

Leading Volunteers with FORCE

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At this time of year, our PMI Great Lakes Chapter puts out the call for members to volunteer. These volunteer opportunities may be for 1-day or 1-month gigs, to serve for a full-year as a manager or director, and/or, whatever neat idea you may have. (For complete details, refer to <https://pmiglc.org/volunteer-opportunities>)

Serving the Chapter and PMI as a volunteer leader is one of the great benefits we have as PMI members. Learning to effectively lead volunteers will make *managing subordinates* seem quite easy. Therein lies the professional development value – discover the personal value of leading a team to complete a purposeful, worthy goal for the joy of serving in return.

Herein is a recycle of a previous article of mine on this important topic of leading volunteers [Moylan's Mulligans article from October 2018 issue of PMIGLC *Baseline* Newsletter].

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One of the greatest management and leadership challenges is leading volunteers effectively and efficiently. Volunteers, so it seems, don't listen to orders, do whatever they want on their own schedule, and can leave at any time, all because they are not paid. However, it is said that volunteers and volunteerism is America at our best. Harnessing the power of volunteers and volunteerism can be transformational for any organization if *FORCE* is applied appropriately. This article will address an appropriate way to lead volunteers with *FORCE* and achieve great results.

The first step in leading volunteers is to be ***Flexible***. People volunteer because they want to be part of something they believe in, and, to make a difference. Providing a variety of opportunities to participate and contribute, affording the volunteers the freedom and control to decide how they choose to be involved is essential. Being flexible in both *what* the volunteer will do and in allowing flexibility in *how* to achieve the desired results is an intrinsic element in leading volunteers.

The second element of leading volunteers will be covered later.

The third requirement in leading volunteers is ***Recognition***. When Napoleon Bonaparte was asked his secret to winning wars against all odds, he replied "Give me enough medals and I'll win you any war" (*Napoleon's Art of War*). People crave recognition more than financial reward. (In human behavioral terms, recognition is a "motivator" whereas money is a "satisfier".) Recognizing the volunteer's contributions and the value of their efforts to the organization is a cardinal rule in leading volunteers. Never lose the opportunity to say thank you.

Fourthly, leading volunteers requires constant ***Communication*** to build commitment. In the opening of a good speech, you tell the audience what you are going to tell them. In the body, you tell them. In the conclusion, you tell them what you told them. Volunteers want to know what is going on, why they are doing what they are doing, and, how they can do better. Regular communication with volunteers anneals their connection to the organization; meaningful communication fires up their unbridled commitment.

And fifthly, in leading volunteers – ***EXUDE ENTHUSIASM!*** No one wants to follow a wet fish. Enthusiastic, sincere coaches excite and energize their teams to play psyched above their abilities. Enthusiasm is a hallmark

of leading effectively; leave the subdued demeanor to the backroom. Show the positive emotion to excite the volunteers; lead them with your passion to do greater things than they ever thought possible.

In review, in leading volunteers:

- Be Flexible
- ****
- Recognition of their contributions
- Constant Communication to build Commitment
- Exude Enthusiasm

Let's return to the second element in leading volunteers. It considers both ends of the spectrum –the *Alpha* and the *Omega*.

Let's first examine the Alpha attitude. Have you ever worked *for* (never *with*) the *Alpha* male/female? The Type-A personality who is all about themselves, their bottom line, pushing hard to get their best results. Bombastically shouting their orders to the lowly boot-soldiers who must bend to their will. The Type-A personality considers them self A+ while everyone else is lazy, slothful and disengaged. Their subordinates require constant browbeating to get any meaningful work done. All good results are because of them; anything amiss or less than perfect is someone else's fault. Working for the arrogant Type-A leader generates feelings of anguish, angst, agony and even anger. Pleasant experience, right?

Unfortunately, the Type-A personality is typical in the real world of work. What if the leader of volunteers channels their Type-A personality, since that is how leadership occurs at their real job? Employing a Type-A leadership style in this scenario, along with being Flexible, showing Recognition, constant Communication, and exuding Enthusiasm, makes for a FARCE.

On the other hand, let's consider following an Omega-leadership style when leading volunteers. The Type-O leader is open and optimistic. Although we didn't get everything completed today as planned, tomorrow is another day. The Type-O volunteer leader with the glass half-full attitude working *with* their volunteer team to get sufficient, reasonable results will yield a satisfying experience for all concerned. The attitude and style of the leader, as in any transactional situation, matters much with volunteers.

Leading volunteers with a Type-O leadership style along with being Flexible, showing Recognition, constant Communication, and exuding Enthusiasm, results in a FORCE to be reckoned with yielding positive results for all concerned.

*And may the **FORCE** of volunteers and volunteerism be with you.*

As always, your questions, comments and criticisms are welcome. Feel free to contact me in care of email: William.moylan@emich.edu

Best regards and Seasons Great Greetings,

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