



Red Cross Week
2 – 8 May 2004

Help fill these buckets

The more collectors we have, the more money we raise – so please encourage your team to join in the fun.

To find out how to take part in collections and other events contact your local fundraiser.

The resource for those who manage, lead and co-ordinate volunteers in the British Red Cross

Making **it** happen

Issue 3 Leading, communicating with and involving volunteers



Welcome

 to the third

issue of Making it Happen. This issue looks at good leadership, how important it is to communicate with volunteers and involve them in decision-making and gives ideas about what British Red Cross volunteers need from their leader.

Leadership, communication and involvement are elements of management that few of us spend time thinking about. They are things managers tend to 'just do'. But in order to be a good volunteer manager, you must communicate successfully with your volunteers, adapt your leadership style to suit the situation and individuals and involve them in the work of the Red Cross.

Although there are many different definitions of leadership, there is a common thread running through all of them – leadership involves inspiring others to follow and support a particular goal or vision. We often assume that good leaders are those people who have a very strong leadership style. However, leaders come in all shapes and sizes and people who are less forceful can be just as good.



British Red Cross
Caring for people in crisis



What am I going to get from reading this issue?

- ✓ Ideas about how to involve volunteers
- ✓ Suggestions on what makes a good leader
- ✓ Tips on effective listening
- ✓ Examples of how volunteer involvement in decision-making can make a difference
- ✓ Examples of different communication methods
- ✓ A tool to help you identify your own leadership style

How will good leadership, communication and volunteer involvement benefit the Red Cross?

- ✓ Volunteers will be better informed
- ✓ Volunteers will feel inspired and empowered
- ✓ Volunteers will be motivated about their role
- ✓ There will be a buzz of excitement and enthusiasm
- ✓ Volunteers will be keen to stay with the Red Cross
- ✓ The reputation and image of the Red Cross will be enhanced
- ✓ Volunteers will have a clearer vision and direction
- ✓ New ideas and solutions will be explored

Did you know?

Leadership

- In a recent Gallup poll, fewer than 20% of respondents said they felt motivated and involved at work. This is a sure sign of poor leadership.

Communication

When we talked to Red Cross volunteers across the range of services and activities we perform, they gave us some very interesting feedback.

Of the volunteers we contacted:

- 50% said they were satisfied with the communication they received about what's happening in their area and activity
- 49% said that they were satisfied with the communication they received about what's happening in the Red Cross.

When volunteers were asked what factors might make them want to leave the Red Cross, 'poor communication' was the most common reason given.

Involvement

Of the volunteers we contacted:

- 58% felt that the Red Cross sought their opinions.

Don't throw it away!

This is the third issue in an eight-part series of Making it Happen. Please keep your copies – by the end of the series you will have collected a 'mini' good practice reference guide on how to lead, co-ordinate and manage volunteers.

Leadership and management



A good way to spot the difference between leadership and management is to think about the kind of tasks you would expect a manager to do and those you would expect a leader to do. A manager will delegate tasks, plan work schedules, organise resources, analyse information, monitor progress etc. A leader will inspire people, unleash potential, share a vision, be a good role model etc. This mental exercise helps us see how the two functions differ, although in the workplace leadership and management often become entwined.

So what is leadership?

By thinking of well-known historical leaders, such as Winston Churchill or Nelson Mandela, we can begin to explore and consider what leadership is truly about. Leaders are often charismatic. They normally have

a strong belief system that influences everything they do and are not afraid of making changes. However leadership is not just about style, charisma or forcefulness, although those things can help. It's also about listening, understanding people, and getting everyone pulling in the same direction.

A leader starts with a vision and develops a plan to achieve it. For example, the vision for leaders in the Red Cross could range from an all-encompassing view of the future of the organisation, to what someone wants to achieve in a particular service. There are leaders throughout the Red Cross, from the chief executive, to public duties leaders to local fundraisers. The Red Cross needs leaders at all different levels, throughout the UK to inspire volunteers and staff to work to achieve their vision.

Does a leader have to be paid?

No. In the Red Cross there are many leaders who are volunteers. After all our chairman's a volunteer. Some have the word 'leader' in their role description, others have become a leader more informally, often by default. Leadership is defined by what we do, not by the role we are in or whether we are paid to do it.

What are the characteristics of a good leader?

Red Cross volunteer managers who attended a leadership workshop in Manchester last year told us that leaders should:

- be enthusiastic, passionate and energetic
- show commitment
- have a clear vision, aim and direction
- be believable
- respect others and be respected
- have integrity and lead by example
- inspire, motivate and give direction
- be empathetic and value people
- communicate their aims and ideas
- display a willingness to take risks
- have determination
- liberate people, giving them the freedom to get on with their jobs
- be able to alter their style of leadership depending upon the situation they are in.

Volunteers' voices

Volunteers tell us how they like to be led, communicated with and involved

Good communication can inspire

Cynthia has been a volunteer for some time, delivering transport and escort services. She was told about plans to start the fire victim support service in the area and spoke to the co-ordinator about what the service entailed. She thought the service sounded amazing. "I was greatly inspired and thought it was something really worth going for. So I started raising money for it, ending up with £5,000 – I was chuffed. I was so glad to be able to get involved and help out where I could."

Mrs Cynthia Wheeler, Taunton

Frustration at lack of involvement

"Years ago, we felt very frustrated and undervalued when a new ambulance was bought without involving any of us in the decision. We had said that a vehicle was needed that could easily be driven off-road, but we hadn't been involved in the specifications that were needed. One day a new ambulance was delivered, which we didn't know was coming. The height of it meant that only a few of us could lift stretchers into the ambulance. We wanted to know who had made the choice and why we hadn't been asked to give our views."

First aid volunteer, Wales and Western

What I look for in a leader

"A leader needs to know their subject area and demonstrate that they do. They need to be able to keep people motivated and positive and be able to communicate to volunteers what is expected of them and help them to understand what they need to know. Leaders also need to have a sense of direction, be thoughtful and have consideration for volunteers and be a good listener."

Audrey Pritchard, volunteer, Northern Territory

Why my leader is a good leader

"My leader is always there for me. She gives me information, answers



Maggie Nimmo, therapeutic care and skin camouflage volunteer, Cheshire

any queries I may have and makes sure that I am happy with what I am doing. My leader involves me in what's going on – we are always consulted if there are any changes afoot or any decisions to be made about the service. I'm quite happy with the level of involvement I have and I know that if I want to be more involved, I can. Although running my own business as well as the other things I do keeps me busy enough at the moment!"

Maggie Nimmo, therapeutic care and skin camouflage volunteer, Cheshire

So what did volunteers tell us they needed from their 'leader'?

- To be listened to
- To be told about what's happening
- To be inspired
- To be asked their opinion
- To be told what is expected of them
- To be treated fairly and with respect

Managers' voices

Volunteer managers tell us how they lead, communicate with and involve volunteers



June Wiseman (left), shop manager, Lewisham

Building trust

"Volunteers are keen to be involved, they like having regular meetings and discussing issues. Leadership is quite a difficult thing – a case of trial and error. The key is developing relationships and trust with people. I try and keep volunteers interested, informed and involved. We keep things on a friendly level and make sure we have time to discuss how we feel about what's going on in the Red Cross."

Dale Mclean, volunteer first aid group leader, Lanarkshire

Keeping people informed

"I take information about any new changes to every centre meeting. Rather than read them out or give a verbal report, I prefer to give everyone a written copy and ask them to take a few minutes to read it. I find that this prevents misinterpretations. Once everyone has read the report we then discuss it, and the volunteers can ask me any questions. If I have received information that's urgent, I take the time to inform the volunteers individually."

Jean O'Connor, volunteer centre organiser, Preston

Involving volunteers

"I try and help volunteers feel involved with the Red Cross. When I interview a new volunteer, I ask them why they've chosen the Red Cross shop and what they know about us. I also make sure that all the current volunteers are involved with the shop and the organisation – they get updates about our work and about what's happening every week."

Volunteers want to know about any appeals that are running or local projects that are happening. We also have the Fundamental Principles on the wall of the stockroom – I got them enlarged so that they are easier for people to read. The volunteers all know what we stand for, which means that if we are being criticised in the press they are as upset as I am. They all understand that our impartiality is our uniqueness."

June Wiseman, shop manager, Lewisham

Keeping in contact

"I visit the medical loan outlets regularly and meet the volunteers. Any changes

that need to be communicated are first done via a personal letter. Then I go along and visit them as this provides me with the opportunity to help them accept the changes. Visiting them on a regular basis ensures that they feel valued. Even if there are no changes to be discussed, I would still keep in regular contact by phone or visits for the same reason – so that both the volunteers and their work are valued."

Dawn Cunliffe, medical loan co-ordinator, Northern Territory

So what do managers need to do? Top Tips

- Hold regular meetings and discuss issues
- Introduce changes face-to-face, give accurate information and set aside time for discussion and questions
- Promote the Fundamental Principles and the work of the Red Cross whenever you can
- Value volunteers for their contribution

Communication

Choosing the right method of communication

How you communicate information to your volunteers can make the world of difference to the way your news is received. If you inform someone that the service they volunteer for is about to close via a text message, for example, you can be reasonably sure that the recipient won't take the news very well! This doesn't mean that you need to convey every shred of information face-to-face. The method of communication you choose is best assessed on a case-by-case basis. An important point to remember however, is to communicate with your volunteers in the same way you yourself would like to be kept informed. If you wouldn't like information to be communicated to you in a certain way, chances are your volunteers won't either.

Day-to-day information

Routine information such as updates or service activity reports can be communicated using the communal

noticeboard, by memo or sent by email if this facility is available to your volunteers. Alternatively, you can set aside time to discuss them at your regular group meetings. It is a good idea to ask your volunteers how they would prefer to receive this type of information.

The personal ask

There are some situations that merit an 'individual ask'. Asking a volunteer to work an extra few hours, to swap shifts or to perform any extra duties should be done personally, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Don't choose a group situation as the volunteer may feel pressured into saying yes.

A big shake-up

Radical changes such as starting or stopping a particular service or activity, or the closure of a centre or shop are definitely best communicated face-to-face. If just a few people will be affected by the change, you should speak to these people privately and take the

time to listen to and address their concerns. However, if the change concerns the entire group then you can call a general meeting and tell everyone together. Make sure you spend time preparing how best to put the information across, present the good and bad points and leave plenty of time for questions and discussion.

Listening

Studies show that we spend about 80 per cent of our waking hours communicating and at least 45 per cent of that time listening. However, research also shows that most of us listen with less than 30 per cent of our attention. Listening has often been cited as being the most critical management skill. If communication is to be effective then the listening process must involve much more than passively hearing words. Listening is hard work and the concentration needed requires just as much energy as talking. A good listener will consciously tune into the speaker and deliberately free their mind of other concerns.

Seven steps to effective listening

1. Prepare yourself to listen (be awake, ready and comfortable) and sit where you can see the speaker.

2. Avoid distractions and minimise noise, interruptions, phone calls etc.
3. Take a genuine interest in what is being said and how the speaker thinks and feels.
4. Paraphrase and summarise what has been said.
5. Look for the important themes in the speaker's words and any emotions that lie behind.
6. Try to understand things from the speaker's point of view and avoid being judgemental.
7. Don't assume you understand what is being said – question, clarify and agree.

Managing change

Change is very difficult for many people to accept and we shouldn't underestimate the impact that even small changes can have. However,

change is necessary for an organisation to progress.

Here are a few tips on how to make change a little easier for volunteers to accept:

- Explain why the change is necessary
- Give information about the change and the effects it will have, highlighting the positives and the negatives
- Ask volunteers to raise any questions they have about the proposed change
- Listen and respond with empathy
- Agree to meet again with further information if necessary
- Ask for support and commitment to make the change work

Involvement



It is essential to involve volunteers in the work of the British Red Cross. You can involve volunteers in many ways. Here are some examples:

- Ask their opinions
- Be open to their suggestions and make time to actively seek them
- Hold an annual review meeting for your service or activity, asking volunteers to give their views and recommendations
- Encourage volunteers to attend local forums or stand for election
- Take time to explain and discuss any changes with them
- Delegate responsibility where appropriate
- Encourage volunteers to meet with you regularly, either as individuals or as a group

Volunteer representation and governance

The British Red Cross has a new system in place to help make the

views of volunteers heard. The aim is to re-engage volunteers in local consultations and to ensure that they are represented and that their views and opinions are taken into account.

- Councils – there is an elected Volunteers Council in every Branch which is the key consultation process for the Red Cross. The Volunteers Council works with the operations director, key managers and the elected Trustee to address local and national issues, support the local Red Cross and foster relations between volunteers and staff.
- Forums – volunteer Forums exist to enable volunteers to influence both local and national issues and to link those attending with the wider values and purposes of the Red Cross. Forums allow volunteers and staff to come together and discuss areas of common interest.

Ten reasons why volunteers should go along to their local volunteer's Forum:

1. To give their views and influence decisions
2. To find out about the work of the Red Cross at home and abroad
3. To meet with local staff, council members and Trustees
4. To have the chance to raise and discuss local issues
5. To celebrate successes (including awards)
6. To put forward the issues pertinent to their service or activity
7. To find out about new developments or changes in the way the Red Cross delivers services or runs activities
8. To contribute to making the Red Cross more effective
9. To socialise with colleagues
10. To change or influence something that will make a difference to them

Leadership

Have a look through the three characters below. Who are you most similar to in terms of your leadership style? Which of these qualities do you currently possess? Which of these qualities would you prefer not to possess?

Margaret Thatcher – the strong leader

Margaret Thatcher certainly had vision. She knew exactly what direction she wanted to take the country in and was totally determined to carry it there. She had a complete belief in her vision and didn't listen to any opposition or feel that she had to justify herself, she believed totally in what she was trying to achieve. Her vision was all that was important to her and she was utterly determined to see through radical change, regardless of other people's

views. She was a strong and driven leader and was prepared to carry things right through until the end. As she herself said "This lady's not for turning".

David Brent from The Office – likes to be liked

The office buffoon, David likes to be liked and thinks he's everyone's best friend. He's always joining in the office chitchat and showing that he can be part of the gang, but tends to take over the conversation and often pushes the joke too far. He's a very positive leader and often gets everyone together to talk about his vision and where things are heading to try and motivate his team. However, it's all a lot of hot air and his inspirational talks are normally met with awkward silences. David doesn't seem to notice though –

he thinks he's fabulous and is convinced that everyone else does too!

Gandhi – the inspiration

Gandhi was a great leader of his time. He had a very clear vision of a free and equal India and was able to influence and motivate large masses of people and get them to follow his direction. His leadership was characterised by being completely in tune with his people. He lived his life by very strong beliefs and preached these tenets to his followers. Gandhi was not a leader of mere words. He did what he said he was going to do and was prepared to do it alone. People respected him for his integrity and bravery. He was compassionate, honest, true to his word and strong in the face of adversity and hardship.



Self study suggestions (1 hour)

1. Think about your vision (e.g. where you want to be in one year's time). What is it and can you express it clearly?

2. Make a list of your own strengths and weaknesses in helping maintain the morale of the group you lead, co-ordinate and manage. What can you do to maximise these strengths and minimise the weaknesses?

Books to read

Effective Leadership

by John Adair
Published by Pan
ISBN 0330302302

Effective Leadership is structured to ensure a steady, easily acquired insight into leadership skills, helping you to:

- understand leadership
- develop leadership abilities
- grow as a leader.

The Communicators Pocketbook

by Sean Misteil
Published by Management Pocketbook Ltd
ISBN 1870471415

Covers the dynamics of communication, how to be effective, communication barriers, styles of communication and technology at work. Also includes a series of checklists.

Website

www.leader-values.com

This website looks at the different elements of leadership and has links to many interesting articles. It also reviews key leaders in history and allows you to assess your own leadership skills.

Message from Stan Fitches, volunteer representation and governance adviser

Volunteers Councils were set up as part of the overhaul of governance and representation. The good news is that the election of volunteers to their respective Volunteers Councils is now complete. Volunteers throughout the UK have elected members onto the Councils to represent activities and services. Although the task proved more comprehensive than first envisaged, it has been completed with very few hiccups. This is thanks to the efforts of the operations directors and volunteering advisers and the work undertaken by the electoral reform and ballot services.

There are still one or two 'anomalies' where elections may have to be re-run because participation was not as high as expected. In some Branches, volunteers are being drafted onto the Volunteers Council, on a short-term basis, to bring the Councils up to strength pending the election of additional members.

Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester recently held an Area Volunteers Council induction day, which proved to be a huge success. John McClure, chairman of the Board of Trustees attended the day, and said: "This is the opportunity for a new beginning – if it doesn't happen it's because we have not grasped the opportunity to make it happen."

One of the themes of this edition of Making it Happen is involvement – without your involvement in Volunteers Councils and Branch Forums they would not be a success. Leaders, managers and co-ordinators in the British Red Cross are the people who have the most contact with volunteers. Consequently you have a crucial role to play in explaining the purpose of the Forums and Councils and encouraging volunteer participation. Please help us to get more volunteers involved.

Competencies

This issue of Making it Happen focussed on the third and final 'core' competency for managing volunteers: Lead, communicate and involve.

1. Promote and communicate a shared commitment to the British Red Cross by acting as a role model.
2. Encourage volunteers to adapt quickly and be innovative.
3. Use appropriate communication tools to give volunteers access to the information they need to carry out their role.
4. Provide volunteers with regular feedback on developments in their area of activity, the British Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
5. Seek and take account of volunteers' views and opinions.
6. Promote opportunities for volunteers to represent the views and interests of other volunteers.

Issues 1 – 3 have looked at the three core competencies for those involved in leading, co-ordinating or managing volunteers. The core competencies are:

1. Motivate, recognise and retain
2. Support, supervise and develop
3. Lead, communicate and involve

For copies of the competencies and behaviours for managers of volunteers or back issues of Making it Happen, please contact your volunteering adviser or have a look at my:redcross (www.redcross.org.uk/myredcross).

The next issue of Making it Happen will look at how to attract new volunteers to the Red Cross. If you have any tips or successes you would like to share, please do get in contact with your volunteering adviser.

We hope you enjoyed reading the third edition of Making it Happen and found it useful. You will have noticed that again, this edition has contributions from Red Cross people across the UK. We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts and ideas.

As the aim of this resource is to share good practice and knowledge about managing volunteers, it would be great to know what you think. Give us your ideas by contacting your volunteering adviser or the volunteering department at UK Office. Alternatively, post your thoughts on my:redcross (www.redcross.org.uk/myredcross).

The next issue will focus on promoting volunteering opportunities and attracting volunteers.

If you would like to be added or removed from the circulation list, please contact your volunteering adviser.