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Boards and Committees
Comités & conseils
d'administration

Sponsor
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

 Editorial Ginette Johnstone, Ontario	
 Oh Canada, The Challenges and Joys of Serving on a National Board Sandra Murphy, Newfoundland	2
 Ô Canada, Les défis et les joies de siéger sur un conseil d'administration national Sandra Murphy, Newfoundland	6
 To Carver or Not to Carver Ginette Johnstone, Ontario	10
 The Duties and Liabilities of Directors Laura Bruneau, Ontario	13
 Committees: Involving Consumers in the Decision-Making Process Alan Muir, Ontario	16
 Video Review Hazel Sutherland, Alberta	16
 Items of Interest	17
 Peer Expert Column	17

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EDITORIAL

There are many out there who would gladly get rid of all not-for-profit boards and committees. To many, they seem more a waste of time than a effective way to achieve goals. However, boards and committees represent our communities and provide a critical link with our constituencies. It is difficult to imagine an organization who would not have them.

In this issue of the Canadian Journal of Volunteer Resources Management, authors assist with very practical information about how boards and committees work best. Sandra Murphy of the Community Services Council of Newfoundland reflects on her experiences as President (past) of Volunteer Canada. Alan Muir relates an interview with Brian Tardiff of Citizen Advocacy in Ottawa, an organization which has been pro-active in involving consumers on boards and committees. Legal liabilities of boards of directors are discussed by Laura Bruneau fo ENCON Insurance Mangers Inc. To round out the offering are Peer Experts who discuss a problematic situation with committee members, a brief discussion on the Carver model of governance and a review of the video "Board Basics" by Hazel Sutherland of Grant McEwan College.

Boards and committees will always be a part of the not-for-profit world. Hopefully, this issue will hold valuable insights as you head to your next meeting.

Ginette Johnstone is Senior Consultant of Johnstone Training and Consultation (JTC) Inc. and a member of the Editorial Team.

OH CANADA THE CHALLENGES AND JOYS OF SERVING ON A NATIONAL BOARD

by Sandra Murphy

An acquaintance of mine used to tell a story about friends in Germany who were sending their teen-aged son to Canada on a visit. In making arrangements, the people had written him to say that Hans would be arriving in Halifax at a specific date and time and asking my friend to meet him. At this time he was living in Vancouver. His reply, sent by telegram, was short "*You meet him, you're closer!*"

This story illustrates the primary challenge of all national organizations working in Canada, the immense size of our country. Distance creates challenges in communication, in ensuring adequate representation, in remaining relevant to membership, in maintaining accountability, and, in covering the bottom line.

COMMUNICATIONS

Maintaining regular communications over distance with fellow board members, staff and members is a challenge that in the latter part of the twentieth century, is diminishing. Even a Luddite like myself recognizes that technology has made that difference. Through teleconferencing, fax machines, and e-mail, national boards can communicate regularly. My experience with Volunteer Canada is that the board members and staff are in touch more regularly than is the case with most members of local boards I have served on.

Nonetheless, boards do need to meet in person. A further reflection on the tale of young Hans is that in terms of ticket cost, and not in distance to travel, it would probably be as cheap to send Hans at least to Toronto, and perhaps even Vancouver, as to Halifax. This latter point underlines the financial challenges for any national organization that wishes to involve members from remote regions. It almost always dictates that meetings be held in Central Canada and that when staff are hired and offices established, they be there too. This creates its own challenges for a national organization because one of the realities of our great

country is the general distrust of the Atlantic Region, the Western Regions and the North of Central Canada. Oh well!

Communication on boards however, goes far beyond the ability to meet regularly as a group or for individual staff and boards to communicate separately. Communication has to do with the group dynamic and how that dynamic is affected by individual motivation and personalities. These are the ingredients of organizational climate, and of members having a true sense of ownership and commitment. Anyone who has served on any board and especially those who have chaired boards knows that this can be the greatest challenge.

In some respect national boards can be at an advantage in this area. Meeting three or four times a year for two or three days at a time, with no family commitments, domestic responsibilities, etc., often sharing rooms to reduce costs creates a retreat-like atmosphere where board members develop a real sense of ownership for the organization and commitment to each other. There can be tremendous difficulties for individuals to block out this time from busy schedules at home and surviving marathon sessions in hotel meeting rooms is no piece of cake, but national boards often draw together in ways that local boards find difficult. They can also build in time for fun and socializing that further encourages group cohesion and mutual understanding.

This closeness and mutual commitment among members of national boards works to the advantage of the organization so long as the personal commitments and relationships established do not outweigh responsibilities to proper governance of the organization. Keeping a balance is extremely important and not always easy.

MAINTAINING FOCUS

Anyone who knows anything about boards knows that successful organizations and ergo boards, are those that are clearly focused on a mission. The challenges in this area are not, I believe, more difficult for a national board than a local board. Again the nature of how national boards meet and their members' general inability to meddle in the day to day operation of paid staff (if there are any), should allow for circumstances that ensure the mission and planning to meet that mission are regularly at the fore.

ENSURING REPRESENTATION

At a national level, organizations must be particularly concerned to ensure adequate regional representation. At Volunteer Canada these representatives are chosen in the regions by volunteer centres. Such a system ensures that regional needs are covered, but does not necessarily lead to a balanced board in terms of gender, skill sets, minority representation, sectoral representation, etc. If the budget allows, this imbalance can be rectified to some extent by having seats for members at large.

MAINTAINING RELEVANCE TO THE MEMBERSHIP

One of the main reasons we have national organizations is to ensure that there is a voice for the local organizations at a national level on issues of concern to them. Another is to create opportunities and resources that local members would not have available to them if the national organization did not exist. For example Volunteer Canada ensures that the perspective of Canada's 200 volunteer centres is heard at the Roundtable on the Voluntary Sector. It was also able to seize the opportunity available at the national level to develop the National Education Campaign on Screening and to support the local delivery of the program through volunteer centres.

There exists at the national level opportunities for involvement and even for funding that can lead to growth for the national board and organization but which may not be related to the needs of local members. There may also be occasions where the efforts of the national board may undermine those of regional and of local efforts. A national board must therefore balance the need of its own sustainability with the needs of its members throughout the country. Ideally the national board should pursue opportunities which serve both sets of needs. If however it chooses to take on projects which have no relevance to the local member, it must be very clear on why this is happening and be able to defend such actions to its members.

Maintaining and ensuring that the work of a national organization is of relevance and supports local members is one of the main challenges of a national board. Included in that challenge is the need for local buy-in to the work of the national as well as an openness and an interest in the broader picture from its members.

MAINTAINING ACCOUNTABILITY

Board members are under a legal and moral obligation to ensure the accountability of their organization. In my experience, the difficulties of fulfilling this obligation are not necessarily more difficult on a national board, except in the area of being able to regularly monitor policies and parameters which the board has in place for staff action.

I have found that accountability and governance issues come to the fore at particular stages of an organization's development. Times of massive change and turbulence create particular challenges for board members around accountability. Boards can also get into trouble when the organization seems most serene. That serenity can sometimes mask stagnant water or hidden shoals and currents. Being at a distance can serve to exacerbate problems at times of turbulence and reinforce complacency when organizations become stagnant.

COVERING THE BOTTOM LINE

Maintaining a national board in Canada is an expensive proposition. Airfares, hotel bills, meals, teleconferences, telephone calls, faxes, e-mail, etc. all cost a tremendous amount of money. This means that if money is limited the work of the board is hampered. It also means that national board needs to be particularly prudent in doing business.

CONCLUSION

I do not remember if my friend told me whether Hans ever did make it to Canada. I hope that he did and that perhaps he was able to see it from east to west (even if he did miss Newfoundland). It is a marvellous country with great people no matter where you go. Belonging to a national board has given me the opportunity to get to know this country, its people and its regions more intimately. It has reinforced my belief in the power of local volunteerism but also the need for us to connect through volunteerism at a national level.

Sandra Murphy is the Supervisor, Volunteer Centre, with the Community Services Council of Saint John's Newfoundland and a past President of Volunteer Canada.



Ô CANADA LES DÉFIS ET LES JOIES DE SIÉGER SUR UN CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION NATIONAL

par Sandra Murphy

Une de mes connaissances me racontait cette histoire concernant des amis allemands qui envoyaient leur fils adolescent visiter le Canada. Les préparatifs du voyage voulaient que Hans arrive à Halifax et on leur demandait de le rencontrer à l'heure et à la date prévus. Or, de ce temps-là, mon ami demeurait à Vancouver et sa réponse télégraphiée fut plutôt succincte "Rencontrez-le vous-même, vous êtes plus près !"

Cette histoire illustre bien les difficultés que présente l'immensité de notre pays, le Canada, pour tout organisme national. Les facteurs affectés par les grandes distances entre autres sont : les communications, la représentativité adéquate, la perception de leur importance pour les membres, le maintien de la responsabilisation et l'équilibre budgétaire.

LES COMMUNICATIONS

Assurer la communication régulière entre les membres du conseil d'administration, les employés et les membres en général, quelle que soit la distance à parcourir, est devenu chose facile aujourd'hui. Malgré mes inclinaisons Luddite, je dois admettre que la technologie d'aujourd'hui rend la tâche facile. Les membres des conseils d'administration peuvent communiquer régulièrement par fax, par téléconférence et par e-mail. L'expérience que j'ai vécue avec Bénévoles Canada me démontre que les membres du conseil d'administration et le personnel communiquent plus régulièrement que la plupart des membres de conseils d'administration locaux sur lesquels j'ai siégé.

Malgré tout, il est nécessaire que les membres des conseils se rencontrent face à face. Nous reportant à l'histoire du jeune Hans, nous devons conclure que si le coût du billet d'avion est la considération première il lui serait économiquement plus avantageux de se rendre à Toronto ou peut-être même Vancouver plutôt qu'à Halifax. Cet argument souligne les difficultés financières auxquelles sont confrontées les organisations nationales qui veulent faire participer leurs membres provenant de régions éloignées. Par conséquent, en vertu de ces considérations économiques, les réunions se tiennent normalement dans les régions

canadiennes centrales. Les bureaux et le personnel y sont également localisés. Ceci présente des difficultés additionnelles pour une organisation nationale car, admettons-le, il existe une certaine méfiance entre les régions de l'Atlantique, l'Ouest canadien et le Centre Nord du Canada. Que voulez-vous !

L'action de communiquer pour un conseil d'administration comprend beaucoup plus que la capacité d'organiser des rencontres de groupe ou celle d'encourager le dialogue entre les membres du personnel et le conseil d'administration. L'activité implique une dynamique de groupe et sa façon d'être affectée par la motivation et le caractère des individus. Ces facteurs et la participation des membres engagés pour qui l'organisation est devenue leur propriété constituent l'environnement de l'organisme. Créer cet environnement dynamique demeure le plus grand défi pour toute personne ayant servi sur un conseil d'administration et plus particulièrement pour ceux qui en auraient été le président.

À certains points de vue, ces particularités avantagent les conseils d'administration nationaux. Lors des rencontres, trois à quatre fois l'an, à l'écart des obligations familiales, des responsabilités domestiques etc., une atmosphère de retraite fermée règne, du fait de partager une chambre à coucher pour réduire les coûts, et permettre aux membres du conseil d'acquiescer un vrai sens de propriété vis-à-vis l'organisme et de s'engager les uns envers les autres. Évidemment, accorder du temps pour ces rencontres et survivre à des séances marathoniennes dans des chambres d'hôtel peuvent présenter des difficultés importantes ; toutefois, il semble que fréquemment les conseils nationaux rassemblent avec moins de difficulté que les conseils locaux. Par ailleurs, on prévoit du temps pour les activités sociales qui contribuent à la cohésion du groupe et génèrent une meilleure compréhension mutuelle.

L'esprit de corps et la compréhension mutuelle présentent des avantages certains pour un organisme national à condition que les responsabilités personnelles engagées ne l'emportent pas sur la bonne gestion. Acquiescer ce bon équilibre est un exercice essentiel, souvent difficile à maintenir.

MAINTENIR L'OBJECTIF

Toute personne qui connaît le fonctionnement des conseils sait que tout organisme et, par conséquent, tout conseil qui réussit son mandat, maintient sa concentration fixée sur la mission à accomplir. Le défi est

le même pour un conseil national que pour un conseil local. Les circonstances qui assureront que la mission et son plan d'action demeurent en avant plan seront en fonction de la forme que prendront les réunions du conseil et du degré auquel les membres pourront s'immiscer dans les activités journalières du personnel rémunéré (s'il y en a).

ASSURER LA REPRÉSENTATIVITÉ

Tout organisme national doit assurer la représentativité adéquate des régions. Les représentants qui siègent à Bénévoles Canada sont choisis par les centres d'action bénévoles régionaux. Si le système assure la représentation régionale il ne répond pas nécessairement aux critères de représentativité selon le genre, les aptitudes, l'ethnologie, le secteur, etc. Si le budget le permet, on pourra subvenir en partie à cette carence en ajoutant des sièges pour les membres de l'organisme dans son ensemble.

ENTRETIEN DES RAPPORTS AVEC LES MEMBRES

Une des principales raisons d'être d'un organisme national est de donner voix aux organismes locaux au niveau national à propos des affaires qui les concernent. Une autre est d'offrir des services et des ressources aux membres locaux qui ne pourraient pas les obtenir si l'organisme national n'existait pas. Par exemple, Bénévoles Canada assure que le point de vue des 200 centres d'action bénévole du Canada est entendu lors des rencontres de Table Ronde du Secteur Bénévole. Également, Bénévoles Canada a saisi l'occasion d'entreprendre la Campagne Nationale d'Éducation sur le filtrage des bénévoles et des employés occupant un poste de confiance auprès d'enfants et d'autres personnes vulnérables et de diffuser le programme à tous les centres d'action bénévole.

Au niveau national, il se présente des perspectives de participation et même de financement qui contribueraient à la croissance du conseil national et de l'organisme mais qui ne seraient pas, toutefois, en rapport avec les besoins des organisations locales. Également, dans certaines circonstances, les activités du conseil national entravent celles des organismes locaux ou régionaux. Par conséquent, un conseil national doit faire le partage entre sa capacité de subvenir à ses propres besoins et ceux de ses membres à travers le pays. Idéalement, le conseil national poursuivra des objectifs pour satisfaire tous les besoins. Par ailleurs, si

le conseil national choisit d'entreprendre des projets qui ne sont d'aucun intérêt pour les membres d'organisation locale, celui-ci devra expliquer clairement le motif de son action et se préparer à défendre son point de vue aux membres.

Le principal défi pour un organisme national qui désire poursuivre son travail et assurer son bon fonctionnement est d'être en rapport soutenu avec ses membres et leur assurer son soutien. Pour relever le défi, il sera nécessaire que les organismes locaux contribuent au travail de l'organisation nationale et que les membres pratiquent plus d'ouverture d'esprit et une vision plus élargie des choses.

MAINTIEN DE LA RESPONSABILISATION

Le maintien de la responsabilisation de l'organisme est une obligation morale et légale pour les membres du conseil d'administration. Selon mon expérience, ceci ne présente pas un problème particulier pour un conseil national, excepté qu'il est parfois difficile de contrôler régulièrement les politiques et les paramètres que le conseil a mis sur pied et qui doivent être mis en pratique par le personnel.

J'ai noté que les affaires afférentes à la responsabilité et la gouvernance surgissent à des stades particuliers lors du développement de l'organisme. Les questions de responsabilité se présentent surtout lorsqu'il y a d'importants changements et des remous. Également, le conseil rencontre parfois des difficultés quand tout semble seréin. Pour utiliser une métaphore, on pourrait dire que sous ces apparences se cachent parfois des eaux troubles, des courants dangereux ou des récifs. Durant les périodes turbulentes, les problèmes peuvent s'amplifier dû à l'éloignement du centre nerveux de l'organisme qui encourage parfois une certaine complaisance lorsqu'un organisme stagne.

L'ÉQUILIBRE BUDGÉTAIRE

Au Canada, entretenir un conseil d'administration est une entreprise onéreuse. Les dépenses attribuées aux frais de déplacement, d'hébergement, de repas et de communication sont très élevées. Les ressources financières limitées gêneront nécessairement le travail du conseil. Par conséquent, le conseil doit traiter ses affaires avec beaucoup de prudence.

CONCLUSION

Hans s'est-il rendu au Canada ? L'histoire ne le dit pas, mais c'est à espérer et de plus qu'il ait visité le pays de l'est à l'ouest (même s'il a omis Terre-Neuve). Le Canada est un pays merveilleux et partout, les gens sont accueillants, où que vous alliez. L'occasion de siéger sur un conseil national m'a donné l'occasion de mieux connaître ce pays, ses gens et ses régions. De ce fait, je suis plus convaincu que jamais de la force que présente le bénévolat local et encore plus de la nécessité de relier les efforts par le bénévolat au niveau national.

Traduction : Jean Carrière

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Fédération des centres d'action bénévole du Québec



TO CARVER OR NOT TO CARVER

by Ginette Johnstone

Last October, I had the privilege to address a group at the "New Visions" conference sponsored by the Canadian Administrators of Volunteers and Volunteer Canada, on the Carver Model of Governance. Then as now, I was intrigued by this approach and endeavouring in my own mind to assess the practical application of this model. I would like to share some of these thoughts with you now.

First, let us look at some of the basic premises that John Carver sets out as the basis for his model. Carver says of not-for-profit boards of directors "They do not function"¹. As he sees it, there are six major flaws inherent in current governance practice.

1. Time of the Trivial: "Items of trivial scope or import get disproportionate attention compared with items of greater scope and importance." (page 10)
2. Short-term bias: Boards deal with short term issues rather than taking the long term view.
3. Reactive Stance: Boards react "to staff initiatives rather than acting proactively" (page 11)
4. Reviewing, Rehashing, Redoing: "Reviewing, rehashing, and redoing staff work... do not constitute leadership."
5. Leaky Accountability: "The board continues to relate officially

with other staff (not the CEO), either giving them directions or judging their performance."

6. Diffuse Authority: "It is rare to find a board-executive partnership wherein each party's authority has been clarified."²

In response to these flaws, Carver proposes a new model of governance in which directors would deal exclusively with policy issues and leave all operational matters to staff. In turn, staff would be expected to work within "operational limits", that is policies defined by the board of directors. The proposed model of governance is founded on the following principles.

1. "Cradle" vision
2. Explicitly address fundamental values
3. Force an external focus
4. Enable an outcome-driven organizing system
5. Separate large issues from small
6. Force forward thinking
7. Enable pro-activity
8. Facilitate diversity and unity
9. Describe relationships to relevant constituencies
10. Define a common basis for discipline
11. Delineate the board's role in common topics
12. Determine what information is needed
13. Balance overcontrol and undercontrol
14. Use board time efficiently

When discussing Carver's model with those who have or are in the process of adopting this model, four major concerns arise.

1. The Carver model advocates minimal board committees, stating that the nominations committee is "the only board committee that may need to be described and empowered in the bylaws (page 165)." Carver argues that boards should focus on policy issues only and that work is important that the whole board should be involved. Though many of us would gladly spare ourselves the time and frustration that committee work sometimes brings, it is also widely recognized that committees have many advantages. They bring together a broader diversity of skills and experience; they bring wider resources (time and people) and they can focus more precisely on issues of importance. Committees are also a critical link to the community and a source of potential board members.

THE DUTIES AND LIABILITIES OF DIRECTORS

by Laura Bruneau

Public awareness of the duties and liabilities of directors and officers is growing exponentially. The following outlines brief answers to the most commonly asked questions about such issues.

“What, In Fact, Are The Differences Between A Director And An Officer?”

- Directors are appointed or elected by members of the not-for-profit organization. Directors direct the affairs of the organization meaning that they assume strategic duties.
- Officers are appointed or elected by directors and they manage the affairs of the organization. Officers are listed in the by-laws and normally include the President, Treasurer and Secretary. Officers assume operational duties.

note: In most not-for-profit organizations, the Executive Director is NOT an Officer of the Board.

Any individual can simultaneously be a director, officer, employee and member. An important element of good governance is to recognize which “hat you are wearing” while you are acting.

“What Are the Duties of Directors?”

Duty of Care

While undertaking strategic duties which include monitoring officers, accounting to third parties, establishing internal control systems, setting and monitoring financial goals, directors owe a duty of care to all concerned. This duty of care implies that directors must exercise diligence and skill when making decisions or acting.

2. The Carver model requires that the only formal access to staff and back again be through the CEO. Carver believes that clean lines of communication and reporting are key to effectiveness. This model also avoids having board members becoming involved in operational issues and frees the Executive Director to make the best operational decisions. It also allows directors to focus on policy issues. However, for very small organizations with very few staff, directors are often involved in operations out of necessity and in these cases, it is critical that they remember if they are working as “the boss” or as “staff”. Still, having board members removed from contact with the staff may run counter to the philosophy of a team approach. It also may lead the board to be out of touch with the reality of service delivery.

3. Some feel that the Carver model leaves the board unprotected from risk and liability. The disconnectedness of the board from the daily operations may leave it open to risk and liability through lack of information. In the worst scenarios, incompetence and inefficiencies can go on a long time before the board, who is ultimately responsible, finds out. The board of directors is legally liable for all actions of the organization’s staff and agents. It is its responsibility to ensure that all those acting on behalf of the organization, not only the Executive Director, is acting prudently.

4. Some believe that the Carver model makes it more easy to defraud for staff to defraud the organization. By the same argument as above, if a board had the misfortune of hiring a dishonest Executive Director, and they do exist, the Carver model might leave more vulnerable to being defrauded than if there were other contacts with the organization.

These concerns do remain for many involved in governance. An organization adopting the model must ensure it guards itself from these potential pitfalls. As the conclusion to a very interesting discussion came about at the conference, there was general agreement that the question was not “To Carver or not to Carver” but to use common sense in applying the Carver model so that it is compatible with your organizations and feasible within its structure.

1 Carver, John, *Boards that Make a Difference, A New Design for Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations*. San Francisco, California: Jossey Bass 1990, page 8.
2 All above quotes come from pages 10 and 11 of Carver’s *Boards that Make a Difference.*”

Fiduciary Duty

Directors must further act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the organization.

Fiduciary duty and the duty of care are consequently owed to the organization itself, members, other directors, staff, creditors, volunteers, clients and the public, to name the most obvious parties.

Note that you will not be held to a standard of care any higher than any other person of your background and experience would otherwise be held to. In the event that you ever face allegations of breach of duty in your capacity as a director, conduct yourself in a manner such that you will be able to prove your alleged wrongful conduct to, in fact, be within the parameters of the above. It is when there is evidence that you were grossly negligent or that you acted in bad faith that you may be held personally liable.

“What are the Liabilities of Directors?”

The organization’s liabilities are distinct from the directors’ liabilities. It would appear that personal liabilities have evolved for the purposes of assigning greater accountability to individuals at the board table.

Director liabilities may arise from two sources: Common Law (previous decisions of the court) and Statutory Law (legislation/written law). The liability of directors is joint and several meaning that the claimant has the discretion to hold one or all of the directors liable for alleged wrongful conduct. Practically speaking, joint and several liability means that a claimant can sue the entire board for the actions of one individual director.

Examples of Liabilities

² Common Law - verbal or written misrepresentation that the claimant relied on to his/her detriment, non-disclosure,

mismanagement, breach of duty, negligence with respect to employee matters, discrimination and defamation of character.

¹ Statutory Law - unpaid deductions at source and employee wages. These examples of statutory liability arise only if the organization is unable to pay.

Common claimants include government bodies, employees, contractors, clients, members and fellow directors.

“How Can A Director Reduce The Risk?”

Knowledge and Understanding

Directors can reduce the risk by knowing and understanding the risks inherent to the job. When faced with a claim naming them personally as a defendant, directors have been heard to say: “If only we had known that our duty required that the board rely on an expert for this legal/technical problem, we would have retained an expert.”

Indemnification By-Law

Directors may trigger financial assistance in the “indemnification” clause of the organization’s by-laws. This clause provides that the organization will pay defence costs along with settlement payments to the claimant if a director is sued in his/her capacity as a director of the organization. One problem that may arise in the event that you are forced to call upon this clause is the organization’s inability to pay. Murphy’s Law is such that claims often surface just when the organization is unable to provide its directors with financial assistance.

Insurance Policy

The organization may purchase a liability insurance policy for itself, its employees, volunteers and past, present and future directors and officers. Although many different coverages are available, all policies cover any error, omission, neglect, breach of duty allegedly

committed by an insured. As with any insurance policy, certain claims are excluded. The policy may be purchased through an insurance broker and you should ensure that a careful report outlining the scope of coverage is completed by the broker. By way of insurance, an organization can transfer its obligation to indemnify and consequently avoid a financial crisis resulting from costly litigation involving its directors and officers.

Concluding Statement

A not-for-profit organization must be directed by the Board in a manner that is appropriate for the business at hand. This article offers no precise solutions but is intended to apprise you of the basics. Consider building on these basics in your vital role as a director of a not-for-profit organization.

Laura Bruneau is a lawyer and Assistant Vice-president with ENCON Insurance Managers Inc. She is an expert claims manager in the area of professional liability claims and particularly claims against Canadian directors and officers.



COMMITTEES : INVOLVING CONSUMERS IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Alan Muir based on interview with Brian Tardif

In order to build a better mousetrap, or to improve customer service, profit-driven businesses constantly solicit ideas from their consumers. And of course, not-for-profit organizations have consumers too—the people who need the service it has to offer. So by creating committees which include consumers, an organization can gain a better insight into its level of performance. The consumer who spends time on such a committee is able to offer suggestions for improvements, discuss concerns and analyze current services. In short, the consumer feels a sense of empowerment.

Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa-Carleton is a not-for-profit agency that helps people with disabilities by matching them with volunteer advocates

on a one-to-one basis. One of its most unique and important committees is the "Consumers Advisory Committee." Members of this group are primarily made up of "protégés"—people with varying levels of physical or mental disabilities seeking volunteer advocates. They are the consumers of the service which Citizen Advocacy provides.

According to Brian Tardif, Citizen Advocacy's Executive Director, the Consumers Advisory Committee has two main functions:

- to provide an opportunity for protégés to learn what it's like to participate in committee work and decision-making in a group
- to give protégés a kind of 'stepping stone' towards becoming members of the Board of Directors

Recent changes to Citizen Advocacy's by-laws stipulate that a minimum of two seats on the Board of Directors are to be designated for protégés. But without training and experience in committee work, the chance for them to effect real change on the Board is limited. "It's not just a question of finding (protégés) and having them elected to the Board," says Tardif. "It's a question of helping them develop the kinds of skills that they need to participate effectively."

By participating in the committee, protégés learn along with many of their peers. This creates a comfort level—a climate for open dialogue in an atmosphere that allows them a chance to learn at their own pace. Citizen Advocacy staff on the committee provide a coaching role, teaching them to participate in discussions and providing them with moral support in order to make the protégé's experience a positive one. They also develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

Members of the Consumers Advisory Committee recently decided to thank their advocates and held a special evening called Thanks a Bunch. Although they had some help from staff, it was the protégés who came up with the idea, developed the concept and were very involved in the implementation. "They learned about managing projects, decision-making and about doing things in a collective way," says Tardif. "They took ownership of the project and took pride in its outcome. And isn't that what you want all committees to do?"

Protégés need the opportunity to transfer what they are learning from the Consumers Advisory Committee to other settings. Members often sit on other committees where there are not so many consumers, and so the comfort level is lowered. Sometimes these consumers learn they simply do not like being a part of any kind of committee and certainly not the Board of Directors. "Not all consumers want to be involved in government structures or groups," says Tardif, "but sometimes they want to be involved in things that are concrete, practical and give meaning to their daily life."

It is not easy for some people to see how decisions and deliberations made on committees have impact on them. It is even more difficult for a person with a cognitive impairment, who may decide that this kind of decision-making is too much to comprehend. But for many others, committee skills are enhanced and social skills are developed. The comments and concerns protégés provide give them a feeling of pride and achievement. An organization that involves its consumers in this way is more prepared to fulfill its mission.

Brian Tardif is the Executive Director of the Citizen Advocacy in Ottawa, Ontario.



VIDEO REVIEW

by Hazel Sutherland

"*Board Basics for Volunteers*" is a five-part video series, designed for board members of not-for-profit organizations in Ontario. The series is supported, in part, by a Facilitator's and Participant Guides, which include exercises and activities. Produced in 1995 by *TVOntario*, the United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada, and the Trillium Foundation, this resource is a useful tool for pre-board training of prospective board members, new board orientation, or discussion of issues by the board team. The flexible components of the package allow for easy use, as individual subjects or as a complete training tool.

The series includes material related to board roles and responsibilities, recruitment and support of board members, planning and developing policies and board teamwork. The content is useful as an overview or

introduction to the issues, and the title "Board Basics" is accurate. Many of the issues presented require additional depth of content, to fully be effective. Designed as a self-study package the addition of a skilled facilitator and sufficient time for discussion, would add even more value to the solid content presented.

Key issues, related to each theme, are introduced in clear and informal terms. Each concept is developed using discussion by individual board members from diverse community organizations. Some segments include actual board meetings and planning sessions designed to illustrate the processes used to facilitate board work.

The Participant and Facilitator's guides add scope and depth to the materials. Exercises and activities are conveniently formatted for use individually or as a group training package.

Particularly strong are the segments on the legal responsibilities of board members and practical illustration of processes, such as policy development. The range of organizations involved in the production make the resource credible to a wide variety of community groups.

The final program, "Springboards", provides valuable insight into the more complex issues of change, partnerships and inclusion. While these issues are critical to effective not-for-profit organizations, they go beyond the basics and occasionally move away from the board focus, so strong in the remainder of the resource. This segment might be used with experienced boards, or as a later follow-up to introductory training.

In addition to relevant content, the introduction and conclusion of the series provide strong motivational messages for volunteer board members, reinforcing the value of their contributions to the social fabric of Canada.

**For additional information about "Board Basics for Volunteers", contact: TVOntario Customer Service
Box 200, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario M4T 2T1
(1-800-463-6886)**

Wendy MacDonald is part of the Voluntary Sector Management Program at Grant MacEwan Community College, Edmonton, Alberta.



ITEMS OF INTEREST

Abbey Livingston, Diane and Wiele, Bob, *Working with Volunteer Boards*, Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Association of Volunteer Bureaus and Centres, 1988.

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Graff, Linda, *By Definition: Policies for Volunteer Programs, A Manual for Executive Directors, Board Members, and Managers of Volunteers*, 2nd edition, Dundas, Ontario: Graff and Associates, 1997.

Johnstone, Ginette, *Chairing a Committee, a Practical Guide*, 2nd edition, Carp, Ontario: Johnstone Training and Consultation (JTC) Inc., 1994

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PEER EXPERTS COLUMN

Scenario:

I chair an Advisory Committee made up of senior volunteers who provide input and direction regarding programs aimed at keeping seniors healthy and independent. The Advisory Committee has been running quite smoothly all along but I needed some more people on this committee and have recently recruited new volunteers. One of the newly recruited volunteers, Mrs Green, has a lot to contribute but seems to have a "chip on her shoulder" and clashes with Mrs. Brown, who has been a key volunteer with the Committee for a long time.

Mrs. Brown says she is going to leave if Mrs. Green stays. Both have a lot to offer and I am worried about the impact this friction might have on the functioning of this committee. What will I do about it?

Response from Rhonda Douglas

A senior volunteer I worked with once told me "It's much harder to jump down someone's throat when you both have your mouth full". In this case I would first meet privately with each individual to get more information on the source of the conflict. I would indicate to the new volunteer that I had noticed she seemed unhappy with her volunteering experience and offer to assist. I would appeal to the "old" volunteer's sense of investment in the organization and ask her to help me make this new volunteer feel welcome. Then I would take the two of them out to lunch and ask them both to work with me on a small project for the committee (just the two of them). I would continue to work closely with them and monitor the situation until it resolved itself, stepping in to mediate if and when it was necessary.

Maybe these two just need to see the world, and the organization, through each other's eyes for a while.

(Rhonda Douglas is Direct Marketing Manager at CARE Canada)

Response from Colin Thacker:

Like a Shakespearean play, this scenario has a main issue and a couple of related issues. The first problem and the primary one is the conflict between Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown. This issue is critical because it is disrupting the smooth functioning of the advisory committee. Secondary issues are Mrs. Green's chippy attitude and Mrs. Brown's threat to leave the committee unless Mrs. Green is removed from the group. If the manager of volunteer services can facilitate a solution to the primary issue it would seem reasonable that the two sub issues would be resolved.

The goal of the manager of volunteer services should be to retain the services of both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown since both have a lot to contribute to the advisory committee. With this objective in mind, the manager should meet with each lady individually and discuss the

importance of resolving their differences in the best interest of the seniors' program. With Mrs. Green, the manager should identify how her chippy attitude is affecting the whole group. With Mrs. Brown, the manager should allow her to identify her own intolerance as an obstacle to communication. The manager should suggest that the two ladies together would add much needed strength to the group. The next step would be to have the two meet together to resolve their own conflict. It is important for the manager of volunteer services to adopt a conciliatory role. The solution to their dilemma should be theirs; if the solution comes from the manager of volunteer services and it fails, the challenge will become his alone. The manager must simply create the opportunity and atmosphere for the two ladies to arrive at a mutual solution.

(Colin Thacker is the Coordinator of Volunteer Services at the North Bay Psychiatric Hospital)

Response from Joy Murray:

Both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown are protecting what they perceive as their own "turf". A number of issues arise out of this situation.

Mrs. Green brings a lot of baggage with her but she might also be feeling intimidated by the committee, especially by people who have been around a long time and who seem to know everything, such as Mrs. Brown. She might feel insignificant and insecure about what she can offer and to overcome that, takes an aggressive attitude. It may well be that the roles of Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown in the new scheme of things have not been clearly communicated. Mrs. Brown, on the other hand, feels threatened. She has been around a long time and has a certain prestige or position of power. Who is this newcomer to threaten her position!

This situation must be resolved. If it continues, there will be alienation of other committee members, power struggles and certainly the goals of the committee will not be advanced. I suggest you first

meet individually with both Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown and ask for their support in meeting the goals of the committee. Asking some questions regarding how they see their role in meeting the committee goals will bring forward some of their feelings and concerns. I would give practical suggestions as to how they can be instrumental in meeting those goals. By involving each individual in some of the planning it is possible to identify the root of the problem, address the concerns and make some headway towards resolution. I would also give each person a role to play that fully uses their skills and experience. It is important to validate their worth while letting them know very clearly what your expectations are.

Call a meeting of the full committee. Describe the role of each committee member. Arrive at a consensus of how meetings will be conducted and what steps will be taken if any member oversteps the guidelines established by the group. Ensure that everyone has a chance to speak, but set some guidelines about tone and content. It will be important to get Mrs. Brown to share her knowledge without feeling threatened. At the same time, it will be necessary to make it very clear what Mrs. Green can offer and ensure she has an appropriate opportunity to provide input.

I would set some progress points to monitor and develop the situation between Mrs. Green and Mrs. Brown. Further individual meetings may be necessary to monitor the relationship and to nurture and encourage both parties. Continuing to seek their advice and cooperation will be needed for quite some time.

(Joy Murray is Manager, Volunteer Development at the Canadian Cancer Society, British Columbia and Yukon Division)



Tell us what themes you would like us to feature in an upcoming issue of the journal.

JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Editorial Process and Guidelines for Authors

Objective

The Journal of Volunteer Resources Management is intended:

1. to serve as a credible source of information on the management of volunteers in Canada;
2. to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and to encourage networking among managers of volunteers;
3. to provide a professional development tool for managers of volunteers;
4. to recognize and encourage Canadian talent in the field of management of volunteers;
5. to include in each issue at least two articles that will consider different views of a specific and predetermined theme.

Target Audience

The Journal's intended audience includes managers of volunteers, educators, media and funders of not-for-profit organizations across the country.

Submissions

All manuscripts will be accepted either on diskette or on typed, double spaced pages. Submissions should be written according to "The Canadian Style - A Guide to Writing and Editing" - Secretary of State, Dundurn Press.

External reviewers may be engaged to review content if deemed advisable by the committee. The revised draft is edited for clarity and consistency by the Editorial Team.

The edited version is returned to the author for acceptance along with an approval form for signature.

The signed form is to be returned to the Editorial Team within a week along with any suggestions for final revisions.

Format and Style

Authors are asked to respect the following word counts:

	Words	Pages
Lead Article	2000	5-6
Secondary Article	700-800	2-3
Book Review	150	1

The lead article will look at the topic in some depth and will normally require the author to conduct research into current trends and perspectives on the subject.

The secondary article will adopt a more practical approach, including personal experiences and opinions.

Advertising

Limited advertising will be allowed in the Journal, for materials of direct relevance to managers of volunteer service, and as long as it conforms to the guidelines set out by the Editorial Team. All ads are subject to the approval of the Editorial Team.

Suggested Guidelines:

1. Only 1/4 page and 1/2 page ads will be accepted.
2. Ads must be camera-ready.
3. A maximum of one page of ads will be permitted per issue.
4. Job ads are not recommended.
5. Cost is to be determined by the Editorial Team.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION AND THEMES

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Theme</u>
Spring '98	articles due on the 24th of February	Evaluation
Summer '98	articles due on the 24th of May	Volunteering in The Arts
Fall '98	articles due on the 24th of August	The Merging Organizations
Winter '99	articles due on the 24th of October	Education and Training



For CAVR Membership
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