

Best Practices Write-Up #003, Volunteerism

Heading: Membership

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Organizations such as AAW chapters operate through the efforts of volunteers.

There is always a core group of individuals, who are relentless in the pursuit of growing the organization, but they are generally few, and additional volunteers are needed to perform the seemingly minor tasks that are essential to make the organization a success.

The vast majority of good and loyal members are reluctant to join in the "management" of the organization for various reasons, including, 'It takes more time than I have to give', 'I'm not qualified', 'I can't speak in front of a group', 'I don't know how', or 'I've never done that before'.

As the leader, you may stand in front of the group and ask for volunteers for various tasks, but this seldom works. Human nature says, "Let someone else do it". A better approach may be to ask for ideas. People always have opinions and thoughts about what they would like to see happen, or how something should be done. When something is proposed, have a brief discussion amongst the membership and note who enters the discussion. When it appears it is time to move forward, ask the originator if they would like to pursue the idea and if they would work with (name the others who joined in) in developing the proposal, and report back at the next meeting. Since this was their idea to begin with, chances are, they will be willing to pursue it.

Frequently, a leader will receive ideas from individual members outside of club functions. This is a perfect opportunity to ask that individual to take responsibility in that area, without possible embarrassment in front of a group. Listen to the thoughts of other members. Don't be judgmental. You are the leader, and as such, you will find a way to encourage other members to take charge, and become leaders in the future.

Seek out those with special talents. All members have talents. A member with a very busy and hectic home life may be great at providing refreshments. Someone who claims 'I'm not volunteering for anything' can make an excellent demonstrator. A lawyer may help with club organization. A banker may be a perfect treasurer. A buyer should have no trouble handling a sanding supply order. Look for machinists, doctors, foresters, photographers, and computer experts. Learn the occupations of your members and find tasks for them that they will be comfortable with.

Above all, ask. Be direct, and be specific. Don't overload the good volunteers you presently have. Recognize your volunteers for a job well done.

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