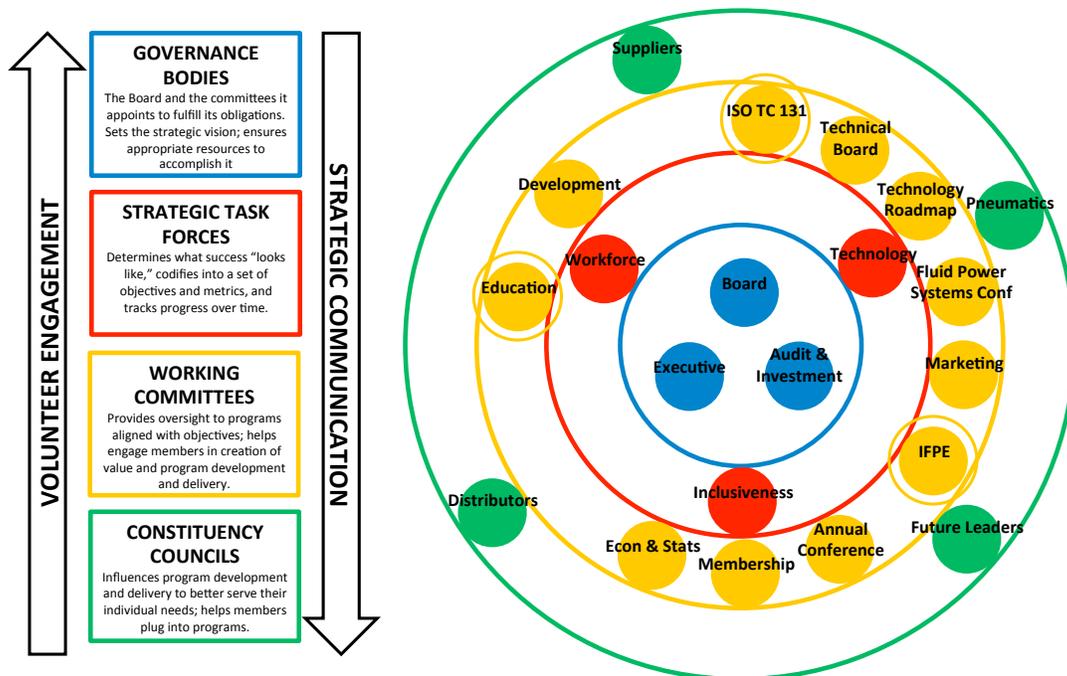
forces of consolidation and technological evolution. Many companies are diversifying to include other technologies, and the strategic connection to fluid power is, as a result, less compelling at the CEO level.

So NFPA decided to reorganize their volunteer program.

The NFPA Board realized they had two major needs to address. First, they wanted to engage members in ideation, development, and delivery of new programs, products, and services that aligned with the strategic direction of the association. Second, they had to do it efficiently and in a way that would break out of the traditional hierarchical organization chart.

The structure represented below was the result.

Volunteer Support Structure



The center blue ring represents the Board and Board committees, which set the strategic vision of the association and allocate resources accordingly.

The next ring out, indicated in red, represents groups that are set up by the Board and include Board and non-Board volunteers, who take the strategic direction set by the Board and turn it into actionable goals with attached metrics.

The yellow ring represents the worker bees, consisting of both standing committees and ad hoc task forces. These groups engage members directly in performing the work of the association, and any member is invited to join just by raising his or her hand. Lanke described this level as the “incubator” of NFPA’s future leaders.

Finally, the green ring includes groups that represent the specific interests of various membership constituencies across all programs, products, and services, ensuring that those association offerings meet the needs of the diverse groups who comprise the NFPA membership.

As Lanke notes, the concentric nature of the model allows one to start from any level and work either in or out, becoming involved at the level that fits the needs of the individual volunteer, with strategic communications flowing out and level of engagement flowing in.

NFPA placed the value of volunteering, both to the association and to the member, at the very center of their process. As Lanke notes: “People are busy. We can’t just ask them to give, give, give. They have to get something out of their volunteer experience. Associations need to do a better job of playing up the benefits of volunteering to their members.”

From the member side, Lanke articulated three key benefits:

1. Volunteering provides an opportunity for people in industry to develop their leadership and business skills, giving them broad exposure to the entire fluid power industry. Lanke noted that some member companies even work volunteering with NFPA into their formal staff professional development plans.
2. Volunteers develop their own professional networks, building relationships that lead directly to new business opportunities. As Lanke remarked, NFPA is “not shy” about promoting this as a key element of volunteer service.
3. Volunteering allows members to give back to the fluid power industry, by making a long term, broad, strategic impact on industry and contributing in a positive way to the futures of fluid power industry professionals.

From the association side, Lanke also articulated three key benefits:

1. This concentric circle model of volunteering injects market knowledge into decision-making, which is key to the association’s value proposition.
2. NFPA’s staff becomes educated on key issues in the fluid power industry from working so closely with such a variety of volunteers at so many different levels.
3. The model minimizes administrative drudgery so that volunteers can focus on substantive work that provides satisfaction, as they see how their efforts make a difference for the association and the industry.

Lanke observed that this new model encourages volunteers to focus on where they can add value and “get right to the meat of what’s going on in the industry.”

NFPA is enjoying success with the new model. Lanke was crystal clear on NFPA's definition of a successful volunteer program: "It's successful if it's growing." NFPA is focused not only on filling existing volunteer slots today, but also on creating new volunteer opportunities and identifying new places where member input and insight is needed to drive additional decisions and programming. Because their process is flexible, NFPA can easily create those new opportunities and find people who are willing to participate in them.

Not that all is perfect at NFPA. Lanke shared that NFPA is still trying to figure out ways to engage CEOs in the strategic thinking that underlies NFPA's planning process without requiring Board service. While the Board is currently working on this through a "Future of the Industry" task force, as Lanke observed: "This shift didn't happen overnight, and it won't get solved overnight. The quick fix is usually an illusory fix. Because we were all coming at this from such diverse perspectives, we had to make sure we were all really talking about the same problem before we could start trying to solve it." ✨

Case Study: Oncology Nursing Society

“[ONS’s success] is, in large part, due to our willingness to change in anticipation of our future needs. We have continually reinvented ourselves while remaining true to our vision of promoting excellence in oncology nursing.”

Deborah Mayer, Work Analysis Working Group chair, Oncology Nursing Society

Call them ahead of their time. The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) started reimagining volunteering as far back as 1993, before most associations were even noticing a decline in volunteerism. The ONS leadership, prompted by major changes that were either already occurring or were predicted in health and cancer care, charged a Work Analysis Working Group to assess the organization’s ability to fulfill their vision of leading transformation in cancer care. They identified four areas for improvement:

1. decision making,
2. prioritizing,
3. communications about those two elements, and
4. the ability to rapidly and appropriately respond to the change and opportunities.

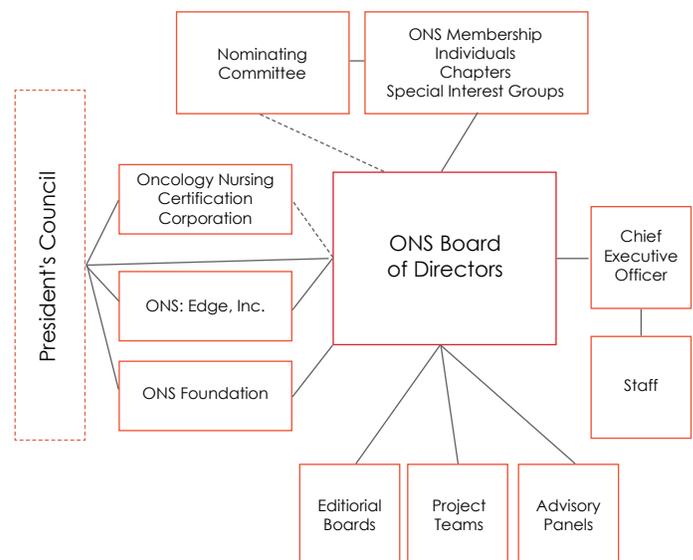
Decision-making, being the common denominator, became the focus. Over a four-year period, the organization revisited and refined its vision, mission, values, strategies, and governance model to assure the society could move successfully into the future.

Twenty years later, ONS is still breaking new ground. ONS serves a growing population of more than 110,000 nurses who care for patients with cancer, including more than 35,000 who are active ONS members. Even more impressive is the volunteer to member ratio, which moved from 1 in 26 in 1993 to 1 in 5 today. What made this progress possible? ONS restructured, focusing on *how* work gets done rather *what* gets done. One could say their “gamble” has, in fact, paid off.

The ONS Model: It’s All about Engagement

In designing their new governance model, ONS followed the adhocracy philosophy referenced above, which replaces bureaucratic structure with an organic entity that thrives on decentralizing work and responsibility, and capitalizes on the involvement of many different voices. The ONS structure flows from the membership (individuals, chapters, special interest groups), to the Board of Directors, who are responsible for strategic oversight, to advisory panels and project teams, who are the conduits for input and action.

ONS Organizational Chart



Only two standing committees remain: the Nominating Committee, which is elected by the membership, and the Audit Committee. When ONS needs to get something done, they pull together an ad hoc group of members, do the job, and disband. It is a matter of finding the right volunteers, with the right skills, for the right job, at the right time. If any of those “rights” are wrong, then it will be an unfulfilling experience for both the organization and the volunteers.

“It is a matter of finding the right volunteers, with the right skills, for the right job, at the right time. If any of those ‘rights’ are wrong, then it will be an unfulfilling experience for both the organization and the volunteers.”

This model does require many hands, but because the jobs are short-term, often virtual, and generally highly supported by staff, finding many hands has not been an issue. Diane Scheuring, MBA, CAE, CVA, CMP, Manager of Member Services and Special Interest Group Relations, describes the volunteer culture as both “push” and “pull.” The push is driven by an ongoing volunteerism campaign that urges members to “Participate,”²⁶ and ONS members willingly sign up.

The pull is supported through a robust and evolving system that allows ONS to cultivate a deep reservoir of member information. Collecting member data is an ongoing process largely facilitated through the member’s ONS Profile, considered her home base at ONS. ONS makes a strong case to members to complete their profiles and routinely nudges members to update their profiles

It's Time to Get Involved



ONS, ONCC, ONS Foundation Boards

- Steering Council
- ONS Nominating Committee

Voting in ONS Elections

- ONStat
- Pilot Testers
- Advisory Panels (research, membership/leadership, education, and diversity)
- Mentors (ethnic minority, advocacy, student, leadership, member-to-member, SIG, and CJO)
- Manuscript Reviewers
- Conference Presenters (poster, podium, speaker)

ONS Foundation Chapter Liaisons

- Editorial Boards
- ONCC Certification Advocates Program
- ONCC Item Writing
- ONCC Passing Score Task Force
- Project Teams (research, membership/leadership, education, and diversity)
- ONS Foundation Grant Review Teams

State Health Policy Liaisons

- Chapter/SIG Leadership
- ONCC Test Development
- National Conference Planning Teams
- ONS PEP Resources Project Team

We know you're busy, but we encourage you to make time to get involved with ONS. **Participating in the Society will help you improve oncology nursing and patient care.** ONS has a number of ways for you to get involved. Some take only a few hours, while others require a larger time commitment. **You pick the ones that fit your schedule.**

For more information on any of the projects listed above or on how you can get involved, contact ONS Customer Service toll free at 866-257-4ONS (412-859-6100; customer.service@ons.org). **You can also find information online in the Membership area of www.ons.org.**

26. <http://www.ons.org/Membership/Participate>

Matching Members to Opportunities

ONS harnesses technology to better know and connect their members. Their member profile includes the standard personal and demographic information, along with data such as:

- General expertise
- Symptom management expertise
- Subject/Study patient population diagnosis
- International experience and areas of interest (countries/cultures)
- Presenting/Publishing experience and interest
- Research expertise and experience, including subject/study population
- Work-related leadership activities (paid professional activities)
- Volunteer leadership activities (unpaid activities, both nursing and non-nursing related)
- Other professional memberships

through simple polls. For their part, ONS members willingly provide data that supports the pull.

When a volunteer opportunity is identified, ONS staff is able to recruit potential volunteers easily and quickly. Need someone with an expertise in a specific cancer area, or on ethical issues, or in consumer advocacy? Pull a report. This ability for targeted outreach has netted new volunteers and satisfied members. In a recent case Scheuring shared, ONS was looking for an article reviewer with very specific expertise. They were able to quickly identify and contact the right member. She said that she had always wanted to volunteer with ONS but didn't know how to start, and was thrilled by the personal request to get involved.

The latest addition to this volunteer program has been on the leadership development side. ONS, working through one of its ad hoc project teams, has identified core leadership competencies around which they have built an evolving leadership training program that includes self-assessment, tracking, and evaluation. The competencies and the training are organized in three concentric circles: individual skills, group skills, and governance skills.

What had been, until recently, exclusively a face-to-face leadership institute is now a widely available, highly individualized web-based course that includes a key component: a mentor.

ONS's investment in leadership development is tied directly to organizational metrics. One of ONS's core principals, and a key component of their brand, is that all oncology nurses are leaders. So developing and measuring leadership is critical. One critical measure is members who become involved not just in ONS leadership, but in leadership in their communities and in the healthcare sector which, so far, is increasing.

"We recognize that our members have limited discretionary time, and that we need them involved," says Scheuring. "We don't want checkbook members. We want our members personally connected to ONS. We know they are asking themselves, 'do I spend my \$130 here or somewhere else?' We want them to always say yes to ONS." 

Conclusion: Meeting the Challenges

Unfortunately, most associations don't currently manage volunteers well. A survey conducted by ASAE in 2011 revealed that the majority of associations do not have dedicated volunteer management staff or management programs that address volunteerism past the governance (Board) level. (ASAE Executive Management Section Council Managing Volunteers Study Summary, 2012) Moving to a less formal structure that does not allow for long training and orientation can exacerbate the problem.

In pivoting to a model of volunteerism that is mission-driven, acknowledges the realities of potential volunteers' needs, interests, and desires, and accommodates adhocacy and micro-volunteering, we see hurdles for associations in the following areas:

- Volunteer development.
- Leadership development.
- Balancing legal requirements for standing committees with move to increased use of task forces.
- New processes around proposing, approving, and working projects.
- Staff training in how to manage and work with these new forms.

The ASAE Executive Management Section Council and the ASAE Research Committee are embarking on a larger study in 2014, which, we hope, will produce data, guidance, and resources to aid associations in working successfully with mission-driven volunteers. Meanwhile, a number of savvy associations are taking steps to transform their models of volunteering:

- The Aging Network put their volunteer program front and center with their Volunteer Collaborative (<http://www.n4a.org/programs/aging-network-volunteer-collaborative/>), which has the ambitious goals of doubling the number of volunteers by 2015; building a volunteer management program around measurable metrics; and providing ongoing training, orientation, and support.
- The American Association of Diabetes Educators revamped its components (chapters), shifting from a structure built on a traditional governance model to one focused on leadership teams and coordinating bodies. AADE also launched a "Get Involved" portal to make volunteering more accessible and visible. (<https://www.diabeteseducator.org/Members/GetInvolved.html>)
- The American Chemical Society created a robust volunteer program (<http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/volunteer.html>) that offers community service, international opportunities, and member community volunteering. Their website helps members navigate the various ways to "Get Involved, Stay Involved" with ACS. ACS also created a Leadership Development System (<http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/careers/profdev/leadership.html>) that provides young professionals and entrepreneurs an opportunity to learn essential skills to "strengthen your competitive edge in today's global economy."
- The American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition created an online Volunteer Portal (https://nutritioncare.org/Chapters/Volunteer_Portal/Table_of_Contents/) to increase access to volunteer resources and encourage volunteer sharing.

- The National Council of University Research Administrators hired a dedicated volunteer coordinator who changed their volunteer culture.
- The Project Management Institute uses a Volunteer Relationship Management System, a centralized volunteer database where members can search for opportunities and maintain their volunteer service histories, and where chapter coordinators can post opportunities and search for volunteers. This database integrates with their Leadership Institute (<http://www.pmi.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer-Excel-as-a-Leader.aspx>), which focuses on helping project managers develop transferrable skills for their careers and other volunteer roles.
- The Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners tailors professional development to equip staff with volunteer management skills, including “soft” interpersonal skills.

The social, economic, and generational shifts we discussed above are not going away. The era in which members had ample time and resources to serve on traditionally-

organized committees that made all decisions slowly, deliberatively, and collaboratively is over. Life moves fast, business moves fast, technological change moves fast, and your members are increasingly pressed, as demands on their time and attention escalate seemingly daily.

The good news, as clearly demonstrated by *The Decision to Volunteer*, is that your members still very much want to contribute their ideas and energy to your association, and, through you, to the profession or industry you serve. Generation-X now leads in percentage of volunteer time. The large (80+ million) Millennial generation is rapidly entering their “career years.” Due to experiences in their formative years, they are perhaps the most volunteer-minded generation we have yet seen.²⁷ The volunteers are coming.

But this large pool of potential volunteers is asking for new things from your association. They want to contribute in ways that are meaningful to them and make a demonstrable difference, in small bites, and on – and only on – their schedules. They are mission-driven volunteers. Are you ready for them? 

27. <http://ncoc.net/226>

Questions for Reflection

- Which of your standing committees have gone zombie?
- What does your demographic breakdown of volunteers look like? Are you seeing a surge in Gen-X and Millennial volunteers? What are you doing to discover and accommodate their preferences in volunteering?
- Among your current volunteer opportunities and groups, which support primarily infrastructure? Which support primarily mission? How could you go about getting more into the mission support category?
- What types of decisions in your association would benefit from a deliberative decision-making process? Which would benefit from a more rapid decide-experiment-learn-iterate process? How do you see your committees and task forces contributing to this?
- What current volunteer projects could be turned over to mission-focused task forces?
- What current volunteer projects should be dropped to allow you to refocus volunteer and staff resources on mission-driven projects?
- Does an entrepreneurial volunteer model resonate with your association? What might have to change in your internal or volunteer culture to become more open to entrepreneurial volunteers?
- Ad-hoc volunteers give the least amount of time but as a group represent the largest number of volunteers. Can you identify yours? What do you know about them? How different – or similar – are they to your volunteer leaders?
- Have you audited your volunteer opportunities to assure a variety of options that target low, medium, and high commitment, as well as differing levels of task complexity and expertise required?
- What do your volunteers say is working and not working for them in terms of volunteering for your organization?
- Have you asked members who aren't volunteering what barriers they experience?
- How visible is volunteering in your association?
- What is one action you could take today to start your association on the path to mission-driven volunteering?

Additional Resources

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About Peggy Hoffman

Peggy M. Hoffman, CAE, is president and association manager for Mariner Management, an association management company and consultancy that is home to four membership organizations. In addition to managing organizations, Peggy has provided training and consultation on leadership development, component relations, and strategic planning to more than a dozen national associations and many local groups over the past 30 years.

From her earlier role as membership director for a trade association with components, Peggy developed a commitment to building strong communities within associations. To that end, she has been very involved in ASAE - The Center for Association Leadership and is past chair for their Component Relations Section Council and currently serving as chair for the Executive Management Council. In this current role she serves as team leader for the "Rebuilding the Volunteer Spirit" project, one of ASAE's inaugural Innovation Projects. The intent is to explore how associations can adapt to

and build on the changing volunteer and develop tools and strategies that can be a catalyst for rethinking our governance and member engagement models.

She also served on the Decision To Volunteer taskforce, on development teams for ASAE University's online component relations courses, and on the inaugural ASAE Foundation Development Committee. She has written for ASAE publications, including a chapter in the 2012 *ASAE Component Relations Handbook*, and has been a frequent content leader. Peggy loves to write and share, so you'll find her contributing to a variety of organizations and media, including [Association Universe](#).

In addition to a B.A. in Communications from The American University, Peggy is a graduate of the association management curriculum of the Institute for Organization Management at Notre Dame. She held positions in membership, marketing, and communications for several different professional and trade associations prior to starting Mariner.

About Elizabeth Weaver Engel

Elizabeth Weaver Engel, CEO and Chief Strategist at Spark Consulting LLC, has over 16 years experience in association management. Although her primary focus has been in membership, marketing, and communications, her experience has been wide-ranging, including corporate sponsorship and fundraising, technology planning and implementation, social media and Internet strategy, budgeting, volunteer management, publications, and governance.

Spark is a boutique consulting firm that provides strategic membership and marketing consulting for associations that have the willingness and capacity at both the staff and board levels to ask themselves tough questions and take some risks in service of reaching for big goals. Forget settling for incremental growth by making minor changes to what you're doing - we're going to uncover and solve the root problems that are holding your association back!

Elizabeth combines a focus on asking the right questions and finding and implementing creative solutions

with a broad understanding of the association sphere. Throughout her career, she has excelled at increasing membership, revenue, public presence, and member satisfaction while decreasing costs through a focus on the efficient and effective use of data, staff, and technology to serve organizational goals and constituents.

Prior to launching Spark, Elizabeth consulted in online campaigns and marketing and Internet and social media strategy for Beaconfire Consulting, and in a wide range of subject areas in association management in the not-for-profit consulting practice at RSM McGladrey, Inc. She has also served associations directly in a variety of positions, including Director of Member Services and IT, Director of Marketing and Sponsorship, Vice President of Marketing, and Acting CEO.

Elizabeth is a Certified Association Executive and holds a Master's degree in government and foreign affairs from the University of Virginia.