

**The One Minute Answer to Volunteer Management Questions: A Practical Approach**

Mary Kay Hood. (2002). Danville, IN: Underwater Publishing. (87 pp.; Paperback, ISBN-0-9723448-0-2)

At the time of this book's publication, author Mary Kay Hood had been in the business of volunteer program management for 13 years. In addition to her professional duties, she admittedly strives to stay on the cutting edge of issues of the profession, as well as to share her skills, expertise, and experiential wisdom by teaching other volunteer program managers. *The One Minute Answer to Volunteer Management Questions: A Practical Approach*, is one such result. After receiving numerous suggestions from participants in her seminars to write, she accepted the challenge in 2002. This to-the-point manual reads quickly, in an almost conversational manner. It is composed of 10 brief chapters that each include practical information and helpful tips.

The book begins with a bit of Ms. Hood's philosophy about community involvement and what motivates persons to become volunteers. The basis for this information is stated to be Maslow's "Hierarchy of Human Needs", but focuses more directly on McClelland's (1985) three basic sources of human motivation: achievement, affiliation, and power. The author is refreshingly concise, sharing sound examples of where differently motivated individuals might best be used as volunteers.

Chapter 3's focus upon volunteer recruitment begins with a more thoughtful challenge presented by the author: before volunteer program managers recruit volunteers, they need to know why their agency needs volunteers and what roles they will fulfill within the agency. If the reader is with a not-for-profit organization that can only exist with volunteers (e.g., Girl/Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Sisters, 4-H, etc.) then this chapter may pose a foreign concept of

an agency determining "why they want volunteers in the first place" (p. 10). However, for many volunteer-based agencies and organizations, the reality of decreasing resources and/or increasing potential clientele may be that reason. For example, as public dollars for libraries decrease, summer reading programs designed to instill in young people the passion for reading, could be maintained by recruiting and training volunteers to conduct the summer events. Regardless of where the reader is professionally involved, or in what type of agency, the question of why one engages volunteers is worthy of thorough consideration. The author emphasizes that volunteer positions must be meaningful, linking "volunteer assignments directly to the agency mission, . . . to assisting staff, . . . and/or to wishes and dreams of the agency" (p. 13).

Following a segment on developing volunteer position descriptions, the author moves the discussion to targeted and non-targeted approaches to recruitment, and designing an effective recruitment message. She comments on contemporary issues in the profession (such as long-term, short-term, and required-term volunteers) and blends an operational understanding of McClelland's work of what could motivate each category of volunteers, and how they might be best used for various volunteer roles. This chapter includes a gentle encouragement to consider a wider array of potential volunteers, specifically inviting the reader to consider engaging volunteers with disabilities and from limited resources, and college students.

The chapter on interviewing is the longest chapter of the book, a direct reflection of the author's philosophy on

volunteer selection. For Ms. Hood, the purpose of interviewing is not to meet the volunteer prior to placing them in a position. Rather, this is the opportunity to implement a standardized process to reduce potential risks to the agency, volunteers, and clientele. "Interviewing is one of the ways to create opportunities for them (volunteer applicants) to say 'no' to your organization and for you (the volunteer program manager) to say 'no to them (the applicants)' " (p. 24). She shares methods of preparing for interviews as well as examples of effective open-ended questions that assist the interviewer and interviewee to get to "no". The chapter concludes with critical considerations (based upon her years of experience) to help the volunteer program manager determine the propriety of a volunteer applicant for a specific position.

Once the volunteer is selected and placed, the efforts of the volunteer program manager may then be directed to keeping the volunteer meaningfully (and happily) engaged in the service to the agency. This involves Supervision and Recognition, Chapters 5 and 6. Ms. Hood addresses supervision not just as treating volunteers appropriately, but also by discussing challenges that may arise in organizations in which paid staff and volunteers work in close proximity, perhaps with similar or complimentary responsibilities. In the chapter on recognition, she again includes the motivations of volunteers (McClelland) with the encouragement to customize recognition as much as possible, while considering formal and informal forms of recognition, and funding for recognition.

Between Interviewing and Supervision, I perceived a lack of emphasis on orienting and/or training the individual once they are selected for a volunteer position. However, the need for providing the volunteer with necessary information is briefly included in Chapter 7, "Forms,

Forms, Forms". Ms. Hood recommends standardizing the process as much as possible (e.g., application forms before the volunteer is selected; evaluation forms once the volunteer is involved; departmental forms such as policies, procedures, volunteer handbooks; orientation and job-specific forms; etc.)

Using her procedures to this point will at least reduce the risks that may be encountered, the focus of Chapter 8. Standardized processes will hopefully allow only the best applicants to be selected as volunteers. Efforts to reduce the liability of volunteers are reduced if her step-by-step methods are followed. Additionally, the purchase of supplemental insurance might be considered to provide some security for your organization and the volunteers.

The theme of the Chapter 9, The Value of Networking, is devoted to the professional development and betterment of the volunteer program manager. It includes helpful information on local networking opportunities that might be available as well as national resources. Leadership, Chapter 10, provides her final commentary in this book that if you are in this profession, then you are a leader, and she shares a variety of leadership points and action tips to enhance that leadership. The book concludes with several samples and templates that the reader can use once written permission has been granted. The forms provide solid information and are worth reviewing to enhance your current methods.

Colleagues new to the volunteer resource management/administration profession will find the information in *The One Minute Answer...* quite helpful. The book's format quickly guides the reader through a bit of philosophy, refers to the works of many renowned leaders in the profession, highlights contemporary issues, and provides useful tools. Similarly, those of us who have been in the profession for a

while can also benefit from the refreshing  
review of Mary Kay Hood's personal

methods and philosophies for volunteer  
management.

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### **About the Reviewer**

Vicki J. Schwartz, M.Ed. is an Associate Professor and Specialist with Ohio State University Extension, 4-H Youth Development, currently serving as Co-Interim State 4-H Leader. She served as a volunteer program manager for 21 years before moving to her current state position, and has presented at 20 national conferences including those of the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents, the International Conference on Volunteer Administration, and the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organization and Voluntary Action.