

## Community Services

Capital News: Volunteer Centre Column 2013 May 30

### **Strategic planning should extend to your volunteers**

I keep bumping into people who are working on strategic plans. Are you thinking strategically about the volunteers in your organization?

Susan Ellis, an internationally renowned expert when it comes to volunteering, challenged my thinking in her “Hot Topics” blog this month on Energize Inc.’s website ([www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)).

She writes about how volunteers can expand an organization’s brain.

Are you intrigued?

The challenge is to value volunteers as “a core asset in leading the organization towards its goals”.

Ellis describes the thought process for adding one volunteer role for each organizational goal.

Read the organizational goal and then ask yourself, what is the role that can be met by paid staff and what role can volunteers fill? Could volunteer roles be used to expand programming online or in different languages?

Do you currently have paid and volunteer staff to play these roles? How many and what skills are needed by these paid staff and volunteers?

Then ask about financial resources. Which activities need cash and which can be accomplished through donated time, talent and products?

Challenge yourself to broaden your concept of “supporters” to include a variety of ways that community members can get involved with your organization.

Volunteers can be purposely recruited with knowledge and experience that currently does not exist within your organization to build capacity.

Include people from diverse occupations and professions “to establish radiating networks of contacts throughout the community.”

Do your volunteers represent your client base in terms of ethnicity, income, education, demographics or lived experience? If so, they can provide ready planning suggestions and program deliver feedback.

Recognize the involvement of both paid and volunteer staff and share as much as possible about your organization.

Ensure that everyone has an extraordinary experience when they interact with your organization so that they will want to make a commitment to your organization's vision and mission.

**Link**

Volunteer Management Hot Topics from Susan J. Ellis: Strategic Volunteer Management: Expanding Your Organization's Brain

<http://www.energizeinc.com/hot/2013/13may.php>

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