



Leading in Your Volunteer Organization

Level 5 Project



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Leading in Your Volunteer Organization

About Leading in Your Volunteer Organization

Leading in a volunteer environment is distinct from leadership in an employment setting because traditional, compensation-based motivation of team members is not an option.

In this project, you will learn the skills required to lead in a volunteer organization and develop an understanding of the importance of recognition and reward in motivating volunteers. You will come to understand the value of building a strong environment of mutual respect with other members and the importance of showing integrity, competency, and character in decisions, leadership, and actions.

Resources

The following is a list of resources available in your digital project on Base Camp. Some of these resources, such as evaluations, are also available on the Resources section on Base Camp.

Project Checklist

Evaluation Resource

Succession Plan

360° Evaluation

Introduction and Assignment

Introduction

Offering your time and expertise as a leader in a volunteer organization provides many benefits and challenges. Among the most important benefits is the opportunity to lead. Regardless of career or social status, a member of an organization can participate as a leader and gain skills and experience. A particular challenge of leading in a volunteer organization is understanding that the people you lead follow because they choose to follow.

Your Assignment

Purpose: The purpose of this project is to apply the skills needed to successfully lead in a volunteer organization.

Overview: Serve in a leadership role in Toastmasters or another volunteer organization for at least six months. You may complete this project based on your employment, but a volunteer organization is preferable. Ask members of the organization to complete a 360° evaluation of your leadership skills. Create a succession plan to aid in the transition after you leave your position of leadership. After your six-month term, deliver a 5- to 7-minute speech at a club meeting to reflect on your personal experience.

If you plan to fulfill a leadership role in a non-Toastmasters organization, you must receive advance permission from your Vice President Education.

Your speech can be persuasive, humorous, informational, or crafted in any style that appeals to you and supports your speech content.

Throughout this project you will see icons in the margins next to the text. These icons indicate additional resources available online.



Video: Sign in to Base Camp to watch a video that supports this project.



Interactive Activity: Sign in to Base Camp to complete an interactive activity.



Resource: Sign in to Base Camp to view this resource online.



Weblink: Return to your digital project when you see this icon to link to a website or Base Camp location.

For all assignment details and requirements, review the Project Checklist.

Learning in Leading in Your Volunteer Organization



Assess and Reflect

To assess and track your knowledge, complete the activity below by listing what you already know and what you wonder about the topic today. Add up to five items to each list. After you complete your project, you will have an opportunity to review your answers and add what you have learned.

Know

For example: I know the importance of recognition and reward in motivating volunteers.

Wonder

For example: I wonder how to build a strong environment of mutual respect among members of an organization.

Competencies

The following is a list of competencies that you will learn and practice in this project.

- Exhibit an understanding of the skills required to lead in a volunteer organization.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of recognition and reward in motivating volunteers.
- Build a strong environment of mutual respect with other members.
- Show integrity, competency, and character in decisions, leadership, and actions.

Volunteer Leaders and Members

One of the most important goals in any volunteer organization is to elevate members to the ranks of leaders. The nature of volunteer organizations, like Toastmasters, is a dependency on members to engage in leadership roles. This requires a high level of commitment and provides an even higher level of opportunity.

The Leader Group and the Member Group

Leader-Member Exchange Theory, or LMX, focuses on the relationships between leaders and the people they lead. Unlike other theories of leadership that focus on the skills and traits of the leader, team members, or the environment, LMX concentrates on individuals as part of a leader group or a member group.

Leader Group

The leader group in an organization is made up of individuals who volunteer for office or other leadership positions. Any office or role that involves leadership responsibilities falls into this category.

Members of an organization who participate in the leader group may simply have more time available to contribute, but they are often those individuals who do more than is expected of them. Whatever the reason they choose to lead, they are likely to be the innovators and problem solvers in their organization. Because of their participation, they very often receive more opportunity and recognition than those who remain in the member group.

Member Group

The member group is comprised of individuals who are not currently engaged in a leadership role. Any time a member moves out of a leadership role, they leave the leader group and become part of the member group. In this way, the groups are continuously evolving and changing.

Individuals content to remain a part of the member group may do so for a variety of reasons. Members may be unable to commit a larger amount of time, they may feel unprepared for handling the responsibilities of leadership, or may not be interested in a higher level of involvement. It is possible they do not see the value to be gained by participation in the leader group.

Value

Each group, both members and leaders, has an important contribution to make to an organization. It is imperative for leaders to remember that without the member group, there is no one to lead. Many volunteer organizations are for and about the members. Leaders contribute to furthering the values of the organization and facilitating the goals of its members.

General members of an organization must recognize that without those who volunteer to lead, the organization would likely fail.

Both groups are needed and contribute immeasurably to the success of any organization.

When You Lead

Members of the leader group—especially individuals who have volunteered for a leadership role over a long period of time or taken consecutive positions—may underestimate the value of the member group. The most successful volunteer leaders recognize the contribution of every member in an organization.

Trust and Mutual Respect

Establish a Positive Environment

Creating an environment of trust and mutual respect is core to building a well-run volunteer team. When your goal as a leader is to be as inclusive as possible and encourage members to contribute, all members must know they have an open invitation to increase their involvement. Because a leader has a high level of trust and respect for members, individuals in the member group will feel secure in assuming more responsibilities and eventually moving into the leader group.

Create Opportunities

When a leader has a high level of trust and respect for the member group, they are more likely to make opportunities available. By making opportunities available and encouraging involvement, the leader gives members a way of building a higher level of trust in the leader and the organization.

Acknowledge Contributions

Provide Rewards

It is important to acknowledge and reward member contributions. Developing a system for honoring contributions will help a leader track rewards and acknowledgments in order to be consistent.

Be Consistent

Consistent acknowledgment builds trust. Keeping track will help a leader avoid the common pitfall of appearing to reward certain members more than others.

Respect and Leadership

The importance of building respect between the member group and the leader group cannot be overestimated. On the surface, this may seem like a simple thing. A leader does a good job, functions with integrity, and is respected by members. Respect flows from leaders to members in the same way.

In theory it is simple, but the reality is more complex. There are several factors that contribute to an environment of mutual respect. Recognizing these factors can help both members and leaders understand the building blocks of a high-quality working relationship.

Generally, people in an organization are drawn to individuals who exhibit stronger leadership skills than they themselves possess. There are times when a leader is not as strong as individuals in the member group, but they are recognized as a leader because of status, rank, or past accomplishments.

Charisma

Most of us have had the opportunity to work with a person who draws people in by the sheer power of her charisma. Though this natural attribute does not contribute to the relationship between leaders and members, it is important to acknowledge its value. While some individuals innately possess more charisma than others, everyone can work to increase their approachability and enthusiasm.

Contribution

Volunteering is a choice. Leaders in a volunteer organization cannot force members to contribute. Though this is true in any setting, it is especially true when leaders are dependent on members to reach an organization's goals. People contribute because they have a desire to be part of something larger than themselves. The challenge for a leader is making sure members want to engage and contribute. We have already mentioned the value of reward and acknowledgment, but it is important to understand the value of respecting the members you lead.

Respect

When members feel respected, they are more likely to engage at a higher level.

Individuals will abandon a well-paying job, a prestigious assignment, or an important role even when they are well compensated if they do not feel respected for their work, their commitment, or their personal strengths. By showing respect for all members, regardless of their level of involvement, a leader builds a stronger ability to influence members to participate.

Courage

Acts of courage have a powerful influence on members of any organization. Courage is a leader's ability to act responsibly even if doing so isn't popular and opens the leader up for heavy criticism.

The smallest act of courage from a leader can build a strong rapport with individuals in the member group and encourage a sense of pride in belonging. This pride in being a part of an organization with integrity can encourage members to join the ranks of leadership.

Success

It is great to be a part of a winning team. It's also great to join the team of a leader you know is a success. Success draws people in, and leaders need to leverage not just their own success, but also the successes of their team members. Successful members tend to become successful leaders, and a generous amount of recognition helps reward current successes and encourages future accomplishments.

Loyalty

In a volunteer organization, loyalty is fundamental to success. Loyalty is built by providing members with a strong, well-defined vision. It is the vision, and the goals set out to accomplish that vision, that call members to action. To attain a high level of loyalty, a leader needs to communicate the vision of the organization and demonstrate what the member gains by helping to bring the organization's vision to life.

Trust and Commitment

Trust is at the core of leading with integrity. Trustworthiness in leadership can be defined as a combination of integrity and competency. If a leader is competent in their skills, but lacks integrity, members will not see them as trustworthy. At the same time, a leader with a high level of integrity, but a lack of competence or skill, will be viewed with an equal amount of distrust.

Another component of building a high level of trust is communication. When you think of communication, it is easy to only think of the bigger, more dramatic pieces of information, like organizational change. Often, the most important communications are the mundane, everyday correspondence that allows members, even those with little active involvement, to feel a part of the broader group. This relates back to that important sense of belonging that will help move an inactive member into the leader group.

Cultivating Leadership Skills

Commitment from membership is built at the same time as trust. When a member trusts an organization and those who lead, that member is more likely to take an opportunity to move into the leader group. In that way, leaders are the messengers for the organization. The more trustworthy the messenger, the more likely a member is to participate.

A leader's commitment to the organization and its membership is a self-fulfilling action. Leaders with a high level of commitment will encourage the same in the members of their teams. That commitment will encourage members to take leadership roles, providing growth to the member and support for the organization as a whole.

Appreciate Participation

Volunteers are most often intrinsically motivated. Intrinsic motivation comes from inside of the member in the form of a desire to participate.

Encourage and Support

Leaders in a volunteer organization are tasked with finding ways to encourage members to motivate themselves and to provide support for continued involvement.

Recognize Potential

All leaders must look for and identify highly motivated individuals. These are the people who are most likely to move from the member group into the leader group. This can be accomplished by recognizing a member's potential and skills.

Inspire Contribution

A volunteer leader's ability to influence members is an important component of encouraging involvement successfully. Take the time to praise members for their contribution and work to inspire each person to contribute at a higher level.

Acknowledge Effort

A leader needs to watch for members who are contributing above their normal level. This may be a signal that a volunteer is ready to assume more responsibility.

Provide Opportunity

Provide opportunities for every member to contribute, regardless of past involvement. When leaders work to encourage and motivate at every opportunity, they create an environment where individuals can easily move into positions of leadership.

Transfer of Knowledge

A key component to success as a leader in an organization is learning from other leaders and passing that knowledge on to members. An organization supports this transfer of knowledge by providing training. Leadership supports it by demonstrating a willingness to share.

Value of Membership

Most people join an organization first because they believe in the vision of the organization and because of the support and learning the organization provides. They stay because of what they gain by being a member.

Creating Successors

Leaders facilitate a member's commitment by being good role models and by mentoring. In supporting members in this way, leaders ensure that there are well-trained successors to move into leadership roles when they decide to take a step back and become a part of the larger membership group.

Organizational Success

The value of well-trained successors is indisputable. This type of training happens naturally, over time when leaders allow members to take the level of responsibility they find comfortable. By encouraging, supporting, training, and mentoring, leaders guarantee the continued success of their organization and growth in leadership among its members.



Watch a video on Base Camp to learn more.

Creating a Succession Plan

In Toastmasters, members in leadership roles have a set term of office. As a part of this project, you will need to fulfill a leadership role at some level of the organization. This role can be as a leader at your club, Area, District, or region and is up to you to decide the best fit for you and your skills or the skills you would like to develop.

You can also take a volunteer role in another organization with the approval of your club's Vice President Education.



As a part of this project, you need to develop a succession plan to smooth the transition when your term is complete. Use the Succession Plan to help you organize your plan or create your own.

Conducting 360° Evaluations

As a part of your project, you will need to complete a 360° evaluation. The value of a 360° evaluation is in receiving feedback from people with different perspectives on your leadership. A peer may have a different experience working with you than a team member you lead or a club officer who oversaw the outcome of your project.

There are many ways to conduct an evaluation of this type. Be sure to invite a variety of people to complete the evaluation for you, as well as completing it yourself. Include people you led, peers, and anyone at a higher level in the organization.



Use the 360° Evaluation provided. Choose the method of administration you feel is most effective, whether via email, in person, or paper-based.

Review and Apply

Before you complete the assignment, take a moment to read through the questions you see here. If you are not able to answer them comfortably, review the project.

- What skills and attributes are most important when leading in a volunteer organization?
- Why is it important to recognize and reward volunteers?
- List the steps you need to take to build a strong environment of mutual respect with other members. How can you accomplish each one?
- What is the value of showing integrity, competency, and character in decisions, leadership, and actions?
- How is leading volunteers different from leading in another type of organization?

Complete Your Assignment



Project Checklist

Now that you have read through the project, plan and prepare your speech or report. First, review your assignment.

This project includes:

- Serving in a volunteer leadership role for a minimum of six months
- Conducting a 360° evaluation of your leadership skills
- Creating a succession plan
- The Succession Plan resource
- The 360° Evaluation resource
- A 5- to 7-minute speech

The following list includes tasks for this project. Please remember, your project is unique to you. You can use the checklist here or complete the digital version in your project on Base Camp.

Identify the leadership role of your choice. If you plan to fulfill a leadership role in a non-Toastmasters organization, you must receive advance permission from your Vice President Education.

Fulfill the leadership role of your choice.

Select the group you would like to complete your 360° evaluation. This group must include representatives from a team you lead, a person or persons you reported to or who oversaw the work you completed as a leader, and at least one peer.

Distribute the 360° Evaluation resource.

Use the Succession Plan resource to create a succession plan for your office.

Schedule your speech with the Vice President Education.

Collect, review, and submit your evaluations to the Vice President Education.

Write your speech. Include information about your experience as a leader, information about how you designed your succession plan, and the impact of your 360° evaluations.

Rehearse your speech.

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Evaluation Criteria



Review the criteria for the evaluation in this project. Your evaluator will use the following scale:

5 – Exemplary 4 – Excels 3 – Accomplished 2 – Emerging 1 – Developing

Clarity

- 5 – Is an exemplary public speaker who is always understood
- 4 – Excels at communicating using the spoken word
- 3 – Spoken language is clear and is easily understood
- 2 – Spoken language is somewhat unclear or challenging to understand
- 1 – Spoken language is unclear or not easily understood

Vocal Variety

- 5 – Uses the tools of tone, speed, and volume to perfection
- 4 – Excels at using tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 3 – Uses tone, speed, and volume as tools
- 2 – Use of tone, speed, and volume requires further practice
- 1 – Ineffective use of tone, speed, and volume

Eye Contact

- 5 – Uses eye contact to convey emotion and elicit response
- 4 – Uses eye contact to gauge audience reaction and response
- 3 – Effectively uses eye contact to engage audience
- 2 – Eye contact with audience needs improvement
- 1 – Makes little or no eye contact with audience

Gestures

- 5 – Fully integrates physical gestures with content to deliver an exemplary speech
- 4 – Uses physical gestures as a tool to enhance speech
- 3 – Uses physical gestures effectively
- 2 – Uses somewhat distracting or limited gestures
- 1 – Uses very distracting gestures or no gestures

Audience Awareness

- 5 – Engages audience completely and anticipates audience needs
- 4 – Is fully aware of audience engagement/needs and responds effectively
- 3 – Demonstrates awareness of audience engagement and needs
- 2 – Audience engagement or awareness of audience requires further practice
- 1 – Makes little or no attempt to engage audience or meet audience needs

Comfort Level

- 5 – Appears completely self-assured with the audience
- 4 – Appears fully at ease with the audience
- 3 – Appears comfortable with the audience
- 2 – Appears uncomfortable with the audience
- 1 – Appears highly uncomfortable with the audience

Interest

- 5 – Fully engages audience with exemplary, well-constructed content
- 4 – Engages audience with highly compelling, well-constructed content
- 3 – Engages audience with interesting, well-constructed content
- 2 – Content is interesting but not well-constructed or is well-constructed but not interesting
- 1 – Content is neither interesting nor well-constructed

Topic

- 5 – Delivers an exemplary speech about some aspect of personal experience leading in a volunteer organization
- 4 – Delivers a compelling speech about some aspect of personal experience leading in a volunteer organization
- 3 – Shares some aspect of personal experience leading in a volunteer organization
- 2 – Mentions some aspect of personal experience leading in a volunteer organization, but does not fully address
- 1 – Speaks on a topic other than personal experience leading in a volunteer organization

Complete Your Project



Once you have delivered your speech and received your evaluation, take a minute to review what you recorded under “Know” and “Wonder” in the Assess and Reflect section at the start of this project. Then add what you have learned while working through this project. Add up to five items.

Learned

For example: I learned to understand and clearly explain how leading with integrity, competency, and character affects members of an organization.

Before You Move On

Review Your Learning

Review all the material in this project.

Deliver Your Speech

Plan, practice, and deliver your speech.

Receive Your Evaluation

Receive your evaluation and complete any other tasks required by your club.

Assess and Reflect

When all components of your assignment are finished, complete your self-reflection by adding what you have learned to the last column of the Know-Wonder-Learned activity.

Congratulations!

If you have completed every task, CONGRATULATIONS! You have completed your Leading in Your Volunteer Organization project and you are ready to move on to your next project.



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