

## Volunteer Management Handbook:

Finding, recruiting, and retaining volunteers that will sustain, support, and promote the work of the chapter are principal challenges facing all RIMS Chapters. The **Volunteer Management Handbook** is designed to provide several helpful ideas on how your chapter can successfully overcome the obstacles you will encounter while trying to find and enlist volunteers. Additional ideas on how to recruit and retain those volunteers are also provided. Use the checklists and tips below to help develop and sustain a vital and healthy RIMS Chapter.

### FIND VOLUNTEERS

- **Building Your Chapter Board**

- ✓ Look to members who regularly attend meetings as potential volunteers. These members have already shown a willingness to commit their time to the chapter.
- ✓ Make your members feel welcome at chapter meetings. Do not have the entire Board sit together at one table. Mingle and greet your attendees to learn more about them, and their reasons for becoming involved.
- ✓ Use a committee structure to form a strong Board, in order to show new volunteers that they will have support.
- ✓ Identify potential leaders from your committees. Sound out committee members to learn what they would like to do for the chapter in the long run. Where do they see their futures with the chapter?
- ✓ Consider having multiple-year terms for your Board Members. This allows Board Members to become more comfortable with their roles. It also allows them to follow through on the goals and programs established.
- ✓ Match the right job to the right person. Make sure that you assign volunteers to a position or program that is of interest to them.
- ✓ Form a Past Presidents Advisory Committee. Former chapter presidents are an excellent resource for your Board and will often assist with board duties.
- ✓ Create a chapter succession plan, and don't be afraid to think outside the box. Be willing to consider a non-traditional succession plan for your officer roles when needed. In other words, your next chapter President may be the Membership Chair and not the Vice President.
- ✓ Ask...This may sound simple, but sometimes all you have to do is ask someone if they are willing or able to volunteer.
- ✓ Ask again...Persistence will pay off. Although a potential volunteer may not be able to accept the first time they are asked; they may have time when you ask them again.
- ✓ Be Flexible. You may not always find a volunteer for your open position, but you may find volunteers who are interested in participating in different ways. Try to match willing volunteers with jobs and duties that will interest them.

## RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

- **Promote Leadership Opportunities**

- ✓ Inform your members when there is a vacancy on your Board. Members don't always look to volunteer, but will often step in if they know there is a need.
- ✓ Promote volunteer opportunities even when no positions are immediately open. Let your members know that the Board is always looking for volunteers - for committees, future board positions, etc. You can, and should, always find a meaningful role for a willing volunteer.
- ✓ Communicate with your members to let them know there are many different people who play roles in maintaining the chapter. Time commitments for volunteer positions vary. Some volunteers help with registration the day of the chapter meetings, while others take very active roles as Board Officers. Know and communicate the time commitment for each job.
- ✓ Share expectations with new volunteers. Make sure your new recruits know what is expected of them. Create position descriptions for your Board or use RIMS Position Descriptions and share them with your Board members.
- ✓ Recognize volunteers for their efforts at chapter meetings. This acts as an incentive for potential volunteers to step up and take a role in the chapter.
- ✓ Promote special Board activities as a perk for volunteering for the chapter. (i.e. Board Retreats)
- ✓ Tell your stories. As a Board member, your experiences as a volunteer should be shared with other members. Talk about how volunteering has benefited you personally and professionally.
- ✓ Use every chapter event as an opportunity to recruit new volunteers.

## RETAIN VOLUNTEERS

- **Tips for Maintaining Your Board**

- ✓ Don't overwhelm new volunteers. Get them involved on a small scale first. For example, start volunteers at the committee level, rather than offering them an officer position.
- ✓ Provide an orientation for new Board Members. Consider developing a handbook for new chapter officers that includes RIMS Chapter Officer Resources and other pertinent chapter information. For example, you may want to make sure that each chapter officer has a copy of the Chapter Officers' Handbook, and that all new Board Members receive and review the New Board Member Orientation Tip Sheet.
- ✓ Invite committee members to Board meetings. This allows volunteers to see the bigger picture for the chapter.
- ✓ Consider creating co-chair positions. This allows volunteers to have on the job training from a more experienced volunteer before taking the lead role on a committee. It also allows for two less experienced volunteers to job share, so that the workload is not overwhelming.
- ✓ Re-evaluate assignments annually, or as needed, to make sure your volunteers are happy with their jobs. Re-assign Board Members to new tasks (if needed) in order to avoid burn-out.

- ✓ Consider hiring a chapter administrative support person. This will allow for continuity for the Board from year to year, as officers change. It will also take some of the administrative and time-consuming tasks from the volunteers.
- ✓ Send Board members to RIMS Building a Successful Chapter Workshop. Attending this workshop allows chapter volunteers to network and share best practices with fellow leaders from other RIMS Chapters.
- ✓ Have fun! Volunteers are much more likely to continue their participation if they are enjoying their time with the Board. Make sure to include team building exercises and fun activities in your Board's agendas.
- ✓ Use your volunteers. When you recruit someone make sure you give them something to do. It is important to keep volunteers active in order for them to see value in their involvement with the chapter.
- ✓ Recognize volunteers for their efforts, and use public forums to thank them for their work.
- ✓ Consider multiple year terms for key Board positions. This will help with continuity for the Board and is key to the succession planning for some chapters. It provides the Board more time to find officers who can move into vacant slots, etc.
- ✓ Consider having 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President positions. This clearly defines the succession plan for the Presidency and is a great help if any Board positions become vacant.

## Volunteer Obstacles: Time – Inexperience - Awareness

### COMMON REASONS PEOPLE DON'T VOLUNTEER AND HOW TO RESPOND:

In order to build a healthy Board it is important to understand why people don't volunteer and to find ways to motivate them which might change their minds. Below are a few suggestions that you may consider the next time that you are faced with a prospect who says "No":

- **Time**

Potential Volunteer: "My job is very busy right now, so I just don't have the time to volunteer."

Board Member: "Do you know that our Board has many different types of volunteers? Some of our members volunteer for less than 60 minutes a month, by helping with registration at our meetings. Would you be willing to volunteer if it was for a limited period of time?"

- **Inexperience**

Potential Volunteer: "I have never held a position on a Board before."

Board Member: "One of our more experienced Board members will mentor/train you during your first year on the Board until you become comfortable. There is also a job description for each of our positions, and a number of resources the Society offers to assist us with our jobs as volunteers."

- **Awareness**

Potential Volunteer: “I didn’t know you needed volunteers, and I’ve never been asked before.”

Board Member: “I’m sorry no one has approached you before now. Our chapter is always looking for willing volunteers. By becoming involved with the Board, you will find even more value in your membership. You’ll have the opportunity to develop leadership skills, network with peers, and influence the local risk management community. What types of things interest you, so we can find a role you would enjoy on the Board?”

## **SELLING VOLUNTEERING TO POTENTIAL VOLUNTEERS:**

As you approach potential volunteers, you may find that you often hear “What’s In It For Me?” or “Why Should I Volunteer?” Selling the merits of volunteering is not an easy job; however, knowing the reasons why most people volunteer (and why they don’t) may help you to answer these questions. When your next prospect asks why they should volunteer, consider the points listed below when you respond. Try to keep in mind what their personal motivations might be based on their experiences or current job.

## **WHY PEOPLE VOLUNTEER:**

- Leadership opportunities they may not have in their own job.
- A desire to give back to the local Risk Management Community.
- The opportunity to gain or improve skills.
- To network with other professionals in the Risk Management field.
- Searching for a community or something with which to belong.
- To stay in touch with key issues.
- To have fun and/or make social connections.

## **OTHER WAYS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR CHAPTER:**

- Look to small companies as well as large corporations for potential volunteers.
- Ensure Board members are welcoming and approachable, and that they mingle with all of your members at meetings and events.
- Use RIMS Chapter prospect lists to find potential members you can recruit and turn into volunteers.
- Involve Associate Members on your committees. Although Associates of the Society cannot vote, they may act as advisors to the Board and committees.