Traps and pitfalls

- Long term leaders who view organization as “their baby” – they may be sharply critical and undermining of new leaders.
- Outgoing leaders may miss being a go to person or in the know. Where can they help the chapter in a new role or step back into a previous role?
- If we don’t share the organization’s mission and goals we lose our direction. Where do we want to go? What are we trying to accomplish?
- Not everyone wants to be a leader or more involved. Listen to what they tell you.
- The board establishes the tone for the organization – are you presenting an example that you are volunteering gladly (or is it reluctantly or guiltily)?

Assumptions we Tend to Make

- Everyone knows what the organization stands for and represents. The only way to assure common goals is to frequently share those goals.
- Everyone knows their role. Clarification of the roles cannot be over-emphasized in volunteer organizations.
- Everyone knows where to get needed information. Volunteers need to know and understand how different parts of a project fit together. Many problems can be avoided when the information flow is unimpeded.
- Everyone gets feedback. Volunteers cycle through organizations. New recruits are often unaware of previous efforts. Providing feedback to volunteers is critical at all levels of the organization. Special attention is required in order to share previous experiences with current members.

What to Do?

- Active Listening. Encourage volunteers to talk about the organization and what they expect from the volunteering experience.
- Mentoring. Supportively guide others in learning and sharing not only how, but why specific roles are important. Help others solve problems that are holding the organization back.
- Evaluation and Reflection. Assess and incorporate the lessons we learn through action. Public decision making encourages those expected to implement plans to have ownership of those plans. Encourage new volunteers to make suggestions.
Recruiting new leaders

- Nominating Committee – consider making it a full time committee
  - Responsible to identify potential candidates
  - Interview candidates
  - Review roles and responsibilities and get permission to submit name for ballot
  - Get input from leadership & board
  - Determine current gaps and future needs of organization
  - How to develop existing leadership to meet the needs.
  - Nominating Committee members are usually not current board members or a candidate for office

- Finding and encouraging volunteers, every board members responsibility
- When people come and are interested, see if they want to be more involved. Let them take small steps

Turning over responsibilities

- Identify people who are interested in taking on a responsibility
- Let them do it their way, within the mission of the organization. There are many ways to get things done
- Let the organization grow into its future
- Once the positions are filled, there should be a formal orientation process
- Consider the assignment of a seasoned veteran leader to act as a mentor for each new leader
- All outgoing leaders need to be recognized for their contributions to the organization and be an ongoing part of the chapter.

What “Things” need to transition?

- Official documents required by state including minutes of annual meeting and financial records
- On line document storage options – Boardnetwork or YahooGroups

Resources:
Leadership for Volunteers: The Way It Is and The Way It Could Be by Richard Cummins

Boards of All-Volunteer Organizations by Blue Avocado
http://www.blueavocado.org/content/boards-all-volunteer-organizations

Four challenges for volunteer leaders and volunteer managers by Mary V. Merrill
Your past leaders are valuable assets:

- They could help you a lot. You need to tap into their interests, which have changed over time. They’ve been there. Done that.
- Sometimes past leaders have outdated opinions:
  - We tried that it didn’t work — well maybe things have changed in 20 years or maybe when they tried it they didn’t do it right. Also, remember they have valuable experience and good insight into several different ways things have worked in the past.
  - This is the way it must be done — they’ve done it this way and it works. But maybe it is not the only way and maybe freshening up the event would be good or maybe we need to blow it up and try something completely different. Everyone needs to watch out for everyone else’s feelings here.
  - Back in my day my secretary, wife, assistant did it — we need to realize time is a very constrained commodity now days; most people don’t have secretaries, assistants or non-working spouses. Maybe the chapter needs to hire people to do some things.

Don’t forget there are opportunities at Region and Institute that might be of interest to seasoned volunteers. Institute is often “starved” for volunteers for task teams and committees.

And make sure you give them opportunities to share what they know; they learned a lot of it the hard way. No need to reinvent everything every year.

How to ask for help:

Why asking for help can be challenging and ideas to try:

- Fear of being a burden — remind yourself people love helping; it strengthens social ties and makes them feel good about themselves. Ask for something specific but steer clear of micromanaging.
- Fear of admitting we are out of control — remind yourself that sometimes control is not the right approach then separate the problem to be solved from a person.
- Fear of owing a favor — feeling indebted to someone may feel uncomfortable. Think of the favor being done with gratitude. Think that was nice for the chapter.
- Fear of appearing weak — reframe as being a fixer consulting with an expert. Match what is needed with someone who you consider an expert. Remember all those past leaders.
- Fear of rejection — if someone has said no in the past. Is it really a rejection of you? Or just that it wasn’t the right person at the right time. What is the worst that could happen, really you are just in the place you started with lots of other people wanting to help. Just ask someone else.

Asking for help maybe outside your comfort zone but it is good for the chapter and for others, give graciously and receive help graciously, consider it paying forward into new leaders and remember it takes lots of people to come together to run a chapter.

Appreciation and Saying Thank You Activity

Resources:
How to Ask For Help Podcast by Ellen Hendriksen, PhD, Savvy Psychologist April 1, 2016
http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/health-fitness/mental-health/how-to-ask-for-help
Leadership and Volunteers

A few things to keep in mind:

- Remember they don’t work for you. They don’t have to do what you ask. You want them to help but they do it because they find it fun, fulfilling, educational, good experience or something. Ask them what they want to do and really listen. Some people like awards, others like to run a good program, they may have a passion for a subject, still others want praise for a job well done and others want to be part of a group.
- When volunteers no longer get what they want they will fade away. Who has faded away in your Chapter lately, do you know why? How about a few years ago?
- Asking too much of one person can lead to burn out, but if someone is good at something and enjoys it don’t mess with success. Communicate with them, do they still want to be in charge of xyz or do they want to move to something else or add something else now that they are comfortable with this task.
- Remember people join groups to be involved. A healthy chapter has a lot of people helping and involved.
- Believe it or not new people OFTEN feel like it is difficult to get involved. Consider linking a new person up with someone who has done the same thing for a long time. You may get new ideas.
- Dirty little secret – It really is just easier to do it yourself. But that denies other people from the benefits of being involved. It denies the chapter the opportunity to engage with a lot of people and hear their ideas.

Burn out is not the only issue with volunteers:

Yes you can burn out volunteers but you can damage their commitment to your leadership team in other ways.

- Conflicting events - both sets of volunteers will be upset. You will lose potential attendees and revenue. Members can be in more than one chapter. Use them to communicate with neighboring chapters, region and institute. Look at and post to the Region and Institute Event Calendars.
- Stepping on their project - if someone volunteers but is not getting it done, talk to them before you do it yourself or ask someone else to do it. They may almost finished. Communicate deadlines & why it is needed by then. Don’t waste their time. And they positively won’t do it the same way you would do it, but that is okay.
- Ignore their advice - Listen to ideas and advice. If you’re not going to take it be sure you continue to communicate with those that gave it to you or they soon won’t have time to share with you. You don’t have to take their advice but it is nice to give them first notice of what you will be doing and if appropriate why. It is a balancing act, they (and you!) need to be able to let go as well and let new leaders have new ideas.
- Ignore their reasons for volunteering -- Everyone is an important member but are not members for the same reasons. To stay and to be active-- their reasons for being involved must be satisfied.
- Feeling left out -- Don’t use chapter money to send the same few people to Region Conferences and Institute Conventions year after year. It is a big perk, spread it around. Don’t huddle in groups at meetings and events. This is not the time to have a committee meeting. Schedule it before or after or another time.