

NABE-News



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CALENDAR

from www.nabenet.org

NABE Administration and Finance Section Meeting

When: Feb. 7 - 8
Where: Salt Lake City, UT

NABE/NCBP/NCBF Midyear Meeting

When: Feb. 8-12
Where: Salt Lake City, UT

CSE Retreat

When: March 8 - 9, 2005
Where: Chicago, IL

Bar Leadership Institute

When: March 10 -12, 2005
Where: Chicago, IL

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CSE RETREAT: Information about the Chief Staff Executives (CSE) Retreat will be mailed this week. The retreat begins with a welcome reception on Tuesday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. Sessions will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 9, all at the Chicago Marriott Downtown – the same place where the Bar Leadership Institute (BLI) will start on Thursday, March 10. Be on the lookout for the information about the CSE Retreat and/or check the NABE web site (www.nabenet.org).

VOLUNTEER TROUBLES? A recent study funded by the Nonprofit Sector Research Fund of the Aspen Institute examined how nonprofits can successfully retain effective volunteers by ensuring “good fits” between volunteers and their organizations. The researchers, E. Gil Clary of the College of St. Catherine and Mark Snyder and Keilah Worth of the University of Minnesota, explored the social climate, environment and “personality” of 85 nonprofit organizations that utilize volunteers for service delivery. The participating organizations effectively use volunteer training programs, handbooks, and formal policies and procedures to guide and assist their volunteers. However, the organizations varied in the degree to which they successfully matched volunteers’ motivations with organizations’ programs and services.

The researchers found that volunteers will gravitate toward volunteer organizations where involvement will help fulfill their own needs and goals. The most significant motivating factor was values – the desire to volunteer out of concern for others and the belief that people ought to help one another. Other motivating factors (in order of importance) were: understanding (the aspiration to learn about other people, the world, and oneself); enhancement (the desire to grow personally or increase self-esteem); social (connecting with others or avoiding social disapproval for not volunteering); protective (addressing personal problems); and career (developing new skills or forging professional contacts). Volunteer motivations varied slightly for different subgroups, e.g., the career motivation was generally more important to student than to adult volunteers.

The researchers concluded that the extent to which nonprofit organizations provide opportunities for volunteers to achieve their future goals or satisfy their most important motivations increased the likelihood that they would remain committed volunteers with that organization.

Recommendations for nonprofits seeking to enhance their volunteer programs include:

- Develop training programs, volunteer handbooks, formal policies and procedures, and hire volunteer coordinators to enhance volunteer satisfaction.
- Use performance evaluations to assess volunteer progress, expand responsibilities for volunteers, and inform them of how they help the organizations achieve their goals.
- Focus on achieving “good fits” or matches between the goals of the volunteer and the opportunities available from the organization to ensure successful volunteer recruitment, retention, and performance.
- Evaluate volunteers’ emotions toward their experiences; these emotions are strong indicators of whether volunteers will stay with or leave the organization.
- Pay special attention to the values, understanding, and career motivations of their volunteers when designing their volunteer program.

If you want to learn more about keeping volunteers on track, come to the “When Your Volunteers Don’t Score a ‘10’” breakout session at the Midyear Meeting on Thursday, February 10 from 1:30-2:30 p.m.

ARE YOUR MINUTES LEGAL? And if dealing with volunteers didn’t cause enough problems, now you have to worry about what goes in your minutes. The following is taken from a case study developed in partnership with Tecker Consultants, LLC. It can be found on the Center for Association Leadership’s web site, www.centeronline.org.

For many years, a professional society of approximately 6,500 members kept detailed minutes of its Board of Directors’ meetings as well as other key committees and decision-making groups. These minutes often included not only motions made, defeated and passed, but also off-hand remarks made during the course of discussion, including member justifications for their decisions and comments by the association’s attorney. When articles appeared in the local media, the Justice Department began to scrutinize the association’s practices with regard to board meetings and ultimately, filed a price-fixing suit against the association.

Some of the specific steps the association took to address this problem were:

- Minutes reflected only actions taken, not discussions and off-hand comments.
- Tape recordings of meetings were used only for their intended purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the minute-taking and the decisions made. Once the minutes were approved, the tapes were destroyed.
- Legal counsel reviewed all minutes of important decision-making groups prior to their approval at the next meeting.
- In any meeting where legally sensitive issues were to be discussed, legal counsel was present and asked to give informed opinions to guide decision-making and propriety of discussion.
- Once a year, all committee chairs, directors, key staff and others in leadership positions attended a daylong training session where legal issues were discussed in depth.

So what happened to the association? After fighting the lawsuit for two years, and just prior to trial, the association signed a consent decree, which prevented it and its members from taking certain actions or providing certain services for a period of 10 years.

To find out more about the pitfalls facing associations, attend the “2004 Legal Roundup” session at the Midyear Meeting on Wednesday, February 9 from 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. If that won’t scare you, I don’t know what will!