Leadership Development In Volunteer Organizations:
Lessons From Business

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Abstract

This paper examines the leadership development practices of volunteer sports organizations, and seeks to identify leadership development models from business that could be applied to leadership development in volunteer organizations. Best practices from business are proposed for application in the non-profit sector.
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Introduction

Canadians have an enduring sense of community that connects each of us to one another. The fabric of this community is woven through our business, social and political organizations, and through the many volunteer organizations that enrich the quality of life for Canadians. The 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating showed that 6.5 million Canadians volunteered just over 1 billion hours of their time to charitable and volunteer organizations, contributing over $17 billion of volunteer effort to strengthen our community. Although volunteer organizations are an important contributor to our society, relatively little is known about the effective management and leadership of such organizations. A widespread concern of many in volunteer organizations is that the weakness of leadership development programs and the ensuing turnover among leaders is undermining the effectiveness of these organizations.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to further our understanding of leadership development in volunteer organizations. We need to examine the challenges facing leaders of these organizations, the current leadership development practices employed by these organizations, and the consequence such practices. In particular, we wish to investigate whether leadership development practices in business provide useful models for volunteer organizations. The basic premises of this paper are these:

1. The structured environment of a large business allows testing of leadership development models.

2. Successful models will endure.
3. Commercial and volunteer organizations have some elements in common.

4. Identification of commonalities allows selection of “best match” models.

The business requirement for efficiency and effectiveness implies that practices that do not provide the business with the outcomes they were seeking will not be continued. Although businesses can follow fads, if the new ideas do not produce the desired results, the business will not persevere. Development models that business implements and continues to use must be providing some value to the organization. This value will be identified through a review of current literature.

A major task of this project is to identify commonalities between business environments and volunteer organizations. The purpose of seeking these common elements is to identify the environments in which different development models are most effective.

In business settings, it is common for an organization to plan for future leadership needs, and put time and money into developing the skills of current and future managers. In contrast, leadership development in volunteer organizations is often neglected, and succession planning can be omitted entirely. This is the first hypothesis to be examined in this paper. The second is that volunteer organizations do not put efforts into leadership development. As a result, many organizations find themselves electing leaders by default. The intent of this paper is to identify the current best practices used by business to develop leadership ability in their organizations, identify differences and similarities between volunteers and employees, and suggest business practices applicable to volunteer organizations. These are the last two hypotheses explored in this paper.
Definitions

Definitions in the field of leadership can be controversial. This paper shall use the following definitions. Leader development, and leadership development will use the distinction put forth by Day (2001). Day identifies leader development as focused on specific individuals within an organization, conducted with the purpose of developing managers for the future. Leadership development Day defines as developing ability within an organization, and engaging members in leadership. Leader development has a narrow focus, while leadership development is broad. Leader development aims at a specific individual, who is being trained for a specific role within the organization. Leadership development has more of a cultural focus, with the goal of involving many members of an organization in leadership.

Discussion of differences between volunteers and employees will involve a discussion of commitment. This paper will use the model proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). According to this model, organizational commitment is composed of three components. The affective component (AC) refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. The continuance component (CC) refers to commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organization. Finally, the normative component (NC) refers to employees' feelings of obligation to remain with the organization. (Wasti 2005)

Perception of organizational support (POS) is a frequently mentioned term. This refers to employee perception of the value the organization places on their contributions and cares about them as people. Volunteer refers to an individual who donates time and
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effort to an organization with no expectation of financial compensation, as contrasted to an employee, who is financially compensated for efforts on behalf of an organization.

**Current State of Knowledge**

*Leadership Development*

Colman (2005) addressed the leadership development situation in Canada by saying that boards need to be focused on filling the leadership pipeline, considering both internal & external candidates with a goal of planning 2 or 3 years out, so that the transitions can go smoothly. Peart (2005) suggested that small and medium size enterprises suffer because of low levels of management skills and experience. He found that people were promoted because of high technical skill set and not necessarily because of their ability to lead or manage people well. To counter this problems, Peart proposed the idea of “upskilling”; adding skills necessary for future leadership roles. Allerton (1998) identifies leadership as more important than good products, and that leader development should focus on business results, not training results, using measurements such as return on investment to evaluate training. Wilson (2005) proposed that satisfaction may be improved, and retention of managers and future leaders by effective management development programs. Wilson’s research found training had a positive impact on reducing turnover, increased satisfaction with career choice and increased desire for autonomy.

One route to identifying effective development approaches is to examine approaches currently used in business. Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) propose that there are three domains of leadership; leader, member & relationship, and that leader/member
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exchange was the critical aspect of development. They point out that leader/member exchange is transactional & transformational. The transactional side of leadership focuses on the organizational objectives, while transformational side addresses the relationships between organization members. The exchange includes management functions such as material exchanges (compensation), and leadership functions with a focus on social exchanges (approval, trust, esteem). Popular development ideas aimed at the leadership functions cited by Graen and Uhl-Bien include 360 degree feedback, coaching, mentoring, leader/member exchange theory, networking, job assignments and action learning.

These current models fall into one of two categories; either leader development with a focus on development of human capital or leadership development, with a focus on social capital (Day, 2001). Leader development models are aimed at ‘self’ development, or improving the participant’s intrapersonal skills. The goal is to improve the participant’s self-awareness. These models emphasize personal knowledge, skills and abilities. Models such as 360 feedback, mentoring and coaching are frequently used to develop the skills of strong internal management candidates. These models focus on individual attributes, such as personal power, knowledge, and trustworthiness (Day, 2001). These techniques have received varying amounts of academic study, however enough information is available to identify strengths and weaknesses of each technique.

Leadership development models focus on social capital, or relationships. These models place emphasis on interpersonal skills, to create value for the organization by constructing networks of individuals to improve co-operation and exchanges. These
models promote the creation of commitments, respect and trust. Day suggests the core purpose of these models is to improve leadership skills by adding to the abilities of the organizations members as a whole. The three most popular current practices for leadership development are networking, job assignments and action learning.

The approach known as 360 degree feedback is widely used for leader development. 360 degree feedback involves evaluation from peers, subordinates, managers, customers and suppliers, which the subject of the evaluation can use to identify strengths, weaknesses and areas in which to improve. The goal of 360 degree feedback is to change self-awareness, usually that of a manager, to allow the individual to improve their relations with others in the business environment. The range of information presented to the subject of the evaluation can be comprehensive but may be overwhelming, without guidance in how to manage the information (Day, 2001). Despite the concerns about applicability, 360 degree feedback seems to create value for the organization when it is linked to organizational performance (Atwater & Waldman, 1998).

Coaching is often used to develop leaders within an organization. Coaching involves regular interactions with a designated personal coach. Coaching tends to be goal-focused and practical. It can be very intensive and personalized. Criticisms of coaching often point to questions of cost-effectiveness, and occasionally to development of internal stigma, related to the perceptions of peers and the coach/future leader relationship.

Goldsmith (2005) studied coaching and found the central variable to be the participant’s ongoing interaction & follow-up with colleagues. He found a combination
of techniques to improve the productivity of executive coaching. His model of leader development combines strategic change with execution, personal and life planning and behaviour modification. He found that who used input from peers and subordinates to develop personal goals, then followed up with these co-workers, showed significant improvement in their skills. The process Goldsmith suggests begins with a review of feedback generated by 360 degree feedback. This review can be conducted with either internal or external consultants. The participant then must identify up to three areas for improvement, and discuss these areas for improvement with key co-workers. The discussion should include a request of the colleagues to provide suggestions for how to increase effectiveness in the selected areas. Over time, the participant does personal follow-up with co-workers to get ideas for improvement. As the training concludes, co-workers complete a confidential custom-designed mini-survey, three to fifteen months later.

Goldsmith concludes with several points that are frequently made elsewhere in leadership development literature. He says that real leader development involves a process that occurs over time, and should involves a reliance on other co-workers to achieve objectives. He points out that leaders learn best from people in their own environment, particularly in a cross-cultural context. The contact between the developing leader & the coach is vital, but the location of the coach is not important. The coach can be internal or external, as long as the coach provides time, has credibility and the interactions are confidential.

Another popular leader development approach is mentoring. This is intended to be a developmental relationship between a senior, experienced leader and a protégé with
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potential to rise in the organization. The two will often develop a strong personal bond, but concern arises in regard to over-dependence on the mentor, and jealousy among peers. Garvey & Galloway (2004) reported on mentoring workshops where volunteers from corporate leadership programme took part in a two-day workshop involving discussions & exercises aimed at exploring and understanding mentoring. The workshop was run in a “mentoring way”, with everyone engaging in dialogue to explore the mentoring relationship & develop an individual sense of its implications. After the workshop, mentors started with protégés who communicated at least twice a week. The mentor offered constructive advice when ever needed, along with impartial help & support. The protégés reported they found the relationship gave them the opportunity to gain objective view from experienced manager and increased their resilience. The mentor served as sounding board for ideas and often gave food for thought. The mentor relationship helped protégés gain insights into how to adapt their work style to those around them.

Mentoring is most often associated with large businesses with deep pools of resources. Gold, Devins, Johnson (2003) studied mentoring in small business. They found that managers built ongoing relationships with those around them, mostly in social processes rather than formal mentoring relationships. This created a natural learning process, where learning was based on solving daily issues as they arose. Many small business managers learn their jobs by doing them. This means they learn what is necessary to keep the business alive. Often they will build a network of advisors such as bank staff, financial specialists and other members in their supply chain. This group forms the learning structure for the entrepreneur. Mentoring in small business tends to
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come from one of two sources; friends or knowledgeable outsiders. Friends and family may be asked for advice or help. Outsiders may be sought out for assistance with specific organizational problems. Both of these can be part of the process of developing the business.

Leadership development takes a cultural approach to development, with the goal of adding to leadership within the organization, rather than within individuals. The current popular techniques include networking, action learning and job assignments. Networking involves building connections across functions & departments within the organization. While it seems to build the organization, it is often unstructured & often ad hoc. The lack of structure makes the value of networking very difficult to measure.

Job assignments are an opportunities to stretch one’s skills. An organization can use job assignments to accelerate & widen learning of members of the organization. Difficulties arise when lack of structure results in participants losing sight of the end purpose of the re-assignments, and when conflict emerges between performance & learning. The fundamental gap in this case seems to be a question of priorities. If the priority is on learning, performance should be less important. If performance is the priority, learning can be neglected.

Action learning is project based with a specific focus, tied closely to the business. Much like job assignments, issues arise about priorities. The tasks are often under time pressures, with a focus on results rather than learning (Day 2001).

Much attention has been paid to the leadership of Jack Welch at GE. Tichy and Cohen (2000) propose a model built on the Welch management of GE. This model is built on the premise that Welch remade GE into a teaching organization, able to create
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leaders at all levels of the organization. A teaching organization is based on the environment in which it operates and the skills and abilities of its leader. Welch built several elements into the structure of GE that created the teaching organization. The first is a leadership pipeline. This includes career maps for all professional level employees, with assessments of their current skills and plans for adding to their skill sets. The second element is a coaching program for the top leaders. The coaching process includes very direct written feedback on both their business and people skills. The third stage is very similar to descriptions of networking, in that it involves an executive council that meets quarterly to share experiences and develop future plans. This forces members to broaden their thinking beyond just their area of work to the entire company. Human resources systems at GE are built to reinforce this model. Compensation and career potential are tied to an individual's ability to develop leadership among subordinates.

Tichy and Cohen propose a three-step process to build a teaching organization. The process begins by recognizing that in order to have effective strategy and execution, the people in the organization must be developed to create the strategy and implement it. This places development on par with execution and strategy in the priorities of the organization. The next stage requires leaders to articulate their points of view in a manner understandable to others in the organization. This requires leaders to be able to clearly explain their vision and their values, as well as to be able to communicate their energy and decision-making processes. The final stage in the process is to develop formal structures in the organization to ensure that teaching is institutionalized. This requires everyone in the organization to understand and adopt the company values,
process and ideas. In commitment terms, leaders must build normative commitment among their company members.

Case Studies in Leadership Development

Many researchers have used case studies to examine leader and leadership development. While case histories are limited to one environment, they can provide a glimpse of potential applications of particular models. One early study was by Davis (1986), who looked at Latino community leader development.

Davis defined a community leader as someone in the community who served as a source of advice or a role model, regardless of his or her formal position. His study focused on leader development, which he explained as adding skills and abilities which enhanced understanding of the community and enabled the person to become as source of support for the community and a role model within the community. Davis identified three elements to effective leader development. These were individual development, acquiring skills needed for organizing & advocating; community benefit, experiential activities that bring about positive change; and ongoing accountability, which means that individuals must make and demonstrate a personal commitment to the community over time. When all three elements were present, leader development was enhanced.

Spangler (1999) analyzed midlevel management development in an American community college district. The project was intended to address specific gaps in senior management development. The program had to broaden the participants awareness of different models of management, develop human resources for the organizations leaders, and create a positive environment for professional development. It was hoped that the
program would improve communication and morale among managers as well as enhance their abilities in long range planning and human resource management.

The final program was an eighteen month long program with three areas of focus – administrative issues, survival skills and applied knowledge. In the process of completing the program, Spangler found participants turned into friends, abilities to influence peers were enhanced, and attitudes broadened.

One intriguing finding from the Spangler case is the identification of a protocol for creating an effective leadership development program. Spangler found the process should begin with a collaborative group willing to take on additional responsibility. The group should take a project management approach to creating the leadership development program. This includes creating timelines, identifying roles and responsibilities, and creating communication channels that include upper management. Once the program structure is approved, a plan for implementation and evaluation should be created. Participants must have appropriate communication channels available to them, which should include updates of information for supervisors. Program evaluation information should be widely available, as should contributions made by program participants. This protocol is the first of several presented in the literature.

Bhatta (2001) studied a senior management development program in New Zealand. This program was focused on improving the capabilities of senior management within public service sphere. The program had moderate success in its target of identifying, tracking and targeting managers for development opportunities. Bhatta found several key themes in the study. The first was the need for buy-in from top level managers. The second was a blend of classroom & on-the-job training techniques,
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including 360 degree feedback, mentoring & coaching, to address a target set of skills.

The final key was environmental. The project outcomes were improved when diversity and accountability were built into the environment.

Salopek (2004) conducted a case study of Blanchard Valley Health Association who had found, after a needs assessment, that they had supervisors and managers who lacked work-related leadership skills. The health authority created a program intended to present basic management skills and to assist managers in applying those skills.

This program combined several development methods. Participants worked with their sponsor to create personal learning objectives. Participants underwent a 360-degree analysis before starting the program, at the conclusion of the eight week program and again seven months later”. Accountability was left to the protégé, who was to initiate, and maintain, contact with the mentor.

Salopek identified five contributors to the success of the program. The program had executive buy-in and visible support, there were clear ties to business needs, action learning with concrete developmental activities, and the learner held responsibility. The final contributor was the creation of prestige around the program, making the program desirable.

Commitment

Commitment has been the subject of frequent examination in studies of leadership development, in both volunteer and business organizations. Early studies of commitment in the social sciences literature viewed commitment as mainly attitudinal in nature (Blau 1964; Homans 1961; Thibaut and Kelley 1959). Later authors broadened the view of commitment by including two categories--behavioural intent and psychological
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attachment (Jobanson 1973; Rosenblatt 1977; Mowday et al. 1982). These authors conceived of commitment both as an attitude (an internal tendency or willingness to maintain the relationship with an organization) and as a behaviour (the efforts that an individual makes to strengthen the relationship).

Meyer and Allen (1984) distinguished between affective and continuance commitment by identifying affective commitment as the emotional attachment to the organization and continuance commitment as the perceived costs of leaving the organization. Subsequently, Meyer and Allen (1990) addressed the feelings of obligation to remain in an organization by adding normative commitment to their model. These three constructs have been explored by a wide variety of research studies.

Current theory on commitment presents three types of commitment. These are affective commitment, cognitive commitment (previously referred to as continuance commitment) and normative or obligation-based commitment. Sharma, Young & Wilkinson (2001) provide effective operational definitions of the constructs. “Affective commitment is based on affect motives such as emotional attachment, belonging and respect for the partner. It manifests (itself?) in the form of a liking to develop and strengthen the relationship with another person or group” (p2). “Attitudinal commitment involves an economic calculation. Two types of attitudinal commitment can be distinguished - positive and negative. Attitudinal commitment is negative when a tendency to maintain a relationship develops because of the costs and penalties associated with switching. A positive attitudinal commitment develops when a partner stays in the relationship to realize certain economic gains or benefits” (p3). “Normative or obligation based commitment emerges from a sense of responsibility towards others with whom one
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interrelates (Allen and Meyer 1990). While this type of cognitive commitment does not involve an economic calculation like locked-in commitment and value based cognitive commitment, it does involve another type of calculation – deciding whether it is morally appropriate to continue the current relationship or not” (p4).

The three part theory of commitment has been extensively studied by Meyer and his colleagues. His early studies often focused on retention, but Meyer (1998) examined the relationship between workplace training and development and affective commitment. A positive relationship was found between employee growth experiences, feelings of recognition, and their desire to further develop at work, and their affective commitment to their organization. This relationship was stronger when the organization was seen as supporting the employee experiences.

Some researchers link transformational leadership and commitment. Dvir (2004) examined the effects of transformational leadership in terms of the formation of emotional bonds to an organization. Dvir cited previous research in establishing a foundation for this relationship. The creation and implementation of a vision is the main technique that transformational leaders use to inspire followers to perform exceptionally well (Awamleh and Gardner, 1999; Baum et al., 1998). A vision may provide an interpretive frame of shared meaning for the organization members (Holladay and Coombs, 1994). Articulation of a vision by charismatic leaders presents goals in terms of the values they represent. These values are ones that are difficult to justify on pragmatic or narrowly rational grounds. Instead, they represent transcendental or transrational ideals. Doing so makes action oriented toward the accomplishment of these goals more meaningful to the followers' self-concepts (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Shamir et al.,
By focusing attention on a meaningful vision, the leader operates on the emotional and spiritual resources of the organization, rather than on its physical resources (Bennis and Nanus, 1997). According to Oswald et al. (1994), a strategic vision must be salient for participants. For a vision to be salient, organizational members must feel that a clear vision has been articulated; that the leadership of the company shares the vision; and that the vision is appropriate. (Dvir, 2004)

Dvir (2004) discusses the psychological link between employees and organizations using the three dimensional model of commitment developed by Allen. The Dvir study examined the impact of a strong, clear vision, built by the CEO and widely adopted by the members of the organization. This study included 183 employees in the Israeli high-tech industry. When the vision went beyond achievement to include social values, affective commitment among employees was increased, and was found to be unrelated to their continuance commitment. This study demonstrated that the widely held belief in the importance of vision had a real impact on emotional commitment of employees, especially when the vision included social values.

Stinglhamber & Vandenberghhe (2003) investigated sources of perceived organizational support and the impact of this support on affective commitment. They cited the impact of the reciprocity norm on employee obligation to the organization. High support created high affective commitment and increased efforts at work. The perceived organizational support also met employee needs for recognition and esteem. This emotional satisfaction increased the affective ties to the organization. Combining the impact of these two effects leads to a positive attitude towards both the workplace and the organization, and continues the increase in affective commitment (Stinglhamber &
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Vandenberghe, 2003). This study indicated a cyclical nature to affective commitment, as increases in this emotional bond to the organization led to positive workplace impacts that further increased the bond.

Building on the value of a clearly communicated vision and the affective commitment that builds on the vision, Costa (2003) explored workplace trust and team effectiveness. This study assessed effectiveness in terms of perceived task performance, team satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Costa found that high work team effectiveness indicated high perceptions of task performance, high team satisfaction, high attitudinal commitment & low continuance commitment. (I thought attitudinal and continuance commitment were the same). Work team trust was particularly strongly associated with the commitment to the organization. When work team trust was low, levels of attitudinal commitment tended to decrease, while more calculative (continuance) commitment tended to rise.

Lee & Bruvold (2003) proposed that the different forms of organizational commitment (affective and continuance) may be related to perceived investment in employee development. Their study sought to examine the employee emotional attachments to the organization (affective commitment) and their bonds for external reasons (continuance commitment), in relation to employee view of employer support. The results suggest that employees will be more satisfied with the job and more affectively committed to an organization when the employer commits to developing employees’ skills and competency, which in turn reduces their intent to leave the organization. Perceived investment in employee development was found to encourage affective commitment and job satisfaction, rather than continuance commitment.
Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) took a similar approach when they looked at psychological contracts and employee perceptions of organizational support. These two concepts are seen as key aspects of employee evaluation of their relationship with their employer. The psychological contract may include any aspect of exchange between the employee and the employer (e.g., wages, benefits, loyalty), while the perceived organizational support includes both emotional and tangible conditions (recognition, job enrichment, enhanced working conditions). These two aspects of employee thought encompass a wide range of exchanges between employees and employers.

This research contrasted perceived organizational support with the psychological contract. The researchers interpreted perceived organizational support to involve reciprocity theory, much like Stinglhamber & Vandenberghe (2003). On the other hand, the psychological contract was seen to be based on the gap between what employees felt they were promised and what they actually received from the organization. Coyle-Shapiro and Conway believed that reciprocity was based on the gap, not the perceived organizational support.

The results of their study did not support their gap-based theory. They concluded that employee citizenship behaviour, defined as behaviours which extend beyond role requirements to the benefit of the organization, was motivated by the support employees had received in the past and what they anticipated receiving in the future. Coyle-Shapiro and Conway identified these behaviours as due to employee feelings of indebtedness and obligation, which other researchers label as normative commitment.

The reasons for employee citizenship behaviour were further explored by Wasti (2005). The Wasti study refined the Allen model of commitment somewhat, to give
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operational definitions. Wasti explained affective commitment as the emotional side of employee commitment to an organization. Employees with strong affective commitment stay with an organization because they want to and identify with the organization. Continuance commitment, the commitment based on the cost of leaving, was defined as a need to stay with the organization. Normative commitment, the feelings of obligation to the organization, was explained as the feelings of employees that they ought to stay with the employer.

Wasti cited commitment profile work done by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002), which found that low continuance combined with high affective and normative commitments seemed to show better outcomes for the organization than seen from employees with only affective commitment. The suggestion for future research was to examine the impact of continuance commitment on the other two forms, and to test the impact of normative commitment.

Wasti found two factors with significant impact on commitment profiles. Turnover intentions, or retention, is a major focus of commitment research, so it is perhaps not surprising that this variable accounted for much of the variance among profiles. Citizenship behaviours, which Wasti called “boosterism” were found to be significant factors. “Boosterism” was identified as a unique factor, in that it is completely discretionary for the employee. Wasti points to this discretionary aspect as an area requiring further research. Other studies, focused on volunteers, have presented this idea of boosterism, but identified it as “personal sacrifice” (Dawley, Stephens and Stephens, 2004) and as solidary (Slaughter and Home, 2004).
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Siders, George & Dharwadkar (in press) took a slightly different approach to evaluating commitment. They looked at customer retention related to executive commitment to the customer. The premise behind this study was that for an employee to be committed to an organization, the organization must clearly define job performance and reward that performance. The findings showed that commitment to a customer improved the chances of retaining that customer, but also as commitment increased, so do the sales executive’s attempts to satisfy broad customer requirements. Siders et al took this to indicate changes outside the organizations compensation model, in that these issues dealt with market share and product refinements beyond the sales measures.

The final outcome of the Siders study was advice to managers. Siders et al suggest that managers need to carefully examine the performance goals of their organization and the compensation rewards for these goals. Based on the differences between the goals and the different motives of committed sales executives, managers need to reinforce the behaviours that achieve organizational goals.

A study by Vandenberghe, Bentein and Stinglhamber (2002) attempted to integrate perceived organizational support with the leader/member exchange theory. Their research was based on the premise that perceived organizational support is based on the view employees develop of how much value their organization places on both their contributions and their value as people. When employees feel their organization values and supports them, the employees address this perceived debt with increased affective commitment.

The results of this study suggested there were three levels of the organization that were relevant to affective commitment. Overall organizational support was relevant to
affective organizational commitment, while leader/member exchange contributed to affective commitment to a supervisor. Affective commitment to the work group was not affected by either of these factors, but was solely based on group cohesiveness.

One aspect of group cohesiveness is shared goals. Payne & Huffman (2005) studied the impact of mentoring on affective commitment and shared goals. They found a strong correlation between shared organizational goals and values and affective commitment. Mentoring was found to enhance the adoption of organizational goals. The relationship between goals and commitment was proposed as one reason for lower turnover in organizations that use mentoring programs. Payne & Huffman found protégé’s had higher affective and continuance commitment than their non-mentored peers, one year after the mentoring relationship ended.

Retention can be a major problem for an organization. Hadjikhani & Thilenius (2002) look at commitment as the bond between firms and employees, and trust as the glue for the employer/employee relationship. Their research suggests that the overall commitment profile is based on the partners mutual beliefs in the benefits of the relationship and the value to maintaining the relationship.

The above study supported the findings of a Meyer and Smith (2000) study of human relation management practices. This study found that the greatest impact on affective commitment was from the belief among employees that the organization was motivated by a caring, concerned attitude and the desire to be fair when dealing with employees. Of all the human relation management practices reviewed in the Meyer and Smith study, the best predictors of affective commitment was well evaluated career development practices.
Perceived organizational support was the focus of Meyer et al (2002). This study reinforced arguments from the 1980’s that if an organization wanted affective commitment from its employees, the organization must demonstrate its commitment to those employees. Fair treatment and strong leadership were two attributes sought by employees. Meyer et al found a strong correlation between organizational justice, transformational leadership and affective commitment. They postulate that the norm of reciprocity may have bearing on affective commitment. This study also found that the experiences at work that led to affective commitment also led to normative commitment, although the correlation was not as strong.

The model of commitment applied in many of the aforementioned studies is not without criticism. Swailes (2002) questions the distinction between commitment and moral involvement. Swailes posits that pure moral involvement occurs when individuals independently adopt organizational norms as their own, while social moral involvement occurs when social pressures result in the adoption and internalization of organizational norms. Swailes points out that the popular commitment model neglects behavioural commitment, which is based on bonds formed by past behaviour and actions. When actions are public, irrevocable and performed freely, individuals can become committed to the organization. Swailes suggests that the popular model of commitment encompasses attitudes towards the organization, but does not address the impact of past behavioural.

Swailes also questions the measurement of commitment. Feelings of belonging are personal and individuals may choose to not reveal personal factors. Swailes contends these hidden factors can only be assessed through interpretative research. More general
feelings towards the workplace may be based on moral values, social situations and economic arrangements. Swailes is confident in the ability of commitment scales to evaluate these general feelings. Where Swailes is least confident in commitment research is in the “black box” of organizational commitment, where attitude and behaviour combine. Swailes contends that the existing models do not address the shifting commitment profiles in this element of research.

**Commitment in For-Profit and Not-For-Profit Organizations**

Research on organizational commitment has been concentrated on for-profit organizations, however, Dawley, Stephens & Stephens (2004) applied the Meyer and Allen commitment scale to leaders in Chambers of Commerce. This study applied the research on organizational commitment and motivation to volunteers, and showed the commitment scale can be applied farther than the workplace. The study found all three type of commitment, affective, normative and continuance, were distinct constructs that were relevant to understanding the motivation and commitment of volunteers. They did find one significant difference between paid employees and volunteer, which was related to continuance commitment and personal sacrifice. They found that volunteers had higher tolerances for personal sacrifices to the organization. The differences in personal sacrifice appear to be related to differing motivations between volunteers and paid employees.

Catano, Pond & Kelloway (2001) investigated commitment and involvement with a study of volunteer leaders compared to leaders in unions. They found higher levels of psychological involvement and commitment in the volunteer leaders. Their study also led them to propose that importance of the relationship between leaders and non-leaders
was enhanced in the organization where the member had the choice to withdraw from the organization. The study went on to explore this relationship and leadership style.

Leaders were classified as transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders were those who led through rewards or punishment, while transformational leaders led through support won by their personal characteristics and their strong vision. The study tied leadership to the psychological involvement construct. Catano et al postulate that since members should identify with the goals of a voluntary organization, leaders should have higher psychological involvement than members, because of the extra effort leadership requires. The study found that leaders in volunteer organizations used transformational leadership to build support for the organization. The union leaders tended to use transactional leadership styles. The recommendation from the study was that volunteer organizations should emphasize the nature of their values and goals to attract and retain members.

Discovering motives for volunteering was the focus of Zappala & Burrell (2001). They used the Volunteer Functions Inventory to study volunteers at an American Charitable foundation. This study found that volunteers who were motivated by the belief that volunteering would enhance their career opportunities volunteered more time per month than volunteers without a career motive. Volunteers seeking psychological growth volunteered more time than those without this motive. Volunteers motivated by altruism spent less time per month volunteering than those volunteers not motivated by altruism. This was also the case for volunteers motivated by social needs. The results of this study suggest that an organization attempting to develop a committed volunteer pool would benefit by identifying career and growth benefits for those volunteers.
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An Australian study compared long term volunteers to people who volunteer for a single event. Slaughter & Home (2004) were interested in retention of volunteers, so looked at matching motives and tasks. Early research in this area had indicated that volunteers tended to bring both altruistic and egoistic motives, but the volunteers were not able to clearly distinguish between the different motives. Slaughter & Home identified different categories of motives, which they called purposive, solidary, traditional and commitments. Purposive motives relate to contributing to the community, solidary relate to the group, tradition relates to family expectation of how one uses free time, and commitment relates to the blend of external expectations and personal skills. They found that commitment motives based on the perceived value of an individual's contributions and skills to an organization, was relevant to event volunteers. This suggests that organizations should recognize the skill contributions of volunteers to enhance volunteer retention.

Event volunteers were found to have somewhat different motives than long-term volunteers. Short-term volunteers are often motivated by the opportunity to learn new skills, while long-term volunteers are often motivated by the belief that their actions are beneficial to society. This suggests that a manager of volunteers should look for changes in the motives of volunteers over time. Changing tasks of individuals could well result in improved retention, because of the opportunity for personal development.

Although the literature indicates that there are commitment differences between paid employees and volunteers, there are common elements shared by for-profit organizations and volunteer organizations. Brickerhoff (1994) points out skills that transfer between organizational environments. Brinkerhoff's list of common elements
Lessons from Business

for leaders includes risk assessment, marketing, financial acumen, the ability to experiment and a desire to continually improve.

Risk assessment skills, according to Brinkerhoff, include the ability to quantify risk and evaluate risk and return, especially regarding the use of debt. Marketing skills focus on customer identification and management. Financial skills address understanding what the numbers mean and evaluating the financial mix. Experimentation, in Brinkerhoff’s study, refers to the ability to implement, monitor and assess change, including empowerment of subordinates. His final point, continual improvement, refers to a positive attitude towards on-going learning. All these skills are developed in the business setting and apply equally well in not-for-profit and volunteer settings, according to Brinkerhoff.

Leadership Development Practices

If the skills from business management are equally useful in volunteer settings, it would be beneficial to establish the most effective approaches to leader and leadership development, in order to apply those models to volunteer settings. Fulmer and Wagner (1999) discuss the strategy behind leadership development. They suggest that leadership development should be closely linked with organizational strategy, and should support the long-term strategy of the organization. Their study indicates an organization should identify the competencies needed in leaders, then develop those competencies within the organization. Human resource practices should include academic education and job experience. The best practices identified by Fulmer and Wagner show formal links between assessment, development and succession planning. These links include
coaching and feedback. Key ingredients to successful leadership development models were top-level support and on-going evaluation of the impact of the development process.

A different vision of leadership development was proposed by Vivien (1998), with a model of collaborative development. Vivien identified three realms of development; education, business and personal. Vivien saw education as addressing the thinker role of a leader, focused on the intellectual demands on a modern leader. Business was the doing role of a manager; planning and controlling organizational activities. In this role, the manager is the trainee, learning new skills to apply to business tasks. The personal side of development is aimed at the self and social development of the manager as an individual working as part of life's experience.

Vivien saw the challenges for business to be the need for leadership development to preserve or improve competitiveness, which calls for on-going learning, led by senior managers. Leader skills must be transferable, so training providers must personalize the training of current and future leaders, yet organizations should develop training and development infrastructures.

The Vivien study concludes with a checklist of guidelines for building effective development programs. Vivien takes a long-term view of training, and begins with a dialogue to agree on goals and measures of success. The program evaluation criteria, as well as individual project criteria are part of the early stage discussion. Every individual should be managed as a project, with a project manager and individualized development plans. Communication is a top priority of the development process. The development needs of everyone in the organization should be recognized, and training should evolve over time as new practices are recognized and implemented.
Lessons from Business

The need for development of leaders to meet future needs of an organization was only part of a study by Noer (1998). Noer says that the ability to lead transitions will be a necessity for business leaders, and says that executives need to take responsibility for their own development. These executives should follow the ten step strategy outlined by Noer. The first step is to get away from a situation where power is vested in the individual by virtue of their position, and to get involved in leading volunteers. Leading volunteers, according to Noer, provides the opportunity to work with people who choose to be part of the organization, have different interests, but have a common goal to achieve. This blend provides developing leaders with an opportunity to hone their leadership skills. The remaining steps suggested by Noer include taking courses, finding a mentor, completing a 360-degree feedback, taking a sensitivity training course, learning to develop a dialogue, and building an intensive feedback system.

Lawler (2000) takes a different approach to leadership development. The Lawler article proposes a consortium approach to developing leaders. The consortium idea is to blend several non-competing organizations together with a training provider to build a development program that fits the participants specific needs. This process improves the training process by creating linkages between participants. Although Lawler does not call this process networking, it fits the description of networking described by Day (2000).

A unique model for leadership development is proposed by Fairholm (2004). Fairholm suggests leadership development should focus on culture and relationships more than controls and measurement. This approach is based on a science model called autopoiesis, which is a process in which a system creates its own organization and
structures itself. The intent of the science metaphor is to call attention to need for leaders to better understand their environment in order to identify the skills and attitudes that can make leadership training a practical exercise. Using the term autopoiesis is intended to focus development on how developing an individual can enhance achievement of organizational goals. Fairholm lists four technologies that contribute to this process; free information flow, feedback loops, a focus on relationships and building trust.

Fairholm discusses the need for leaders to work well with ambiguity, especially in public organizations, and the need for leaders to accept that they influence organizational life rather than decide it. In order to achieve both comfort with ambiguity and recognition of lack of control, Fairholm suggests a goal of leadership development is to learn to ask the right questions in order to broaden understanding.

The science model put forth by Fairholm sets the organizational ideal to be self-motivated followers. When followers are developed enough to organize themselves to work towards mutual goals, the leader has been successful. To achieve this ideal, the leader must be able to lead the organization through transitions and ambiguous situations. This requires the leader to recognize learning opportunities and use them to work towards organizational objectives.

The third aspect of the Fairholm science model is values. Values are the basis for vision, which is the core for organizational actions. Leaders must create and refine the vision of the organization, communicate it and ensure it permeates the organization and drives the objectives and activities of the organization. The final task of the leader is to shape, guide and support the members of the organization. With the vision as a shared motive, leaders encourage the growth and development of others within the organization.
Succession Planning

Given the range of training methods available, the next question is how they are being used. Busine and Watt (2005) examined succession planning, which they define as the process of identifying individuals with strong potential, then providing those individuals with extra development opportunities to prepare them for leadership roles that may emerge within the organization. They found that 41% of Australian organizations did not have a succession management system in place, compared to 36.4% of businesses in other countries they surveyed (USA, UK, Germany, France, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong). In their study, they found one common practice to be the use of talent pools. The talent pool is made up of organization members who are offered accelerated development.

Their survey was a follow-up to a study conducted 2 years earlier, asking business leaders to identify their top business priorities. The 2003 survey found that improving or leveraging company talent was not in the top five priorities, unlike the 2001 survey. Their study concluded that many organizations had a development program, succession planning was often defined as preparing one replacement to take over for a specific top executive (Busines and Watt, 2005). A successful executive was defined by: specific job challenges, organizational knowledge, capabilities, and personal styles and/or attributes.

The Busine and Watt study identified common elements of the most effective development strategies. These elements include a combination of job assignments (lasting 6 months – 2 years), short-term experiences, targeted training and/or executive education and professional executive coaching.
Zenger, Ulrich and Smallwood (2000) suggest an approach to leadership development that focuses on the process rather than the methods. They propose that truly effective leadership development begins with identification of the purpose and desired outcomes of the program for the specific organization, with its individual culture and values. Once top-level management have agreed to the vision for the program, create a scorecard for development, reflecting the attributes and results desired by the organization. The scorecard can clearly demonstrate the connections between skills and results, which gives purpose to the leadership development program, and motivates the trainee.

The methods must be relevant to the organization, rather than abstract or theoretical exercises. Training activities should be intense, with a focus on skills that can be put into practice and used throughout the organization. Participants must be accountable for their development, so effective feedback channels must be developed. Participants should train with peers, but training should involve the most talented and respected members of the organization. The best training is in realistic situations for the organization in which the participant may fail, but allows the participant to learn from failure.

**Evaluating Leadership Development Programs**

With so many different ideas about what constitutes effective leadership development programs, what criteria can be used to identify best practices? Christian-Carter (2002) proposed a strategy to use when identifying benchmarks for leadership development. This strategy begins by recognizing the need to include organizational culture and specific organizational needs in the assessment process. Christian-Carter also
calls attention to the need to carefully identify two types of competencies; personal attributes that can be sought out in recruiting and enhanced through development programs aimed at high level achievement, and basic abilities needed to perform effectively in the workplace.

After these steps, Christian-Carter provides a checklist for benchmarking. The process began by an examination of organizational culture, and the objectives identified in that stage must be followed. If information does not enhance knowledge or is of questionable validity, do not use the information. Keep the evaluation process as simple as possible, but involve peers, subordinates and superiors in the analysis. Secure feedback from senior management early in the evaluation process, to ensure the direction taken meets organizational goals. Keep an objective perspective when collecting and analyzing information. Translate jargon into language appropriate for your organization. Involve stakeholders in the analysis of data, and use the benchmark in a supportive manner.

The “don’t” part of the checklist reminds the researcher to avoid seeking information to support a favorite theory, and to carefully separate qualitative data from quantitative data. The final reminder is to seek practical recommendations that the organization can implement.

Shelton (2005) proposes an alternate approach to evaluating best practices. Shelton begins by asking if the vision is understood by all participants, and if it is linked clearly to the development path. The second criterion is to evaluate the extent of involvement and participation in the program. Measurement and accountability are next examined, with an eye on accountability for participants and financial return from the...
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program. The program design is evaluated for relevance and credibility, as are the presenters of the program. Shelton suggests confirming the take-away value for participants in terms of what can be applied in their organization. The final check is an overall assessment of the impact and benefits of the program to the organization.

A more straightforward approach to identifying best practices is proposed by Mercer (2005). Mercer identifies three critical components to effective leadership development programs. The first is to see how well the program blends individual development with achievement of organizational business objectives. The second is how well the program fits with the organization's succession plan. The final component is the quality of the development experience. Mercer proposes that most development occurs on the job through experience and coaching, so the best developmental experiences push a leader outside his or her comfort zone. With this premise in mind, Mercer supports experiential or action learning, where leaders learn by doing.

The model Mercer puts forth for succession planning is based on the Boeing model. Boeing has a plan in place for every senior executive. The plan includes career paths for individuals, alternate choices to the primary candidate, and a list of experiences the replacement candidates should have before assuming the new leadership position. This model includes aligning leadership development with corporate strategy, sharing of best practices within the organization, and accountability through direct business results. The purpose to the succession plan at Boeing is to enhance the competitive position of the company by having talented trained people ready to lead the organization.

Fulmer, Gibbs and Goldsmith (2000) conducted a study to benchmark leadership development practices in American business. Their study found that best-practice
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companies tied leadership development to their business strategy, and saw leadership as a source of competitive advantage. This study proposed five critical steps to connect leadership development to organizational strategy: awareness, anticipation, action, alignment and assessment.

Awareness is a blend of environmental scanning and internal evaluation. The external scanning includes monitoring change and opportunity related to the business, but also seeks out new developments in management tools and techniques. Attention is paid to how other organizations deal with their environments. The internal evaluation starts with the 360 feedback process, but includes customer feedback. Organization leaders are included in the internal evaluation process, in order to capture their experience and share their abilities.

Anticipation refers to a forward-looking focus to the development program. This steps challenges leaders to anticipate future developments for their industry and their organization. Anticipatory tools such as focus groups and Delphi planning groups are used to create an envisioned future. Action is the application of leadership training. This may be applying real business issues in a classroom setting or applying classroom techniques in the actual business setting. Since the actual business situation has increased complications and costs for the organization, the learners may work a step away from the actual situation, but report to the actual client or manager.

Alignment refers to linking leadership development programs to succession planning. The organization should develop formal links between the program and the participants career path. The Fulmer study found some evidence of integration of
Lessons from Business

assessment, development, feedback, coaching and succession planning. This relates closely to the leadership pipeline developed at GE under Welch.

The final stage of the development program is assessment. Best-practice companies always monitor the impact of their development programs. Assessments are conducted to include various points of view ranging from program participants to HR staff to consultants. The exact people involved vary between organizations, but generally include a concerted attempt to secure feedback from a wide range of parties related to the program participant.

Fulmer, Gibbs and Goldsmith conclude their report with the observation that although not all best-practice organizations incorporate leadership development into strategy, all do practice the five steps proposed in the Fulmer model. Despite the variety of approaches to leadership development used in the best-practices companies, all share the common strategic goal of developing leaders to create competitive advantage.

Research questions:

1. Do volunteer organizations have a problem with leadership and management?
2. Is the problem related to their leadership or management development practices?

As reported in the introduction, replacing the efforts of volunteers with paid staff in Canada would cost over $17 billion annually. The number of volunteers in Canada declined thirteen percent between 1997 and 2000. Effective leadership should have an impact on member retention and organizational success. The first research task for this
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paper is to determine if there are problems with leadership and management, and the role of development practices in those problems.

3. What are “best practices” in business?

4. Is there a model from business that could be used by volunteer organizations to improve their leadership and or management?

North American businesses make a significant investment in developing leaders. During the period in which volunteerism declined, North American business worked towards becoming more efficient and more effective. This paper endeavors to identify the most effective practices applied to businesses, in order to suggest practices that could improve the management and leadership of volunteer organizations.

Methodology

Sample

To determine what leadership and leader development approaches might be most applicable to volunteer organizations, a sample of volunteer organizations was studied. The organizations were selected based on the following criteria. All the organizations:

1. are made up solely of volunteers, (no paid staff positions)
2. have a goal or goals related to athletic high performance, and
3. are community-based organizations, located in Prince George.
4. are listed in the Prince George Leisure and Education Guide.

The organizations chosen for study are involved in sports that lead to Olympics, and have had success with either athletes or coaches participating at a national team level.
**Research Plan**

Current and past leaders of the organization who held the position of president of the organization will be interviewed. Topics of discussion in the interview include the mission of the club, approaches to leadership development, succession planning, how the club measures success, and member retention. (See Appendix ?? for interview questions). The information gained from the interviews will be combined with the research on commitment to identify strategies that could be beneficial for the organizations future development.

**Results**

These results are based on a very small sample of sports organizations in Prince George, British Columbia. The organizations vary in size, but all serve a wide range of ages in their community, and are led by volunteers.

**Organization Profiles**

Organization 1 has existed for over fifty years and gone through several restructurings on route to its current form. Membership has been close to or over one thousand since 1998. Programs for youth are only part of the club’s activities. The club believes it has been successful in retaining members, as approximately thirty percent of its current members have been members of the club for more than five years. This is one measurement of success for the club. Other measures of success include the number and variety of
programs they offer, the positive attitude of the membership towards the organization, and their strong financial situation. The club recently completed an expansion project that cost close to five hundred thousand dollars. The project was completed without incurring debt. Success is also related to achievements of athletes, both current and former members of the club. The club has members who have won national age-level championships, former Olympians, and former members coaching the National Ski Team. This club regularly hosts provincial events, and has hosted provincial, Western Canadian and National Championship events.

Organization 2 began in 1973, and is aimed primarily at young athletes. The club average over two hundred members each year, with about forty percent of their members being new to the organization. As the athletes gain experience, they are offered the opportunity to take on coaching roles with younger athletes. This has been a measure of success for the organization, as these young coaches are seen to be re-investing in the club, and several have gone on to careers in coaching. Over thirty percent of the “graduates” of the club have pursued education in either human kinetics or physical education. Athletes from this club have performed well at provincial and national levels. The organization has had more than sixty athletes receive scholarship offers in Canada and the US. Despite the high-performance aspect of the organization, they measure success more by the long-term achievements of their members than by the short-term. The leader of the organization says that “education buys a lifetime; awards buy a moment.”
Organization 3 began in the 1970's, and has also gone through several different forms as its sport has evolved. They have over one hundred members of whom sixty five are youth in elementary or high school. Ten percent of their members have been members more than five years. Their primary source of coaches is parents of athletes, who are sponsored by the club to take a National Coaching Certification Program. Club members have gone on to the National team, and several have competed or coached at the Olympic games. The club measures athletic success by achievement of personal goals. All athletes set personal goals for the season, and success is measured against these personal accomplishments. The club has no formal goals for the organization as a whole.

Organization 4 is rebuilding, after a huge loss of membership and leadership. The club began in 1993 and was maintaining membership at more than forty athletes. A recent crisis resulted in a drop to only eight members. Membership in March stood at thirty five, five of whom are adults. One major focus of the current leadership is increasing membership. Success is measured in part by surviving the crisis, but also by the recruitment of an internationally accredited and certified club coach. Member success is related to personal achievements, with senior athletes having won medals at World Masters Championships. The leader of the organization intends to focus on increasing membership and stabilizing the coaching staff before developing long-term plans, as the current short-term crisis must be addressed before the focus becomes long-range.
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Leadership Challenges

The organizations studied are managed by volunteers, and are seasonal clubs, meaning none of the clubs have year-round programs. The clubs surveyed all have youth programs as either their primary focus or as one of their main programming areas. The impact of this is that member development is a primary focus of each club. Three of the clubs focus their efforts on improving the technical skills of the athletes in the organization. The fourth club has a more adult membership than youth members, but puts a great deal of energy and effort into youth programming. The result for these organizations is that much of their effort is devoted to member development, often at the cost of leader development. As one leader said, "(our mission is) to strive for personal bests, to develop the ability to lead and to pass (those) skills on". This leader went on to speak about the focus on learning over performance within his organization by saying, "education buys a lifetime, awards buy a moment".

The make-up of the organization has a significant impact on the management. Several organizations are made up largely of students from elementary and secondary schools. In these organizations, the Boards and executive consists primarily of their parents. These are action boards, not leadership boards, so the members tend to be involved because they have a passion for the sport and want to support the organization for the sake of their children. As one club reported, the "deciders are the doers".

The size of the organization has a definite impact on the ability of the leader to function. For example, one club is in a rebuilding phase, rebounding from an almost catastrophic loss of membership and leaders. The current president is managing a recruitment process while supporting a new coach who immigrated to Prince George to
lead the technical development of the athletes. As a result of the immediate needs, long-term planning has been shelved until the organization has enough participants to maintain itself. In contrast, the largest organization in the survey is completing a strategic planning exercise that looks at the next ten years of direction for the organization. That organization has almost the same number of volunteers on its Board as the first has in its entire membership.

<table>
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1 - Complete Interview Questions in Appendix

All sports organizations in British Columbia are governed by a provincial sports organization (PSO), which is part of the formal structure for sport in Canada. Relations with the PSO have an impact on the local organizations. Some local organizations have difficulty getting support and access to training programs coordinated by the PSO, while others receive these resources easily. The political aspect of the relationship with the PSO can be a challenge for leaders.

The Leisure Services department of the City of Prince George relies on sports organizations for delivery of specialty programs. Support from this department can
include training opportunities, venues for recruitment, and coordination of facility use, but rarely is the department involved in leadership development.

The variations in measures of success was noticeable. Organizations measured success in terms of participation, growth, athletic accomplishment, non-athletic outcomes for former participants, financial well-being, but no organization reported having specific goals to which they aspired.

*Leadership Development Practices.*

The organizations work very hard at providing opportunities for members to develop skills, but none have leadership development activities or succession planning actions in place. Member development can go beyond technical competence in the sport to formal training, usually related to coaching. Coach development program vary in formality, as some organizations use the National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP), while others use informal mentoring processes. Leader and leadership development are not part of most organizations, although one club has a tradition of the vice-president serving two years on the executive before assuming the role of president.

It seems most organizations attempt to use the skills a volunteer brings to the organization. One organization recently completed a major capital project. Part of the success of this project is attributed to the career skills of the individual who was president of the club during the project. The individual is professional engineer, specializing in project management. Other leaders report their knowledge, skills and abilities from their profession are significant assets for them in their volunteer leadership positions. Others described the leaders of their organization as the members who have “taken ownership (of the organization) and bring a plan, saying Can I do this?”
Leadership Development Practices Summary

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The sports organizations in Prince George are focused on their sport and development of the competencies of their members. This focus can lead to high performing athletes, but raises concern about the leadership within the organizations. One long-time executive member said, “We succeed in spite of our efforts, not because of them.”

Conclusions

1. Do volunteer organizations have a problem with leadership and management?

Each of the leaders I spoke with identified a need within the organization for more members willing to be part of leadership. Lower level leaders (coaches) were a focus of each of the organizations, but none had extra capacity for upper level management. This focus seems to be short-term, and aimed at meeting immediate needs of the organization. The impact of this focus is a lack of clarity of vision for the organizations, and little attention paid to long term organizational well-being. This leaves the organizations very dependent on a small pool of very dedicated volunteers, who have no one trained to replace them.
2. Is the problem related to their leadership or management development practices?

The interviews with current and former leaders of sports organizations made it clear that these organizations should be concerned about leadership development. Recruiting leaders often is replaced by accepting any volunteer willing to step into a leadership position. The organizations have adopted a focus on member development that results in the organizational and leadership efforts being focused on technical aspects of the discipline and adding skills to individual members. While the sports organizations do a very good job of developing skills within the organization, the development programs they have are directed at technical competency in their sport, not management or leadership of the organization. This results in increasingly competent participants in the sport, but does not build leadership capacity within the organization. The organizations tend to recruit coaches, not leaders.

Leaders emerge because they either have a passion for the activity or their child has a passion for the activity and the parent wishes to contribute his or her skills to managing the organization. One leaders commented that the “deciders are the doers.” The organizations benefit from the skills and abilities of their volunteers, but do not attempt to enhance the leadership abilities of their leaders, current or future. Those members willing to act become the leaders, sometimes by default. When recruiting of leaders occurs, it tends to be tied to a specific need of the organization, rather than as a practice of building a pool of members with leadership skills, ready to take over leadership of the organization. As one long-time executive member observed, “We succeed in spite of our
efforts, not because of them". This contrasts strongly with current business practices, such as the model of GE as a teaching organization.

3. What are best practices in business?

It appears that no single leadership training method stands alone as a best practice, as all can be and have been successfully applied in different organizations. The literature suggests that there is not a best practice in terms of techniques of developing leaders, but instead that there are best practices processes. These relate to the process of development of management development programs. Several common threads emerge from the literature. Recognition that organizational culture, goals and vision must be part of the leadership development program is frequently mentioned. Ongoing evaluation of the program is another feature of most best practices. Best practice processes often also include some variation of feedback and self evaluation.

One volunteer organization had a practice that could serve other organizations well. This organization had changed officer terms from one year to two years, with a ratification of the executive at the end of the first year. This practice results in leaders that serve two years as vice president, assisting the president, before being elected president. After their term in office, they serve two years as past president. This results in improved awareness of issues within the organization, and gives the organization a structure that promotes continuity in management and leadership.

4. Is there a model from business that could be used by volunteer organizations to improve their leadership and or management?
The Fairholm science model of leadership seems to be very similar to the normal practices in the volunteer organizations interviewed in this study. Fairholm proposed a model that accepted ambiguity for leaders, and the ability to influence organizational direction, rather than decide it. Fairholm also pointed out that effective leaders worked to create self-motivated followers. These leaders created a vision that was the basis for all actions, and communicated this vision to their followers. The adoption of this vision shaped and guided the organization. This seems to be common practice in the volunteer organizations in this study, especially in relationship to short-term goals. Members accept the immediate goals of individual development and increasing technical competence in the sport. This model appears to have great potential for volunteer organizations, in part because it ties the affective and normative commitment profiles with leadership development. Both are based on vision tied to core values. A leader using this approach to leadership development could build on member commitment to create the next leaders of the organization.

The Five A’s model proposed by Fulmer, Gibbs and Goldsmith (2000) appears to have potential for application in volunteer organizations. The organizations would have to begin by taking a long-term view of their operation. This is a significant change from normal practice. Once they have articulated their organizational vision and strategy, they could apply the model to connect leadership development with organizational strategy. Increased awareness of potential future needs would help current leaders anticipate future organizational needs and take action to prepare to meet those needs.

Regardless of the possible application of the leadership development models, the greatest barrier for these volunteer organizations seems to be their short-term focus. The
focus on member development and the small number of volunteers means the current leaders find themselves dealing with immediate pressing issues, and unable to develop a long term view. The larger organizations appear to have more stability, so leaders are able to extend their planning range beyond the current season.

One business technique that may be useful for volunteer organizations is networking. Increasing the networking opportunities for volunteer leaders may be helpful to the long-term development of the organizations. The leaders interviewed in this study had little opportunity to discuss leadership with peers from other organizations. Sharing best practices, identifying successful strategies and comparing leadership experiences could prove beneficial for the volunteer leaders.

With over twenty per cent of Canadians participating in volunteer activity, the pool of potential leaders exists. Developing the leadership capabilities of that pool would provide immediate benefits to the organizations, and potentially long-term benefits to the communities served by these organizations.

**Recommendations And Directions for Further Study**

This study was limited by a small sample and a lack of geographic dispersion. It would be beneficial to discover how many communities share the situation described in Price George. A study that examined the relationship between organizational size, financial position and range of planning would be a positive contribution to understanding the operation of volunteer sports organizations.

The number of members in an organization has a tremendous impact on the resources available to the organization. The knowledge, skills and abilities available to
an organization with several hundred members is vastly greater than those available to an organization with under fifty members. One area that could bear further investigation is the identification of the membership size that separates "have-not" organizations from those that have an adequate resource pool from which to draw leaders.

**Limitations of this Study**

This study drew on a small but diverse pool of organizations located in Prince George. The sample size and lack of diversity limits the application of the findings. Future work could broaden the scale of the study, and explore regional differences in volunteer organization leadership development practices.

Provincial Sport Organizations could be used to further the search for best practices among volunteer organizations. The PSO's coordinate sport development in the province and as keepers of statistical information about their sport, may be able to provide information about a broader base of clubs and organizations.
Appendix 1  Interview Questions

Respondent’s Role
What is your role in the organization? How long?
What are the duties and responsibilities associated with this role?
What previous roles have you had?

The Organization
Approximately how long has your organization existed?
What is the size of the organization?
Do you keep track of member retention?
What percentage of your members have been members for
less than 2 years
2 – 5 years
more than 5 years
What percentage of your membership is involved in leadership of your organization?
What is your mission?
How is this communicated to members?
Has your organization been successful?
What are some of the outstanding achievements of your organization
How do you evaluate success?
How is your organization structured?
Do you have performance goals – ie achievement targets
How are these goals created

Leadership Development Practices
How does your organization identify potential leaders?
What does your organization do to develop members, leaders?
What skills, abilities and knowledge are you trying to develop?
Do you do any succession planning? (if yes) what do you do?
Do you do any formal leadership development? informal? (if yes) What do you do?
What knowledge, skills or abilities helped you as a leader?
What challenges have you confronted in your role?
What knowledge, skills or abilities do you wish you had?
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