

## **The View From the Trenches: Getting the National Office Involved in Recruiting Local Volunteers**

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Of all the support and services we get from our national organizations, the one that gets the least attention is recruiting leaders. Yes, each of my national associations (we manage five chapters for five different associations) offers leadership development at some level. Most also provide checklists for recruiting leaders and ideas on recognizing them. However, could national associations do more? Could they help us in actually recruiting leaders?

Based on the Chapter Dashboard, an evaluation and monitoring tool featured in ASAE's forthcoming book on component relations, leadership is one of four make-or-break elements for success. Success means having the right combination of people on the leadership team with volunteers in the wings. Success isn't necessarily the size or scope of a board, but rather the complement of people prepared and motivated to lead the organization. So where do those people come from--and how can national organizations help their components recruit volunteer leaders? The leaders who sit on the chapter boards we work with at Mariner offer these seven suggestions.

- 1. Recruit members to serve on boards at the local level.** For example, help us identify members who call the national office frequently, use national programs and services, or serve the association in other ways. But don't stop there. Call and ask the member to serve at the local level.
- 2. Recommend retired national leaders.** When national board members or committee members complete their terms, ask them to consider serving at the local level for a change rather than finding another national position for them.
- 3. Keep a list of local/state committee, board, and volunteer opportunities to which you can refer members.** You can post this list on your Web site, publish it in the newsletter, and insert it in new member packets and renewal confirmations.
- 4. Make service a part of career development.** If you offer professional certification, for example, consider adding local volunteer service to your requirements. For example, ASAE's CAE recertification process allows for two hours of credit to be given per year for service as an officer of an association or professional society, or for service as chair or vice-chair of a committee, section, or special interest group.
- 5. Ask your national leaders to commit to recruiting colleagues in their organizations to sit on local boards.** For the Chesapeake Chapter of the Risk Management Association, one bank president on the national committee actively recruited in his own institution and contacted other colleagues for the chapter.

**6. Make it easy for members to invite others to volunteer.** For example, the Senior Corps offers an “Ask a Friend Now” online option whereby you can send an e-mail invitation. See it for yourself at [www.volunteerfriends.org/ask\\_friend.asp](http://www.volunteerfriends.org/ask_friend.asp).

**7. Don’t drain local resources.** One of our national organizations has twice tapped our emerging leaders for national leadership, leaving us shorthanded.

Across the board, most local groups cite a lack of volunteers as one of their top concerns. We also know that the primary way to recruit prospective volunteers is to ask them personally. By proactively helping local level leaders invite members to volunteer, a national organization is addressing a top concern.

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