



A Matter of Design:

Job design theory and application to the voluntary sector

Foreword

A Matter of Design: Job design theory and application to the voluntary sector is intended to disseminate essential information about job design theory to the voluntary sector and to provide helpful hints on how to apply the theory to the management of volunteer programming. This is one of several capacity-building resources released in recognition of the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) 2001, and has been written to assist the professional administrator of volunteer resources, as well as individuals who find themselves managing volunteer programs, either as volunteers themselves or in a paid capacity.

Volunteers have changed. Voluntary organizations have changed. Access to information, the expectations of funders, the way we define communities, contextual impacts of security, economy, health, environment are all in flux. How many organizations are engaging volunteers to do the same job, in the same way that it has been done for years? *A Matter of Design* challenges organizations to fundamentally re-think the involvement of volunteers, starting with an examination of mission and moving through the elements of volunteer involvement.

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Canada

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Setting the Context	5
Why Job Design?	7
Job Design: Good for the volunteer, too	9
The Organizational Backdrop to Job Design	10
Recruitment	10
Competition for volunteers	12
Volunteers and/or paid staff	13
Understanding and Implementing Job Design	15
Step 1. Review the mandate of the organization	16
Step 2. Identify the functions that support your mandate	17
Step 3. Identify the skills necessary for the task	19
Step 4. Identify and describe volunteer assignments	22
Step 5. Match volunteers to assignments	25
Conclusion	28
Job Design: Support materials	29
The five steps	29
Using the Job Design Templates	35
Sample Job Design Process	44
Template 1 – Function Analysis (Example: Health care organization) . . .	44
Template 2 – Component Breakdown	45
Template 3 – Job description	46
Job description 2: (Example: Food Bank)	48
Job description 3: (Example: Soccer League)	50
Diversify the Assignments	52
Next Steps in the Volunteer Management Process	53
Bibliography	54
Job Design Templates	59



Introduction

The theory of job design is an important concept in business management and has been well known in the private sector for over 30 years. According to its proponents, workers are motivated by jobs in which they feel they can make a difference—and jobs can be designed with that in mind. An employee may take on a whole position involving many tasks, or a reduced number of tasks, depending on ability, time allotment and other constraints.

Put simply, “job design refers to the way tasks are combined to form complete jobs” (Robbins and Stuart-Kotze). Using job design principles results in clear job descriptions, a motivated workforce and successful completion of tasks. People are assigned to a job because they are perceived to be able to fill its requirements. From an employer’s perspective, the employee knows exactly what to do and is accountable. From the employee’s perspective, the job requirements and responsibilities are clear. A contractual element—through either a position description or the employment contract—ensures that both employer and employee have a shared understanding of the work to be done.

Job design theory has a basis in the work of a number of key researchers. Psychologist A. H. Maslow identified a hierarchical scheme of five basic needs that motivate people: to stay alive, to be safe, to be with others, to be respected and to do work that corresponds to our gifts and abilities (Bittel and Newstrom).

Frederick Herzberg, a noted behavioural scientist, distinguished between what he called the *maintenance* and the *motivational* factors that affect job satisfaction (Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory). *Maintenance* factors include salary, administrative policies and working conditions. On their own, maintenance factors cannot provide job satisfaction, although they can be reasons for job dissatisfaction. On the other hand, *motivational* factors include a sense of achievement, the perceived importance of the work, job autonomy and skill development. Workers respond positively to the importance of the work they are doing and an opportunity for living up to their potential (Bittel and Newstrom).

Based on these theoretical underpinnings, job design methodology has been developed for and by larger organizations to handle the challenges associated with employing a large number of people in a wide variety of capacities. Among features of the modern workplace that come out of the job design model are flextime, job-sharing, job rotation and the compressed workweek. All of these can lead to more autonomy for the worker and thereby tend to increase job satisfaction.

Little has been done to adapt the job design model to volunteerism. While a fair amount of volunteer management theory has been borrowed from the wealth of knowledge about general human resource management, the technical aspects of job design—found mostly

A BRIEF NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Some organizations that involve volunteers dislike the terms ‘job’ or ‘work,’ preferring to refer to ‘assignments’ or ‘activities.’ Since the concept presented here originally came through the private sector, and referred to paid work, it is natural to continue to use the expression ‘job design’ to refer to it. Please do not let the terminology dissuade you from realizing the value of this approach for yourself, your organization and your volunteers.

in the corporate sector—have yet to be considered systematically by those who recruit and oversee volunteer programming. Yet, it is self-evident that volunteers also want to take ownership of tasks and to experience the satisfaction of successful completion of work assignments. Volunteers, as well as paid staff, have the right to know what is expected of them and will be likely to contribute more if they can see how their role fits into the larger picture. Most importantly, volunteers are increasingly concerned about the appropriate use of their time. Charities and non-profits are finding it more difficult to match volunteers to the volunteer positions they have. All of this leads to the conclusion that we, the voluntary sector, must change how we think about the work that volunteers do and the way tasks are completed to achieve the goals of our organizations. Job design theory provides a helpful basis on which to consider these challenges.

This discussion paper/manual introduces job design as a concept, outlines its particular applications in the voluntary sector, and identifies the problems it may help to address. The manual contains both helpful hints for applying job design strategies and a number of job design examples. In addition, a Job Design Template appears at the end of the document to help you as you begin to apply the insights presented here.

Time is always in short supply in the voluntary sector, but job design is worth the time it takes *now* to serve both volunteer managers and our clientele better in the future.



Setting the context

The voluntary sector in Canada is defined by the involvement of volunteers. In fact more than 40% of the 180,000 charities and non-profit organizations in the country have no paid staff at all, depending solely on volunteers to achieve their goals and objectives. At the other end of the spectrum we find many large organizations that involve thousands of paid people who work alongside volunteers, such as hospitals, school boards and social service organizations. The single defining characteristic of all registered charities and non-profits is the governance of volunteers, so that even an organization that involves no volunteers in direct service will be accountable to, and led by, a volunteer Board of Directors.

The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) indicates that 6.5 million Canadians volunteered their time to an organization during the year 2000. There are also approximately 1.3 million paid staff workers in the voluntary sector and, together, this very large number of people provides a plethora of services to Canadians. The work of the voluntary sector covers an enormous range of activities: providing health care, social services, environmental protection and advocacy, arts and culture work, leadership, coaching and organizing for sport and recreation programs and organizations, education, mutual aid and support, and political activism. To this very incomplete list we must add the millions of Canadians who contribute to their communities in 'informal' ways by being good neighbours, being members in groups outside of work or family, and donating money.

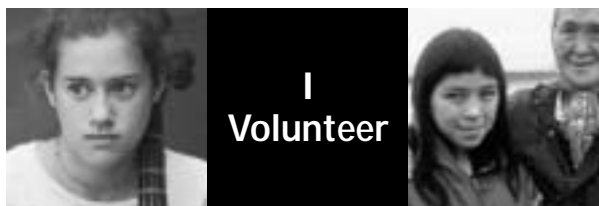
The 2000 NSGVP also highlighted an important and troubling fact that has direct implications for thinking about job design: fewer Canadians volunteered in 2000 than in 1997 and the main reason people cited for *not* volunteering was that they "do not have extra time." Volunteers have many demands on their time: increasing career pressures and stress on the job, and the challenge of tending and supporting families. This is a particular problem for members of the 'sandwich generation' who are raising children while providing care and support for an aging parent.

We live in a changing world with many new options competing for our attention. E-mail, the web and all sorts of electronic gadgetry help us, but can also distract us and eat up time. In fact, the concept of 'spare time' is rapidly vanishing, with the vast majority of people struggling to balance their time commitments on a daily basis. A survey of 11,000 people carried out by Statistics Canada in 1998 showed that 21% of women considered themselves time-stressed, and that men and women who were time-stressed had two hours less free time a day than they did in 1992. Free time is defined in the report as "the time spent on leisure activities, like playing sports, watching television and socializing" (Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, November 9, 1999).

These facts come as no surprise to voluntary organizations that find themselves facing a revolving door of volunteer recruitment, training and management as a result of the deepening time crunch.

Volunteers have not only changed in terms of the amount of time they have available. Unlike the traditional picture of the volunteer as a retired person or an ‘at-home’ wife and mother, more than 65% of volunteers in Canada are employed. In practical terms alone, this means that most volunteers are not usually available to volunteer during traditional working hours. Other changes in the composition of the volunteer cohort are emerging, too. For example, young people are volunteering at higher rates than their older counterparts. Contrary to myth, the lowest rate of volunteering is among people 65 and over (although those who do volunteer contribute significantly more time on average than volunteers in other age groups). Volunteers state that, in addition to a commitment to the cause, they also volunteer to gain skills and, in many cases, to enhance employment opportunities. For about a quarter of volunteers (27%), the active support of their employer is an element in their decision and availability to volunteer. On the other hand, mandatory volunteering—that is, programs that are court ordered or that require people to work as a condition of completing an education program or staying on social benefits—introduce yet another kind of ‘new’ volunteer.

The voluntary sector has also changed. Government cutbacks have resulted both in the downloading of more services to voluntary organizations and in a context of shrinking available funding which can mean cutbacks to support for volunteer management. Despite an improving economy, a widening gap between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ is putting communities, and the voluntary organizations in them, in a position of scrambling to meet needs. An aging population, growing interest in equity for marginalized groups, and recent concerns about security and emergency response all affect the voluntary sector. The sector’s context for thinking about volunteering is a moving target and staying ahead of trends is challenging, to say the least.



Why job design?

Clearly, the context for volunteering in Canada is in flux: we live in a climate of changing organizations, shifting motivations for volunteering, different kinds of volunteers, less time and higher expectations.

Volunteer management theory is a relatively new thing. It tends to combine good human resource management theory with psychosocial elements that address questions of volunteer motivation and need for recognition. The emphasis in volunteer management theory tends to be on the relationship between the organization and the volunteer, usually focused on the way the person ‘in charge of’ volunteers (who may, or may not be a paid manager of volunteers) interacts with and for the volunteer. During the International Year of Volunteers, Volunteer Canada contributed to the body of knowledge about volunteer management by producing a number of think pieces and guides. The organization also provided an annotated bibliography of recent volunteer management resources.

Job design theory has, in fact, very little to do with the volunteer-to-organization relationship. The theory is concerned with the work that needs to be done, regardless of who ultimately does it—that is, regardless of whether they are paid or unpaid, how they are managed and by whom. At its simplest, job design theory requires that we address the question of *how to get done what we want to get done*—in other words, how we achieve our mission/mandate/vision. In many voluntary organizations a sense of urgency guides everything and jobs seem to grow from the imperative to meet these urgent needs, rather than from a strategic long-term approach based on task/function analysis and documentation.

The theory of job design could be put to use in consideration of much of the paid work done in the voluntary sector. However, the new challenges around recruitment and management of volunteers make the introduction of job design in the context of volunteerism a higher priority.

The starting point for thinking about job design and volunteerism is straightforward:

- Voluntary organizations are more or less dependent on volunteers to get their work done (achieve their missions/mandates), depending on how they are structured.
- Generally speaking, fewer people in Canada are now available to volunteer.
- Volunteers are changing: they have higher/different expectations and have less time, for example.
- Many organizations are facing difficulties finding volunteers who are available and interested in doing the work that needs to be done.

Unfortunately, it seems that just ordering up more volunteers is not an option. Neither is closing the doors of good organizations that are doing important work. Rather, it becomes clear that organizations will need to make changes to the kind/amount/nature of the work that volunteers do to achieve the overall goals of the organization. By extension, this means re-thinking the kind of volunteer opportunities they create. By exploring job design theory and thinking in new ways about the work of the organization and how it is organized and described, charities and non-profits will be better prepared to reach out differently to existing volunteers and, more importantly, to new ones.



Job design: good for the volunteer, too

Job design will identify the tasks volunteers can do for the organization to contribute to its mandate. It will let the volunteers know what is expected of them in the way of performance, and it will solidify their commitment.

For the volunteer, job design will clarify the whole volunteer assignment. Clear requirements, reporting structure and guidelines for role limitations—these all protect the volunteer. They mean that the volunteer will not be at a disadvantage through lack of understanding of what he or she is undertaking. He or she will know what is expected in the way of activities, time commitment and behaviour, for example. Volunteers will be able to contribute knowing that their own needs will be met, and they will stay because they find satisfaction and validation in working under these conditions.

Volunteers need to know what is expected of them, just as any paid employee does. Job design facilitates this. It breaks work down into manageable units that can be assigned specifically with regard to the particular talents of the volunteer. It requires the completion of a form that establishes reporting channels, outcomes to be expected, and deadlines or time frames. From an employee's perspective, everything is laid out clearly. The volunteer knows how many hours a task should take and can plan the time efficiently. And, writes Susan J. Ellis, “[w]hen people know what is expected of them, they are happier and more productive” (*From the Top Down*, p. 103).



The organizational backdrop to job design

Three features of volunteer involvement warrant special consideration when it comes to implementing job design: recruitment, competition for volunteers, and the mix of volunteers and paid staff.

RECRUITMENT

- **Time constraints:** One of the challenges of the voluntary sector is the need to understand the pattern of how volunteers work. Many are available for only short segments of time—perhaps as little as two hours per week—and may not be able to perform in a role that was designed for a 40-hour week. This means that the way we might normally view work assignments needs to be adjusted. Tasks that might typically be grouped into a single volunteer position could perhaps be separated and handled by more than one individual or done by a team. In practice, you may end up recruiting two or more people to handle jobs previously handled by one person. It is also important to realize that if a volunteer works only one day out of five, then the work will take five times as long to complete and the schedule should be designed accordingly.
- **Providing a quality experience:** Volunteer time should be quality time—both for the volunteer and for the organization. We have already mentioned the determinants of job satisfaction outlined in Herzberg’s motivation–maintenance theory: achievement, recognition, the value of the work itself, responsibility and advancement. If the work itself is sometimes routine, then these factors are particularly important. Herzberg contended that the more tangible issues of salary, working conditions, company policy and interpersonal relationships could affect a worker negatively, but could not by themselves provide job satisfaction. Obviously, taking the factor of financial remuneration out of the mix increases the importance of other motivators. No matter what they’re doing, volunteers want to enjoy themselves—their volunteering experience should be a positive one. Many volunteers come forward for the opportunity of meeting new people, while others appear with a friend or relative to investigate an opportunity that appeals to them, and yet others come to join a friend or relative already volunteering for the

“If you want people to do a good job, give them a good job to do.”

Frederick Herzberg

organization. Beyond this, a number of volunteers engaged in similar activities may develop a further identity among themselves or with those served (in the context of natural work units), which may heighten the sense of belonging and thereby enhance the overall quality of the volunteer experience.

- **Focus on fit:** It is important to find volunteers who fit into the organizational culture, who accept the mandate of the organization as being worthwhile, who are comfortable in the structure themselves and who make others comfortable. ‘Chemistry’ and ‘fit’—defined by Coverdill and Finlay (1998) as “compatibility with the organization’s culture, norms and strategies”—are important because belief in the value of the organization’s goals strengthens the volunteer’s commitment.

Data from the 2000 NSGVP revealed that over half (59%) of volunteer respondents indicated they had organized or supervised activities or events for an organization, with the next closest task category being ‘sitting as a board member,’ reported by 41% of responding volunteers. Obviously, these kinds of volunteer tasks or activities can have a profound impact upon the general public perception of an organization, whether positively or negatively. It is therefore important that volunteers in the public eye represent your organization in a positive manner.

The sometimes complex nature of volunteer assignments requires comprehensive training and regular supervision and monitoring of volunteers, to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills, and that they are performing their tasks in an appropriate and professional fashion as required by each individual assignment.

- **One size does not fit all:** Some organizations struggle to find people willing to commit to the programs they offer; others have to turn away highly interested people on a regular basis. What are some determining differences between these types of organizations? Among organizations that seem to be successful with recruiting and retaining their volunteers, we notice a number of shared approaches: a passion for their cause, an energy within the organization related to volunteer recruitment and recognition, and the ability to offer distinct kinds of volunteer opportunities.

A number of organizations are involved with the staging of special events or what might be termed ‘episodic’ needs. In some cases these are truly single events, such as the staging of a world-class athletic meet. In other cases they are of a recurring nature, such as annual cultural events. These organizations often have people lining up to be involved. For some the appeal is the love of the subject matter, but more commonly, it is the perception of a rewarding experience. Such experiences often involve a great deal of time and effort, but over a limited time span. Some volunteers will work around the

clock for such events, arranging their vacation to accommodate them and describing the experience as something they would not miss for the world.

In other cases, success clearly depends on the ability of the organization to offer long-term, valuable work in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Such organizations ensure that volunteers are getting their own needs met, that their involvement is recognized and valued, and that they fit well into the overall milieu.

In each instance, effective volunteer recognition is an integral part of organizational culture and makes allowances for peoples' different needs for recognition. Not everyone wishes to receive a certificate or a plaque. Some people do not wish for public recognition, but prefer appreciation to be personal, perhaps only between themselves and their immediate supervisor. The best organizations find ways to personalize their recognition efforts. They understand that a committed volunteer force will achieve far greater returns for the time invested.

COMPETITION FOR VOLUNTEERS

The need for volunteers continues to increase to meet the changing demands of the world we live in. In order to attract volunteers successfully, with an eye both to the time limitations and the quality of individuals needed, organizations must look carefully at what they are offering in the way of incentives.

As mentioned earlier, each of us has different needs and motivations. We all undertake a task or assignment with a specific purpose in mind, and we all look for some return. The nature of that return will vary greatly—from a need to interact socially or to acquire experience for an anticipated career, to the desire to give back to the community. But for each person who is willing to volunteer, the returns are critical to determining how much time and effort will be committed.

Today, many volunteer-based organizations are becoming very large. It is not unusual to find organizations that provide hundreds of dedicated volunteers to serve the interests to which they are committed. The size of such endeavours means that organizing, staffing, and maintaining the organization has become a very sophisticated business process. Alternatively, in very small voluntary organizations it can be hard to find the time or people to create innovative and attractive recruitment strategies, opportunities and approaches to recognition.

To move forward and be successful, organizations looking for volunteers must learn to compete for their talent. Competing does not require large marketing and advertising budgets. It really means creating an organization that will be perceived as one that is worthwhile, and one in which the assignments are interesting, challenging and realistically meet the personal objectives of those willing to undertake them. Such organizations will be able to locate and retain effective volunteers to help them meet their mandates.

VOLUNTEERS AND/OR PAID STAFF

There can be a special set of challenges in organizations where volunteers work alongside paid employees. There is the need to recognize the vast differences between a volunteer and a paid worker in terms of how an actual assignment is carried out. A paid worker generally has a work schedule with prescribed hours and a broad range of responsibilities. The volunteer, by contrast, usually works on a more flexible or even sporadic basis and has a narrower set of responsibilities. Consequently, two people working alongside one another will take very different approaches, will have different needs and will contribute to the organization in quite different ways.

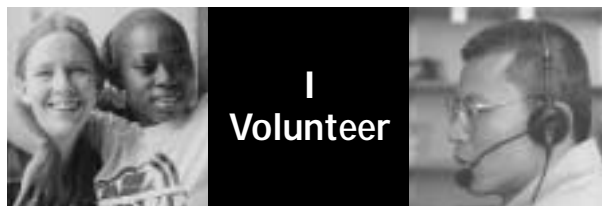
Recent fundamental shifts in the job market have tremendous implications for both paid workers and volunteers. With dramatic downsizing, entry-level jobs are increasingly being performed by mid-career workers, creating problems of career blockage and career plateauing for remaining workers. The results are that people take longer to be promoted, take longer to reach the top of the organizational hierarchy and sometimes experience frustration and morale problems. We also see higher rates of mid-career job switches and job turnover (Foot, in Duchesne, 1994). It is important then, that paid staff do not see your volunteers as a further threat to their security.

Where unions are involved in the work setting, it is especially important to differentiate between the roles of staff and volunteers. Many unions will oppose the presence of volunteers if they perceive that work under their jurisdiction is being carved away. The secret to success in these situations is to develop a shared understanding that the volunteers are performing tasks that could not be accomplished in any other workable manner, and that they are augmenting the work of the unionized force, not diminishing it.

The part-time, casual or temporary nature of most volunteer work mirrors a more general trend in the Canadian labour market. Traditional full-time, full-year work is in decline, and is increasingly being replaced with a wide variety of non-standard work arrangements including part-time employment, temporary or contract work, self-employment and multiple job-holding. One estimate based on 1994 survey data revealed that fully one-third of the Canadian labour force was employed in some form of non-standard work arrangement (Krahn, 1995). The advantage to volunteer organizations is that people who are gainfully employed may also be able to volunteer during regular, daytime hours.

Volunteers are not constrained by the limitations often placed on paid workers around such issues as hours of work, age restrictions, or collaboration with friends or relatives on the job. In fact, many people start volunteering because their friends and relatives draw them in. Increasingly, families and close friends become involved in volunteer activities as one way of doing things together, and there are now many formalized ways in which this can be done.

Although volunteers are often available to assist for only one or two hours at a time, their ability to focus exclusively on an assigned task for even a short time period ensures their effectiveness within the organization. By comparison, paid workers typically must balance a wide variety of duties and tasks, and often lack the opportunity to concentrate their efforts on one specific task at hand. This balance becomes more difficult as organizations increasingly apply multi-task/multi-skill work design concepts, and rely more heavily on generic workers who are expected to perform an expanding range of duties and responsibilities in the workplace (Cappelli, 1993; Cappelli and Rogovsky, 1994; MacDuffie and Pil, 1997).



Understanding and implementing job design

Job design theory outlines a set of functions, components and tasks in any given organizational setting, based on a set of unique organizational and personnel qualities. Applying job design to volunteering involves a five-step process:

1. Review the mandate or mission of the organization
2. Look at how various functions/components/tasks are carried out to achieve the mission/mandate (task analysis, task identity, task significance)
3. Consider current and potential volunteers, and establish the qualities that will be needed to perform the various components or tasks, as defined (skill analysis, skill variety, autonomy)
4. Identify and describe discrete volunteer assignments (job descriptions)
5. Match volunteers to jobs or assignments

For the organization, implementing job design will result in easier volunteer recruitment, greater output from the volunteer, better allocation of work between paid and unpaid people, lower turnover rates and greater co-operation. For the volunteer, it improves the quality of the volunteer experience, offers greater freedom and flexibility, makes the work more challenging, and uses more of the volunteer's skills (Dolan and Schuler).

There are many possible approaches to designing volunteer work and describing it in meaningful terms. The variation across the spectrum of the voluntary sector in terms of mandates, program focus, availability of funding, and geographical diversity can act as complicating factors that preclude the possibility of there being any single 'best' method. What works in terms of design for one organization may not be the best method for another organization, even though there may be many similarities between the two.

NOTE: ABOUT MANDATE

For the past several years, both the corporate world and the voluntary sector have placed heavy emphasis on identifying mandates and forming mission statements. If your organization has not already done this—that is, identified your fundamental reason for existence and explained it in terms that everyone in the organization can understand and identify with—then this is the time to do it. Proper job design looks to mandate for direction. Without a thorough grounding in the organization's goals, it is impossible to identify functions, components and tasks that will truly contribute to the things you want to achieve.

The following section outlines the general steps that may be taken and describes the theoretical aspects of job design relevant to each step. Naturally, each organization will need to fine-tune the specific process to meet its individual needs.

STEP 1. REVIEW THE MANDATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Effective job design always starts with a good look at your organization's mandate: every job must contribute to the mandate in some way. Remember, it is belief in the goals of the organization that motivates 95% of volunteers. They must be able to see a link between their output and the advancement—if only in a modest way—of the cause they support. Think about it: if volunteers (or paid staff, for that matter) are not doing work that contributes to achieving the goals of the organization, then why would they be involved?

One of the mistakes that organizations often make is to assume that if their basic mission does not change, then neither should the methods they use to achieve it. If fundraising has always been done door to door, by volunteers, then so it will continue. If one teacher has always signed up to teach Sunday school from September to June, then that's what we do. If the paid staff members write the proposals and the volunteers handle the phones, then that's what works. Implementing job design requires that we review the mandate and confirm it, but we should then reserve judgement on any notions about how the mandate is achieved until we explore how jobs *could* be designed to get the work done.

The purpose of starting the job design process with a review of the mandate or mission of the organization is not to question the agreed-upon goals (although a review process might lead to that inadvertently). The intention at this stage of the process is to start thinking about the work that the organization does to achieve the stated goals. Sector organizations sometimes find themselves caught up in 'mission drift'—goals change, community needs shift, money dries up in one area and new funding sources may emerge that are targeted to slightly different causes/constituencies. For many reasons, organizations can find themselves engaged in work that has little to do with the originally stated mandate or mission. Clearly, the objective of re-thinking who does what can't be done until these fundamental issues are explored.

During this step of the process, ask yourselves the following questions:

- Does the mandate still speak to a community need and reflect what we do?
- Do we have established goals?
- Do our goals still adequately reflect the wording of our mandate/vision/mission statement?

- Would outsiders (for example, funders, clients, public or the media) basically agree that our organization exists to fulfil the mandate as described? If not, why not?
- Do we think that the work we do supports our mandate?
- Would outsiders agree that our work supports mandate?
- Does any of our work fall outside of our mandate? How did this happen?
- If we are doing work that doesn't support or directly address our mandate do we need to:
 - re-shape the mandate?
 - stop doing that work?
 - ask another organization to take on that work or create an offshoot or subsidiary of our organization to do so?

STEP 2. IDENTIFY THE FUNCTIONS THAT SUPPORT YOUR MANDATE

As you have considered the overall mandate and goals of your organization, and the work that you carry out to achieve them, you have begun the process of job design. The next step is relatively simple: to break the work the organization does into a set of functions, components and tasks.

For example, a food bank's mission may be as simple as to feed those without food and their work may be described as 'distributing food to people from a central location.' The *functions* associated with doing work probably include collecting food, distributing it and fundraising. As you move through the analysis you will get more and more detailed: the *components* of the fundraising function might include direct mail, phone campaigning, special events. In the same manner, the *tasks* associated with each component will also be identified. Consider the organizing of a special event, which might be one component of the food bank's fundraising: it could involve planning, recruiting, training and overseeing volunteers, food preparation and service, entertainment and the giving of prizes. As the various tasks are identified you will be able to consider ways to group them—or even hive them off on their own—into discrete volunteer assignments.

In addition to revisiting the organization's mission statement, there may be other tools to help you identify functions in your association, including strategic plans, budget documents, contracts, job descriptions and promotional materials. Start with whatever you have. Some points to consider:

- Are the functions described in these tools still relevant to what your organization is trying to accomplish? When were they last reviewed? If most of the functions are

still relevant, proceed with the task analysis process. Don't delay job design unnecessarily to embark on a long-term planning process.

- Are there any activities identified in your planning tools that aren't being done? This could mean one of two things: either you need to update the documents and let both the organization and its stakeholders know that the organization is engaged in that work OR you need to make the recruitment, training and delivery of those activities a priority—perhaps a volunteer opportunity?
- Have you identified any new functions that your organization is ideally suited to undertake, if you had the resources and people to assign to them?

Having identified the general functions of the organization, consider the components and tasks of each. As in every instance where we are asked to adopt a 'model' for doing something, remember that it is not that important to define functions, components and tasks to a highly technical degree. The point is to break down the work of the organization into manageable pieces for the purposes of creating a series of volunteer/work assignments. Since the fundamental building block for the work of the organization is found at the level of tasks the following theory may be helpful as you commence the breakdown process.

Job design theory presents three elements to our consideration of 'tasks':

- Task analysis
- Task identity
- Task significance

Task analysis identifies and describes every task to be performed on each job, the skills necessary to perform those tasks, and the minimum acceptable standards of performance (Dolan and Schuler, p.608). This concept is of particular importance to the voluntary sector because, traditionally, many volunteer tasks have been patterned after paid work examples that do not always translate well for volunteer involvement. For example a paid 'Office Manager' might carry out a range of tasks from reception duties, to mailroom, to bookkeeping and general office management. While it is reasonable to expect to be able to hire a person who can speak both English and French (in order to be able to do the reception part of the job), have good technical abilities (for the mailroom) and some bookkeeping experience, it could be a tall order to find a volunteer with such a mix of skills and the time/interest to be able to carry out such a range of tasks. It is more likely that by breaking down the function of Office Management into three or more tasks—reception, bookkeeping, mailroom—that a series of attractive volunteer assignments will emerge.

The principle of **task identity** involves designing tasks with clear start and end points and plainly articulated purposes—this task will produce result *X*. In this way, when individual workers carry out the task they are given responsibility to handle it from beginning to end, taking ownership of the product or outcome. The unique nature of volunteerism is conducive to task identity, since the tasks or assignments volunteers undertake are often very focused in nature and not interrupted by secondary responsibilities. Task identity allows volunteers to put their work in context and in measurable terms: for example, “I answer the phones and track the calls” is more specific than a vague, “I’m an office volunteer.” And when volunteers track the 300th call, or finish their three-week assignment on the phones, they have something quantifiable to show for their efforts.

Finally the principle of **task significance** refers to the relevance of a role within the scheme of the organization. Identifying the significance of the task results in a clear understanding between employer and employee of why the work assignment is important, and how the task contributes to the achievement of the organization’s goals.

In a volunteer setting, the principle of task significance is particularly important because the volunteer identifies closely with and supports the goals of the organization. If volunteers feel that what they are doing does not support the mandate or—worse—conflicts with it, they will be considerably less committed.

Task significance can be further enhanced through having the volunteers form positive relationships with those they serve, whether clients of the organization, or others within the organization who rely on volunteers. This may also require having the volunteer determine specific feedback criteria with the client or user. Close interaction between volunteers and the people they serve allows volunteers to see the impact of their work efforts, and to share in the rewards of a job well done.

STEP 3. IDENTIFY THE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR THE TASK

If job design theory were being considered for paid work positions you could probably move immediately to the step of identifying work assignments (job descriptions) based on the function, component and task analysis process. Each job description would list the skills required to carry out the job and you would recruit accordingly. The process is a little less straightforward when thinking about volunteer work assignments, however. With volunteer assignments it is important to consider the skills and abilities the candidate requires *before* you actually describe the position. This allows you to customize volunteer assignments to certain ‘types’ of volunteers—students, for example, or individuals from a particular work context (hi-tech, perhaps, or management consulting).

Job design theory uses three concepts to assess the skills required for a particular assignment:

- Skill analysis
- Skill variety
- Autonomy

Skill analysis consists of identifying the fundamental elements of the work requirement, in this case the characteristics and abilities that will be required to complete the task. Consider both the technical and interpersonal skills needed for each task you have identified. This information will be needed when it comes to developing the position description and will also help you define the recruitment strategy for each position.

Skill variety refers to the fact that *most* jobs require more than one skill. In the private sector, workers are hired if they have most of the skills the employer is looking for and seem able to learn the rest. Organizations are usually less demanding when it comes to volunteer assignments. Depending on the task under consideration, you will want to distinguish between skills that are ‘essential’ and those that are just ‘desirable.’ For example, a web designer absolutely needs HTML programming skills but could perhaps be given time and training to develop skills in JavaScript.

Unlike paid staff, volunteers often come to their work with the primary purpose of learning new skills or being exposed to a kind of work they’ve never done before. While you might be reluctant to pay someone who doesn’t bring the needed skills and experience to the work, you may be prepared to provide training and on-the-job work experience in return for the gift of the volunteer’s time and energy.

Skill variety also refers to the different degrees of responsibility associated with the jobs people undertake. In the interests of job satisfaction, it helps if people can sometimes take on jobs that are challenging or involve more responsibility. It is important to provide vertical variety (skills of different responsibility) rather than just horizontal variety (more of the same).

It is also important when discussing skill variety to distinguish between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills. Hard skills involve technical knowledge, whereas soft skills may be described as the abilities, skills and traits that pertain to our personalities, attitudes and behaviours. Soft skills include both:

- **interaction skills**—the ability to interact with customers, co-workers and supervisors, highlighting such attributes as friendliness, teamwork, ability to fit in, appropriate effect, grooming and attire; and
- **motivation skills**—personal characteristics such as enthusiasm, positive work attitude, commitment, dependability, and a willingness to learn.

These social skills also facilitate the learning of more traditional technical or hard skills in the workplace (Moss and Tilly, 1996).

Social skills are especially relevant for volunteers, given the social context of many volunteer work activities, whether canvassing for a political campaign, organizing events, sitting as a board member, or providing information to clients.

Many of the tasks performed by volunteers occur in a teamwork setting. Teamwork knowledge, skills and abilities include interpersonal dimensions such as conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving and communication, as well as aspects of self-management including goal-setting and performance management, planning and task co-ordination (Stevens and Campion, 1994).

The actual skills of volunteers will evolve and expand over the course of their volunteer involvement. According to data from the 2000 NSGVP, volunteers were able to develop a broad range of skills through volunteer work experiences, including interpersonal and communication, organization and managerial skills, and technical or office skills. Volunteers also had the opportunity to advance their knowledge on a variety of topics such as health, women's issues, political issues, criminal justice and the environment (Hall, et al, 2001, p.45).

How do we apply this element of job design theory to the voluntary sector? Where possible, volunteers should be encouraged to undertake assignments that will provide sufficient variety to challenge a broader set of skills and abilities, and thereby increase their overall levels of satisfaction with the volunteer experience.

Autonomy refers to the degree of control a worker has over the performance of tasks and assignments. Can the worker decide the order in which to perform them? The timing? Will a supervisor be present all the time or available only as needed? In his motivation–maintenance theory, Herzberg found that responsibility was one of the five factors that determined job satisfaction. Some degree of autonomy is important to the feeling of satisfaction we get from our jobs.

Autonomy can also enhance levels of satisfaction for volunteers. It is essential to determine, however, the extent to which individual volunteers will be able to work independently. Some volunteers may not yet be capable of working independently and will require monitoring, guidance and direction. Alternatively, the nature of the task may not lend itself to allowing a great deal of autonomy—child supervision, for example, or handling money or sensitive documentation. Other volunteers may be more interested in carrying out only routine tasks, not wishing to assume responsibility for making decisions or determining courses of action related to tasks or assignments.

STEP 4. IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS

You are now ready to identify a series of volunteer assignments that will:

- help the organization achieve its mission;
- reflect the work you have done breaking down the functions, components and tasks to be carried out; and
- outline the kinds of skills and abilities volunteer candidates will need.

Some organizations use the same form for volunteer assignments as they do for job descriptions for paid staff. You may already be using a volunteer job description format (you might also wish to refer to the job description template that appears later in the manual). Adopting the job design process does not mean you need to change such documentation. You may find, however, that the volunteer assignment you are ready to describe—based on the task and skill analysis work you will have completed—may be more detailed than those you have done in the past. The goal in producing the job description is to provide:

- a thorough outline of the work (tasks) to be done;
- any necessary information regarding screening (notification that candidates for this position will be screened);
- a list of required skills; and
- an idea of the term of the assignment (Is this a two-week assignment? One year? How many hours a week?).

While a complete job might be a cluster of similar tasks carried out to achieve an essential purpose in an organization, a volunteer assignment may be to complete only one specific task...or even a part of that task. Just as the purpose for any job must be essential to the organization, it follows that a volunteer assignment must also provide something of significant value to the organization. This is how the organization meets its objectives: by ensuring that all assignments add value, and the sum total of those assignments will meet the overall goal.

Before you settle down to the task of writing up the volunteer assignments, job design theory presents one last concept that is helpful to bear in mind.

Work dynamics refer to the motive forces, physical or moral, that affect behaviour and change. Even when a great deal of care goes into properly determining all the components of an assignment at the front end, it is important to recognize that all things change over time. There are at least three major types of changes that must be factored into thinking about volunteer assignments:

- **Time-determined changes:** Many assignments are seasonal in nature. As an organization's workload ebbs and flows, the required number of active volunteers may change. It is therefore necessary to plan the timing of volunteer recruitment and training, as well as strategies for retaining inactive volunteers during down times. Consider the seasonal aspects of a task and whether such changes affect an ongoing assignment, or are, in fact, two completely separate areas of responsibility (example: snow shovelling in winter, and lawn mowing in summer). This does not mean that they cannot or should not be undertaken by one person, but they should be kept distinct in terms of actual design considerations.
- **Volunteer-determined changes:** Volunteers, like paid employees, bring to their assignment certain skills, preferences and methods of working. Naturally, the behavioural demands of a position may be modified by these differences. For instance, one volunteer may be happy doing secondary research from documents, while another might be very outgoing and prefer primary research. In order for assignments to be meaningful, it is critical to determine where volunteers can have some latitude, and where strict process must be followed. Obviously, the amount of latitude built into a particular task will help determine the background and experience requirements of the appropriate volunteer. Similarly, there may need to be flexibility in the volunteer assignment based on the availability of volunteers. A common example is found in the situation where the volunteer assignment is suited to a young person, often a student. It makes sense to design the job knowing that students have times in the year when they are less available (during exams and vacations, for example). Predicting—and building into the job design—the effects of volunteer-determined changes, will result in easier recruitment and retention of volunteers.

NOTE: RISK MANAGEMENT/SCREENING

Does designing assignments that mesh closely with individual needs conflict with the risk management screening used in the selection of volunteers? Not at all. The two activities are, in fact, complementary: each is part of the process of ensuring that the organization attracts the right volunteer for the job. Screening helps to determine the suitability of an individual for a given task or clientele, while job design finds volunteers assignments that meet both their needs and those of the organization.

- **Situation-determined changes:** The assignment situation may be described as the total environment within which a job is done. Situation-determined changes are often difficult to predict, but must be taken into account in order to keep assignments both interesting and productive. The easiest example of such changes might be the malfunction of a specific piece of equipment and the need to complete the task without it. Seen positively, situation-determined changes can make assignments both challenging and rewarding, because they allow for creativity. When designing a job, it is important to keep in mind the conditions in which volunteers will work, and to acknowledge their efforts for those times when tasks have had to be accomplished under challenging circumstances.

Creating volunteer assignments offers a unique opportunity to design positions that focus on one particular activity. It can be tremendously helpful to an organization to be able to access a group of people who bring time and talent to a very specific piece of work: designing a human resource policy, for example, or scheduling Sunday school teachers or T-ball coaches. While the nature of paid work (particularly of full-time jobs) is that it almost always requires a combination of various tasks and responsibilities, volunteer work lends itself beautifully to the dynamic of ‘one person, one task’ allowing you to find the right person for the right assignment. This approach also means that you will be able to offer a range of volunteer assignments with clear purposes (explicitly attached to mandate), clear terms of engagement and measurable outcomes.

As varied as the available pool of volunteers is, so should your roster of volunteer positions be. An organization that has only one kind of volunteer ‘job’ will end up with a very homogenous group of volunteers and may find themselves facing recruitment and retention problems. Ideally your organization will have a full spectrum of positions, ranging from those with short terms and basic skill requirements to those with longer terms, and higher skills and responsibility. By creating a continuum of volunteer assignments you will be able to recruit a variety of volunteers—and get a lot of different kinds of work done. You may also find that a person who starts out making a ‘low end’ commitment will be encouraged to move into more demanding and more intensive involvement with the organization. It can be a lot easier to recruit someone to make one time commitment of 10 hours to work on an event and then ask them to repeat, than it is to recruit someone to organize all the events. You should also bear in mind that when you create more intensive volunteer assignments—those that require more time, higher skills and a more serious commitment—you will want to ensure that the terms of the engagement are clear. The job description should make explicit how long the assignment will last, what will be produced, and what benefits there are both to the volunteer and to the organization. You will likely engage in very targeted recruitment strategies to fill such positions: seeking out a corporate partner for a loaned executive program, for example, or making a presentation to a church or seniors club. Alternatively, you will likely be more scattershot in your recruitment strategies for ‘one-off’ or lower-end

assignments: when contacting a number of schools or putting up notices in public venues, for example.

In the end it is the variety, the creative nature and the practicality of the range of volunteer assignments that an organization has available that will prove the success of using a job design approach. Once the discipline of breaking down the work into functions, components and tasks is completed and the skills and availability of potential volunteers is factored in, it becomes a relatively simple task to create a series of discrete volunteer assignments. Further in this document you will find a number of examples that may prove helpful. You may also like to contact your local volunteer centre, which will be able to help you work through the process to design, or re-design, the volunteer assignments in your organization.

When a volunteer is unable to fulfil the requirements of an assignment, it is important to refer to the original agreement. It may be that the situation has changed since the agreement was written—making it necessary to adjust expectations—or it may be necessary to find a better way to perform the assigned work. Job design is not static and must always be considered both in the light of your organization’s particular needs or requirements, and with the needs of the volunteer in mind.

STEP 5. MATCH VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIGNMENTS

The last step of job design is actually one of the first steps of the normative volunteer management schedule. Having created a series of volunteer assignments, the task of recruiting, training and overseeing volunteers to fill them should be easier and, hopefully, quite straightforward. The beauty of making an intensive investment in thinking about the volunteer’s work long before recruitment is that the ‘contract’ between the organization and the individual will be more explicit—that is, the understanding of what is to be done, why it’s important, what the organization will get and give, and so on.

Recruiting volunteers is always easier when it is based on a volunteer position rather than a generic call for someone to ‘get involved.’ Too often, voluntary organizations recruit volunteers based on the desire to engage people in the purpose of the organization. While organizational *purpose*—and passion for the cause—is a key ingredient to motivating everyone involved (both volunteers and staff), it is becoming more difficult to ask people to get involved based strictly on their commitment. By offering potential volunteers a range of ways to be involved (through tasks as discussed above), the recruitment process should be easier to manage.

In addition to providing insight into volunteer recruitment, job design theory outlines the conditions of ‘feedback.’ This concept is not just the familiar volunteer management ‘recognition’ under another name. Both feedback and recognition are extremely important to your volunteers. Recognition is general in nature, saying in effect: “thanks

for all you do.” Feedback, on the other hand, is more task-related—it is connected to a recent activity. Feedback is more specific, more in the line of a debriefing: “this was good; this could be better.”

Feedback is direct response, positive or negative, to an activity performed in the interest of the organization. Job design theory directs that feedback be:

- immediate;
- ongoing; and
- provided by direct supervisory contact, rather than filtered through management.

The immediacy of feedback is important in order to correct any performance-related issues before they become habitual. Feedback is usually more accurate and of higher quality if it comes directly from the source and is not subject to interpretation and explanation by a third party or supervisor. In short-term assignments, feedback should be provided as soon as possible upon completion of an assignment.

The importance of feedback is well known to managers of volunteers. Providing feedback is a key element of volunteer recognition, and recognition strategies are central to a well-run volunteer program. The 2000 NSGVP reports that many people, especially youth, are hoping to increase or gain employment related skills through volunteering (Hall, et al, 2001). Given this fact, feedback on the performance of volunteers becomes an important part of helping them achieve their goals.

Occasionally, volunteers may overstep their responsibilities, or cause difficulty for staff or other volunteers. We do a disservice to those volunteers who are with us to prepare for the labour market if we just ignore their shortcomings. We must address the difficult situations that come up, both for the volunteers’ learning experience and also for those who work with them.

Some managers of volunteers feel uncomfortable with the idea of giving feedback to a volunteer—especially if it might be anything less than glowing. They are aware that the volunteer is giving his or her time willingly and without payment. They fear that the volunteer may be hurt or angered, and decide to leave the program. Losing a volunteer is always challenging for a volunteer program manager but—on balance—providing feedback should benefit both the volunteer and the program. Any negative effects should be mitigated by the opportunity to improve the program and to give the volunteer the same guidance and respect you would give a paid employee.

To facilitate proper feedback, the written description of the assignment should include specific statements concerning:

- the purpose of the assignment;
- tasks to be undertaken;
- specific parameters for the assignment;
- the skills required; and
- working conditions.

If duties are clearly outlined in writing and relationships with staff have been established and discussed, there is something for the volunteer co-ordinator to fall back on when dealing with difficult situations. On the other side of the relationship, a written list of duties helps volunteers to better define their roles and responsibilities.



Conclusion

Good volunteer job design demands a careful balance between the ability of the organization to meet its objectives on time, and the need of volunteers to participate in meaningful activities that allow them to pursue their personal objectives. To attract and retain the best workers and volunteers, organizations must ensure that individuals are treated with dignity and respect, that their intrinsic personal and social needs are met through their work and that their personal objectives are advanced within the organization.

The recruitment and retention of volunteers can be as critical to the success of an organization as the screening, selection and career development of traditional paid workers. The same degree of careful attention, therefore, must be directed to ensuring an appropriate fit between an individual volunteer and the organization. Job design has been used successfully in the private sector to determine this fit—it is now time that we adopt job design in the voluntary sector as well. As Susan Ellis has said, “Volunteers may be ‘free’ in the sense of not requiring a great deal of cash outlay, but they are very expensive in terms of recruitment, training, co-ordination and supervision time” (*From the Top Down*, p. 103).

Rather than trying to find appropriate work for your volunteers, job design uses an analytical approach to identify first the work, then the skills, and finally the volunteer who has or may acquire those skills. All volunteers brought into the organization must understand the rationale for their assignments, how their tasks contribute to the overall organization, and whom to turn to for assistance or to report on task progress. Job design, because it focuses on supporting the mandate, also meets the needs of the volunteers to know that what they are doing really matters and will make a difference.

The most effective organizations find ways to elicit the best efforts from all of their members, ensuring that each person feels challenged, fulfilled and rewarded, and is motivated to contribute more in the future. Successful job design will support your organization’s needs, while meeting the needs and expectations of individual volunteers who will develop their skills and talents and bring their new-found abilities back to the organization. Ultimately, these volunteers will become your organization’s biggest assets and your best ambassadors. It’s all *a matter of design*.



Job design: support materials

THE FIVE STEPS

- Step 1 — **Review the mandate of the organization.**
- Step 2 — **Identify the functions that support your mandate.** Look at how various functions/components/tasks are carried out to achieve the mission/mandate (task analysis, task identity, task significance).
- Step 3 — **Identify the skills necessary for the task.** Establish the qualities that will be needed to perform the various components or tasks, as defined (skill analysis, skill variety, autonomy).
- Step 4 — **Identify and describe volunteer assignments** (job descriptions).
- Step 5 — **Match volunteers to assignments.**

STEP 1. REVIEW THE MANDATE OF THE ORGANIZATION

In addressing the question of your mandate, it would be appropriate to ask yourself the following questions already identified in this document:

- Does the mandate still speak to a community need and reflect what we do?
- Do we have established goals?
- Do our goals still adequately reflect the wording of our mandate/vision/mission statement?
- Would outsiders (for example, funders, clients, public or the media) basically agree that our organization exists to fulfil the mandate as described? If not, why not?
- Do we think that the work we do supports our mandate?
- Would outsiders agree that our work supports our mandate?
- Does any of our work fall outside of our mandate? How did this happen?
- If we are doing work that doesn't support or directly address our mandate do we need to:
 - re-shape the mandate?
 - stop doing that work?
 - ask another organization to take on that work or create an offshoot or subsidiary of our organization to do so?

STEP 2. IDENTIFY THE FUNCTIONS THAT SUPPORT YOUR MANDATE

Preparatory work

The following chart shows how different functions are broken down into components and tasks. We feature three organizations: a health care organization with lots of paid staff and many volunteers; a medium sized, community-based organization—a food bank—that has two paid staff and a number of volunteers; and a soccer league operated by parents and other volunteers, with no paid staff. Remember that in a large organization with staff, it is important that employees and volunteers both know where they fit in the larger picture. In the case of the health care organization, for example, the work the volunteers do to publicize their event must not conflict with a major public relations thrust that the staff at the health care organization are carrying out. Communications channels must always be maintained.

Make sure that staff members are aware of the contribution of volunteers by having meetings that include everyone, by making sure that all are aware of relevant guidelines, and by working with the union, if you have one. Staff will not be motivated to help volunteers if they fear the volunteer will end up taking their jobs. Make the distinctions very clear to everybody in your organization.

As you can see from this chart, some jobs require a smaller time commitment, while others require a considerably greater commitment. Likewise, some are ongoing while others are short-term. When discussing the time commitment with those who may already be carrying out the work, consider the following:

- Does this job really require as much time as that person thinks it does?
- How much time should it take to do the job *properly* (if the current time commitment does not seem to be sufficient)?

Functions and components: three examples

ORGANIZATION	Health care organization (Large organization, huge staff, many volunteers)	Community food bank (Medium-sized organization, some staff, some volunteers)	Soccer league (Small organization, no paid staff, all volunteers)
MANDATE	To eradicate a specific illness and to promote quality of health	To provide good food to people in need of assistance	To teach kids to play soccer; to promote healthy activity and good sportsmanship
FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research • Program development • Public relations • Fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquiring food from stores • Organizing and promoting community-based food drives • Soliciting donations of money • Organizing the shelves • Managing volunteers • Filling food baskets • Staffing the office • Processing applications • Cleaning the facility • Distributing the food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition and Awards • Registration • Fundraising • Supervision • Officiating • Training and Skill Development • Game scheduling
COMPONENTS	Components of Fundraising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct mail • Donor recognition • Corporate Awards Night • Donor support • Corporate development 	Components of Distributing food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill the food requests • Make sure shelves are stocked • Communicate needs to office • Provide emergency relief • Train volunteers 	Components of Game scheduling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan the schedule • Book the Field • Organize Finals
TASKS	Tasks for organizing Corporate Awards Night: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee awards committee • Organize entertainment • Make arrangements for the dinner • Sell tickets • Promote the event • Solicit prizes 	Tasks for making sure the shelves are adequately stocked: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep inventory • Receive foods and stock shelves • Review client needs and pass the information on to solicitation team • Organize foods for distribution • Supervise volunteers 	Tasks for planning the schedule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review teams • Determine dates • Co-ordinate finals

STEP 3. IDENTIFY THE SKILLS NECESSARY FOR THE TASK

As has been discussed, job design theory uses three concepts to assess the skills required for a particular assignment: skill analysis, skill variety and autonomy.

Skill analysis

- What technical skills are required to perform the task in question?
- Does the task require a particular kind of technical, academic or professional qualification?
- What interpersonal skills are required?
- How much will the volunteer have to interact with customers, co-workers and supervisors? How important to the task are such attributes as friendliness, teamwork, ability to fit in, grooming and attire?
- How important to the task are such personal characteristics as enthusiasm, positive work attitude, commitment, dependability and a willingness to learn?

Skill variety

- Which skills are essential for the task?
- Which skills are desirable, or ‘nice-to-have’?
- Are there any *combinations* of skills that are essential?
- Are there any aspects of the task that could be learned on the job, or through training?
- What degree of responsibility is associated with the task?
- Is the task likely to challenge volunteers or give them the opportunity to increase their level of responsibility?
- What mix of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ skills does the task require?

Autonomy

- How much control will the volunteer have over the performance of tasks and assignments?
- Will the volunteer be able to decide the order in which to perform tasks? The timing?
- How much supervision might the task require? Will a supervisor be present all the time or available only as needed?

STEP 4. IDENTIFY AND DESCRIBE VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS

You are now ready to identify a series of volunteer assignments that will:

- help the organization achieve its mission;
- reflect the work you have done breaking down the functions, components and tasks to be carried out; and
- outline the kinds of skills and abilities volunteer candidates will need.

At a minimum, the goal in producing the assignment description should answer the following questions:

- What tasks does the assignment involve? Provide as thorough an outline as you can.
- Will candidates need to be screened before being considered for the assignment? If so, what degree of screening is necessary?
- What skills are essential? Which are desirable?
- What other attributes are necessary for the assignment? (driver's license, professional qualifications, etc.)
- How long will the assignment last? (Is this a two-week assignment? One year? How many hours a week?)

In terms of *work dynamics*, how is the assignment likely to change over time? You should consider the three major types of changes that were discussed earlier:

Time-determined changes

- How does this assignment fit into your plans for the timing of volunteer recruitment and training, as well as strategies for retaining inactive volunteers during down times?
- Does the assignment have any seasonal aspects?

Volunteer-determined changes

- How open is the assignment to variations in volunteer skills, preferences and methods of working? Obviously, the amount of latitude built into a particular task will help determine the background and experience requirements of the appropriate volunteer.
- Is there any flexibility in the volunteer assignment based on the availability of volunteers? It might make sense to design the job knowing that students have times in the year when they are less available—during exams and vacations, for example.

Situation-determined changes

- Will the assignment require that the volunteer be ready to deal with unexpected or unpredictable demands? Situation-determined changes can make assignments both challenging and rewarding.

STEP 5. MATCH VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIGNMENTS

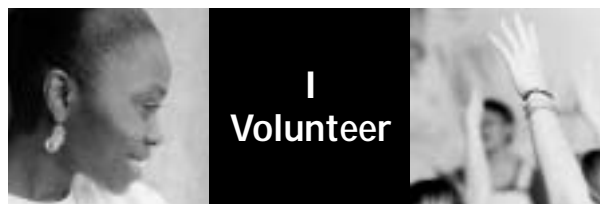
The last step of job design is actually one of the first steps of a healthy volunteer management cycle. Having created a series of volunteer assignments, the task of recruiting, training and managing volunteers to fill them should be easier and, hopefully, quite straightforward.

As a final checklist, we offer the following:

- Does the assignment offer potential volunteers a range of ways to be involved (through tasks as discussed above)?
- Are you prepared to give the volunteer immediate, ongoing and direct feedback that is related to their task performance?
- Have you made clear the limits of responsibility and authority associated with the assignment, and the person to whom the volunteer reports?

Again, providing appropriate feedback requires that the volunteer receive a written description of the assignment. The description should detail:

- the purpose of the assignment;
- tasks to be undertaken;
- specific parameters for the assignment;
- the skills required; and
- working conditions.



Using the job design templates

The pages that follow contain samples and explanations of templates that will walk you through the job design process.

Use the **Function Analysis Template** as you work through Step 1 and identify the Functions and Components discussed in Step 2.

The **Component Breakdown Template** will help you with the remaining tasks in Steps 2—breaking each component into individual tasks.

The detailed **Job Description Template** will assist you with the more complex process of Step 3—skill analysis, skill variety and autonomy, and Step 4—developing a detailed position description.

Following the template pages, is a walk-through of the job design process using the large health care organization as an example (see the Functions and Components chart on page 31). There are also sample position descriptions for the community food bank and the soccer league (also identified in the chart on page 31).

For your own use, you will find an additional copy of the three templates at the back of this manual.

EXPLANATION OF THE FUNCTION ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Organizational Mission

Does the mandate still reflect what you do? Remember, 95% of volunteers are motivated by a belief in the organization's mission. Every job must contribute to the organization's mandate in some way. Does the work that you do support your mandate? If anything falls outside of the mandate, how did this happen?

Organizational Functions

Break the work of your organization into a set of functions. There are tools that can help you do this—strategic plans, operational plans, your budget, job descriptions, promotional materials. Are these functions still relevant to what your organization is trying to accomplish? Are there functions that your organization is suited to do, if you had the financial and human resources?

Components

Now look at each function and determine what the specific components are. What are the high level activities that group together as parts of that specific function?

Function Analysis Template

Organizational Mission
Organizational Functions 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Components Function #1 a. b. c. d. e. Function #2 a. b. c. d. e. Function #3 a. b. c. d. e. Function #4 a. b. c. d. e. Function #5 a. b. c. d. e.

EXPLANATION OF THE COMPONENT BREAKDOWN TEMPLATE

Component Description

Use this template for each component you have identified. Indicate the specific component in the Component box. Next, focus on breaking the identified component into tasks. It may help you to write a one or two sentence description of the component.

Task Identification

Breaking components into tasks, while not a highly technical process, does require that you carefully and thoroughly think about every aspect involved in accomplishing the specific activity. Refer to the component description that you have just written to assist you in thinking through each step involved in that component. As you identify the tasks, you will be able to see ways to group them into distinct volunteer assignments. Remember: the more specific you can be, the better.

Component Breakdown Template

Component
Tasks 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

EXPLANATION OF THE JOB DESCRIPTION TEMPLATE

Assignment: What do you want done? Give it a title. You can always go back and change the title to something which more clearly reflects the task when you have fully defined it, but for now, giving it a name helps give you focus.

Purpose of Assignment: What do you need accomplished, and why? Think short-term and also long-term. Most activities are not one-shot. They also reflect on your organization one way or another, and can therefore have a long-term effect.

Tasks: The individual activities that combine to create this position. List everything that you think is part of the job (or assignment) you want done (see the following section for some examples of task identification).

Time Commitment: Don't underestimate. Consult with anyone who has done the task before. If you give this to a volunteer with an unrealistic time line, it won't get done and the volunteer will feel either embarrassed or abused.

Firm vs. flextime: Are there hours that absolutely must be covered, or can this be done at the volunteer's own time and pace? Also consider duration: Is this a job that will be very intense for three months, or are you looking for someone who can make a regular commitment over two years?

Skill Requirements: Consider both hard skills and soft skills. Is there equipment to run or graphics to be designed? Will the volunteer be working with others, have to attend many meetings and make oral presentations?

Job Description Template

Assignment
Purpose
Tasks
Time Commitment Firm vs. flexible time
Skill Requirements

Training and Skill Development: Who is going to teach this volunteer how to do the task assigned? Is there someone around who has done it before? Will you provide a course? Is there a manual? What skills will the volunteer gain by working in the office? Will any additional training or ‘professional development’ be provided?

Supervision: Your volunteers deserve to know to whom they answer. If two different people give them instruction, how do they know which to respond to first? The reporting system must be clear, and they must also know that they will be evaluated and on what basis they will be evaluated. This is especially important when it comes to positions in which the volunteer must be screened.

Authority/Decision Making: Imagine yourself going into a new office—would you know automatically what you can and can’t do? Yet, too often, we don’t give volunteers clear guidelines. Decide now what they can handle in the way of money, authority, speaking for the organization, and so on.

Supporting Policies: These can be either internal (bylaws or a volunteer manual, for example) or external (such as government imposed non-smoking policy or Health and Welfare standards).

Working Conditions: Establish where the volunteer will be working: inside, outside, in a shared office, out in the field, or going door-to-door in the community. List whatever applies. Physical conditions should take into account such items as special footwear needs, the accessibility of your building, physical strength required for the job, manual dexterity, or the ability to handle heights, to name just a few. Be sure to list any special equipment provided.

Benefits: What is in it for the volunteer? Will the volunteer be able to attend concerts of the symphony group for which he is volunteering? Will she be invited to the Christmas party? Is parking or bus-fare provided?

Agreement/Approval: When you have found the volunteer you are looking for—the person who has or can acquire the skills and meets all, or at least most of these conditions—get it in writing. The very act of signing the agreement can strengthen the commitment for the volunteer. Having a Supervisor’s signature also gives the volunteer some degree of assurance that the organization will meet its commitment to him or her as well. We all like to see it on paper!

Training and Skill Development	
Supervision	
Authority/Decision Making	
Supporting Policies	
Working Conditions	
Benefits	
Agreement/Approval	
_____	_____ Volunteer's Signature
Date	_____ Supervisor's Signature

Sample job design process

TEMPLATE 1 — FUNCTION ANALYSIS (Example: Health care organization)

Organizational mission

To eradicate a specific illness and to promote quality of health

Organizational functions

1. Research
2. Program development
3. Public relations
4. **Fundraising**
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Components (of #4, Fundraising)

1. Direct mail
2. Donor recognition
3. Donor support
4. Corporate development
5. **Corporate Awards Night**
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

TEMPLATE 2 — COMPONENT BREAKDOWN

Component name and short description: Corporate Awards Night (<i>from previous template</i>)	
Task	Task description
1.	Oversee awards committee
2.	Organize entertainment
3.	Make arrangements for the dinner
4.	Sell tickets
5.	Promote the event
6.	Solicit prizes
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

TEMPLATE 3 — JOB DESCRIPTION

<p>1. Assignment Chair, Corporate Awards Night Committee (Task #1 from Template 2, above)</p>
<p>2. Purpose of Assignment To hold a successful fundraiser that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• raise funds to support research for the disease• build our reputation for having first-class events
<p>3. Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• co-ordinate the committee• establish a budget• oversee committee expenses• co-ordinate with the communications committee
<p>4. Time Commitment (<i>specify deadlines if appropriate</i>) Expected number of hours per week or month: 2–4 hours per week, with an increase likely as event nears Firm vs. flexible time: Meetings will have to be held at a time convenient for the committee</p>
<p>5. Skill Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• organizational• management• delegation• experience in public relations or public speaking, time management• leadership abilities• ability to manage details• bilingualism
<p>6. Training and Skill Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incumbent is available as needed for support and guidance• Excellent historical records available for review• Training budget available• Training and orientation provided by senior staff

7. Supervision

Volunteer reports to: the Fund Development Chair and the Director of Finance

Feedback mechanisms: through meetings with the chair

8. Authority/Decision Making

- Approval of expenses within agreed-upon budget

9. Supporting policies

- Health and Welfare
- Volunteer management
- Fund development guidelines

10. Working Conditions

Where/what's provided: Can work from home or from the organization's office, and administrative support is provided, as is access to all equipment

Physical provisions: Office is accessible

11. Benefits

- Suite at hotel for night of event (for entertaining purposes)
- Seating at head table
- Acknowledgement
- Cocktail reception with special guests
- Expenses covered (within budget guidelines)

12. Agreement/Approval

Date _____

Volunteer's Signature _____

Supervisor's Signature _____

Note: The two remaining examples show how the job description template could be used by different organizations.

JOB DESCRIPTION 2: (Example: Food Bank)

<p>1. Assignment Food distribution manager</p>
<p>2. Purpose of Assignment To ensure that the Food Bank is adequately stocked and able to respond to clients' needs</p>
<p>3. Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill food requests • Oversee stocking of shelves • Keep inventory • Communicate with buyers • Provide emergency relief • Train and manage other volunteers
<p>4. Time Commitment (<i>specify deadlines if appropriate</i>) Expected number of hours per week or month: Approximately 15 hours per week, although this can change during periods of peak demand Firm vs. flexible time: There is some flexibility possible in arrangement of work hours</p>
<p>5. Skill Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good knowledge of database software is desirable • Good communicator • Management skills, preferably in a volunteer setting
<p>6. Training and Skill Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to upgrade computing skills • Opportunity to improve communications skills

<p>7. Supervision</p> <p>Volunteer reports to: Executive Director</p> <p>Feedback mechanisms: Executive Director will review supply-and-demand flow</p>
<p>8. Authority/Decision Making</p> <p>Has input into stocking decisions, in consultation with the Executive Director and the buyer</p>
<p>9. Supporting policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Welfare • Purchasing
<p>10. Working Conditions</p> <p>Where/what's provided: Volunteer will work at the food bank</p> <p>Physical provisions: Most areas of food bank are accessible</p>
<p>11. Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses covered • Access to office equipment as required • Working with a great team of people to help others who really need your service! • Christmas party for all • Experience will strengthen résumé
<p>12. Agreement/Approval</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Date _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Volunteer's Signature _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Supervisor's Signature _____</p>

JOB DESCRIPTION 3: (Example: Soccer League)

<p>1. Assignment Soccer League Finals Co-ordinator</p>
<p>2. Purpose of Assignment To co-ordinate League finals</p>
<p>3. Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay up to date with team standings• Maintain liaison with City Parks and Recreation• Establish schedule for, and co-ordinate, schedule for finals
<p>4. Time Commitment (<i>specify deadlines if appropriate</i>) Expected number of hours per week or month: Approximately 4 hours per week to co-ordinate finals and attend games Firm vs. flexible time: According to league requirements</p>
<p>5. Skill Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Must be organized• Able to maintain accurate records
<p>6. Training and Skill Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Last year's co-ordinator is available for questions• Last year's schedule can be used as a template
<p>7. Supervision Volunteer reports to: League President Feedback mechanisms: Ongoing feedback and wrap-up evaluation</p>

8. Authority/Decision Making

Have the President approve the schedule of finals to check for changes, errors or omissions

9. Supporting policies

- Screening

10. Working Conditions

Where/what's provided: Community centre is available for meetings with team coaches, when needed

Physical provisions: Accessible

11. Benefits

- Our unending gratitude!
- Also welcome at team parties, awards night, and all League functions

12. Agreement/Approval

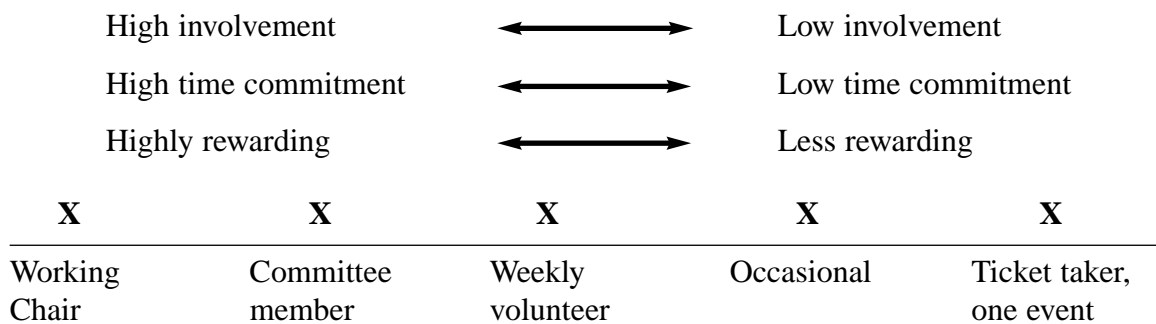
Date _____

Volunteer's Signature _____

Supervisor's Signature _____

Diversify the assignments

As said earlier, certain jobs have a low time requirement that will be suitable for someone who has other commitments or is testing the waters before committing to greater involvement with your organization. In the following chart we have outlined how to evaluate some of the jobs in your organization. Such a chart will help you to determine if you are ready to welcome all volunteers, whether they are looking for a lifetime of commitment to a cause they adore or want an afternoon of pleasant company for which they are prepared to stuff a few envelopes.



Each volunteer position is integral to overall success—without those envelope stuffers and ticket takers, your jobs wouldn't get done and/or your events wouldn't make any money!

You have now seen how job design can give you a whole new perspective on finding volunteers. By breaking down components into tasks, you greatly reduce the risk of losing a volunteer because you are unable to suggest something that fits their available time and level of commitment. Volunteers who have a positive experience with your organization may decide to take on more than the initial commitment. The volunteer who organized the soccer refereeing—and had a good time doing it—may decide that next time, they could also book the fields and follow-up with the city on maintaining them.

In a voluntary organization, more than in any other, you must prepare for succession. In an organization with some staff it is unlikely that everyone would leave at once, whereas volunteer organizations sometimes will suffer a big loss of volunteers—for example, when all the active parents of a peewee team move up to the next age level with their kids. With job design, your organization will be in a better position to find replacements without starting over from scratch. And if your volunteers have each had the chance to handle a few different tasks (task variety), they are better able to fill any gaps in the organization while new volunteers are being recruited.

Next steps in the volunteer management process

Now that you have broken down most of your jobs into manageable work units, you are ready to move on to the other cornerstones of your volunteer management program.

They are:

- Recruitment strategy
- Management/oversight
- Recognition

Your recruitment strategy will be much simplified by the fact that you have several specific jobs designed, laid out and ready to be filled. Management and oversight will be easier because you know exactly what to expect from each volunteer and they, in turn, will know exactly what's expected of them. Recognition will be a delight, because all your new volunteers will be performing well in the jobs that were meant for them and that meet their needs.

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Job Design Templates

Function Analysis Template

Organizational Mission

Organizational Functions

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Components

Function #1

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Function #2

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Function #3

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Function #4

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Function #5

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

Component Breakdown Template

Component

Tasks

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Job Description Template

Assignment

Purpose

Tasks

Time Commitment

Firm vs. flexible time

Skill Requirements

Training and Skill Development

Supervision

Authority/Decision Making

Supporting Policies

Working Conditions

Benefits

Agreement/Approval

Volunteer's Signature

Date

Supervisor's Signature

