(Approx. 764 words)

What Makes a Great Organization Great?

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Most “non-profit” organizations exist to help others. They help in the community and have a mission and goals. Although I am writing this article for the members of our organization, the Sarasota Technical Users Group, I am hoping that this article will benefit many members of other organizations and yours. It has to do with making things better – to help more people in more ways. And we are NOT talking about money here! What makes an organization work to do some good is its people. If other organizations are like ours, you will see that only a handful of people do almost all the work. They serve on boards, committees, make phone calls, send out communications, and more. Wouldn’t it be a big help if someone volunteered to help, at only one or two hours a MONTH?!

Yes, it would! Let’s take an example; we’ll call him Joe. Joe likes to help others and enjoys it very much. He serves on the board, sends out communications, and answers emails about the organization. The big help for Joe would be if someone would volunteer to send out one or two emails a month. Or make a couple of phone calls to verify membership. Or send out an email survey. This frees Joe up to do a better job in other ways, not to mention to give him a break.

Why do people not volunteer to help? I’ve heard many reasons over the years, and here are the main ones:

1. I don’t have the time. Yes, you do. This is not a full-time job, and you will not be bothered by many phone calls or emails. There are plenty of needs for people like YOU, anyone, to give just an hour or two a month.

2. I don’t have the skills or knowledge, and you don’t need ANY skills or expertise to help. Of course, if you DO have some skills that could be useful, that’s great. But we need people to help first; many areas need your help, and no skills are required! Besides, we offer free training too!

3. I’m taking care of a sick relative. Wow, that’s important, and no one wants you to neglect your taking care of someone who needs you daily. But if you have the time to make phone calls to your friends, can you not make a few calls for your organization? Or send an email? A phone call to a member is a great personal touch that makes the organization more meaningful. Keeping in touch with members is a huge step to make a good organization a great organization.

Here are some things our organization would like to do to help our members, but we need volunteers to help:

A. Offer more classes – our instructors could use some help (no, you do not have to teach).

B. More contact with our members to understand how our organization helps them and what they would need or like in the future.

C. Conduct a survey to help us do more and better things.

D. Improve communications with our members – news articles, email, and phone calls.

E. More recognition of others, especially our volunteers, organizing a gift or luncheon.

F. Asking other members to help too!

There are many benefits to helping too – you will make new friends, learn something new, have more fun in your life, and have something to talk about (which makes you a more exciting person). What’s NOT to like?

I also do volunteer work at a food pantry. I once asked another volunteer this question: “Wouldn’t it be great if some of these people who come here to get food would volunteer just for an hour to help us distribute it? I know they have the time.” The answer I got back was a bit shocking. The answer was, “These people do not think that way; it is not in their mindset.” It was tough for me to understand that. I can’t imagine people taking advantage of a not-for-profit organization over and over again and not thinking to “pay back” a little with an hour of their time. What do you think about that?

Organizations would always like to improve and do more for their members.

Every such organization needs everyone to contribute a little to provide more. Will you donate an hour or two a month?

Contact ANYONE in your organization to find out how. And I thank you for your kind help in advance.