

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP

Training volunteers and employees to develop strong leadership skills will create new opportunities for growth for your organization. When you encourage leadership in your organization, you make the organization more sustainable and make the quality of your work more consistent.

Most directors find this easy to say and hard to do. It's normal for new directors to attempt to maintain total control over their organization. In practice, maintaining a one-person image gives the impression that the organization lacks a core team.

IDENTIFYING LEADERS

Leadership development includes these steps: identifying leaders, giving them leadership training, sharing power, preparing them to represent the organization, and evaluating their performance.

In your day-to-day work, you can identify potential leaders by analyzing volunteers' skills in terms of leadership qualities. Once you know what these are, you can strengthen these skills and address any weaknesses in order to help the individual develop and flourish within the organization.

DESIRABLE LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Reliability | A volunteer who is dependable and honors her working commitments.

Willingness and Ability to Speak Up | Someone who is able to vocalize her views and opinions on your organization's matters in a constructive way. A person who is articulate and can make her views clear through effective and memorable communication techniques.

Compatibility with Others | A person who can relate to others and participates in teamwork constructively.

Ability to Mobilize | A leader with potential who can mobilize others for organization events and activities.

A Range of Skills | Someone with a variety of skills that she can use to further the organization's mission.

There are all kinds of leaders. In order to increase the likelihood of successful leadership, try to provide guidance to bring out individual leadership styles. If you find any particular leadership skill in one of your volunteers, the next step is to sit down in a one-on-one meeting to see how she envisions herself growing within your organization. Encourage the individual by pointing out the qualities you see in her and discussing ways she can take on new responsibilities or help the organization to grow. Once you have agreed on the new responsibilities, write up a short job description and invite her to discuss with you or make any edits, so that you are both clear about the expectations.

Hard work alone does not automatically qualify someone as a leader. Don't give too much responsibility to someone who is not ready yet. To make up for missing leadership skills, you can counsel the individual on specific weaknesses and give her an opportunity to improve.

LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

As the volunteer begins to take on these new responsibilities, help her to prepare for new challenges. For example, before a volunteer speaks publicly on behalf of the organization, you can go over some of the items to highlight in the talk together, and discuss what to expect from the event. If a new leader in your organization is planning an event in which several groups will work together, it is a good idea to have a one-on-one meeting with each leader, a meeting with all the leaders together, and then a larger group meeting with all people involved in the event, to ensure everyone is on the same page.

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

After you have seen your organization's new leader use her skills, have a one-on-one meeting with her to discuss their performance, point out things that she did well, and give feedback on any areas where there is room for improvement.

Always start with positive input before anything negative. As the volunteer begins to gain more confidence in the new role, you can consider letting her work more independently with less direction.

Resource: Joan Minieri and Paul Getsos. *Tools for Radical Democracy*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2007.

For more of the Nonprofit Survival Guide, visit:

www.asiacatalyst.org