

Go Volunteer Probono: Building the Case for Engaging Skilled Volunteers in Today's Nonprofit Sector

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Setting the Stage

The Volunteer Vancouver board moved quickly through obligatory introductions, modestly amending and approving the minutes of its last monthly meeting before turning its attention to the evening's key guest, Kerry Ho, the CEO of Inhance, an ethical investment firm. With Volunteer Vancouver's current asset balance exceeding \$436,000,¹ the board was eager to explore investment opportunities designed to meet its criteria of "reasonable liquidity, professional management ...capital preservation over 20 years, [that] meet[s] the obligations of the City lease agreement and balance[s] the operational needs of the organization" (Volunteer Vancouver, 2007a).

Colleen Kelly sat quietly as she watched her board balance the nuances of an investment strategy that allowed for sufficient operating funds while meeting the volunteer centre's² long-term endowment expectations. Volunteer Vancouver (VV) had indeed come a very long way since she had first come to work as the organization's executive director (ED) eight years earlier.

During her tenure as ED she had been able to increase organizational productivity through the effective engagement of skilled volunteers, while she simultaneously reduced the overall complement of her salaried workforce. Not only had she succeeded in balancing the budget, but the organization was in the enviable position of negotiating an endowment fund strategy. Her board of young, highly effective professionals had become the leadership training grounds for some of Vancouver's most prestigious nonprofits.

Yet, in spite of her numerous successes, Volunteer Vancouver was faced with one of its most significant challenges to date.

The face of Canadian volunteerism was changing. As Boomers retired, more and more people were interested in using their skills as the basis for their service. Similar service patterns were emerging among young professionals, as well. VV had undeniably demonstrated the power of skilled volunteers, yet the centre's efforts to market a new brand of volunteering to the nonprofit sector were falling short of the mark. Area nonprofit organizations still sought the "traditional" volunteer, the person willing to perform routine tasks on a regular, predictable basis, and they failed to warm to the specifically skilled volunteer – despite all VV's efforts to demonstrate the value of a skilled volunteer workforce. As attempts to package a saleable product remained elusive, everything from VV's ability to fulfill its mission to Colleen Kelly's

¹ See Appendix A for Audited Financial Statement

² When referring to the Volunteer Vancouver volunteer centre, this case study will use the Canadian spelling of the word centre.

merit bonus (which VV's board had tied to marketing the new skilled-volunteer project), hung in the balance. Despite the Centre's best efforts, area nonprofits remained skeptical at best about this new "specifically skilled volunteers" venture.

History of the Volunteer Center Movement

Volunteer centers date back to 1919, when the Volunteer Bureau of Minneapolis, Minnesota, opened its doors in response to the needs of a post-war society. However, it was not until the 1930s that the movement to establish intermediary organizations that serve as clearinghouses for volunteers and volunteer capacity builders for nonprofit organizations really began to take shape.

The emerging field of social work helped to spur the development of volunteer centers. As social work rose as a profession, social workers attempted to distinguish the work of this new discipline from the efforts of community volunteers. Forming a National Committee on Volunteers, the National Conference of Social Work helped to articulate the role and value of volunteers and the need for volunteer centers (Ellis, 1989). By 1933, 28 volunteer centers were actively referring volunteers to social service agencies and responding to the demands of the Great Depression.

With the advent of World War II, supporting the nation's war effort became the country's top priority. In 1941, the U.S. government formed the Office of Civilian Defense, and the nation's 50 volunteer bureaus suspended operations to form official Defense Councils. At the peak of the war, 4,300 civil defense volunteer offices recruited volunteers to support defense-related activities.

As the war came to a close, the National Committee on Volunteers again pressed for the formation of volunteer bureaus to aid with volunteer recruitment to support local community service organizations. Community Chests and Councils of America – the predecessor organizations to The United Way – along with the Association of Junior Leagues, a women's membership organization dedicated to volunteer engagement, jointly financed a study to examine postwar plans for mobilizing volunteers. By 1950, more than 80 volunteer bureaus were in operation across the U.S. and Canada.

The mission and purpose of volunteer centers, as well as the names given to these organizations, changed over the intervening years. Volunteer Bureaus, Volunteer Centers, Voluntary Action Centers, and more recently "Hands On" or "Cares" (such as "Philadelphia Cares") organizations are just a few of the titles given to today's volunteer clearinghouses. A variety of organizational structures exist, as well. Some centers are freestanding nonprofit organizations, while others may be found within United Way offices, as departments of local government, Red Cross organizations, or within Junior League Associations. While each center is defined by its local community, generally speaking, "the mission has evolved from simply matching volunteers with organizations to serving as a comprehensive community resource for positive change" (Points of Light Foundation, 2008, p. 1).

Because of the variety of organizational structures and the multiple names given these organizations, it is difficult to get an exact count of the number of volunteer centers in North

America. Nonetheless, in 2001 the Points of Light Foundation, home to the Volunteer Center National Network, claimed 426 member Centers (Brudney, 2001). The Network claims that its affiliates annually connect more than 2.5 million people with more than a million service opportunities, thereby providing volunteer assistance to nearly 193 million people.

Volunteer Vancouver

With a history that parallels that of the volunteer center movement itself, Volunteer Vancouver originated as the City's Central Volunteer Bureau in 1943 (Volunteer Vancouver, 2007b). By 1955 the Bureau was tracking 20,000 hours of volunteer service in 70 different agencies. Approximately 20 years later, the Bureau changed its name to the Vancouver Volunteer Centre and expanded its services to include information provision about volunteering and volunteer management to individuals and organizations.

Working in collaboration with the local United Way, the Centre initiated BoardWalk™, a national leadership-training curriculum designed to prepare and place volunteers on nonprofit boards of directors. This initiative became the Volunteer Leadership Development Program, a collaborative with United Way/Centraide Canada. The Leadership Development Program focused on selecting and preparing community volunteers to deliver governance training to community organizations. By the early 1980s, volunteer referrals and placements were increasing rapidly. The Centre moved its operations to a more central location within the city and began to computerize its volunteer referral system.

With the advent of 1990s, the Centre prepared to celebrate 50 years of operation as it expanded its mission to both "encourage and promote volunteer participation and to strengthen the voluntary sector" ("Voluntary Action News," 1993, p. 2). In honor of its anniversary, the Centre hosted its first Volunteer Recognition Awards program, an event to celebrate volunteers, raise funds, and raise the Centre's visibility. The Centre used this occasion to unveil another new name and soon began doing business as Volunteer Vancouver (VV).

Responding to the changing needs of the community, VV sponsored Leadership Vancouver, a joint venture with the Vancouver Board of Trade. Building on the BoardWalk™ program and other initiatives, Leadership Vancouver provided a year-long professional development program to prepare young leaders to assume more active roles within their communities. In addition, the centre collaborated with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to sponsor and organize The Volunteer Day Festival. The Festival introduced thousands of people to the learning opportunities to be gained via volunteering. In recognition of the centre's 50 years of service to the community, the City of Vancouver proclaimed 1993 the "Year of the Volunteer."

As the 90s wore on however, the centre began to stagnate. Board member Joan Grant recalled a "very 'traditional' nonprofit." The executive director "was a things-sort-of-guy, who maintained a small but rigidly structured organization." Grant noted, "The board lacked bench strength, and operations became fairly one-dimensional." Furthermore, even though the organization promoted the power of volunteerism, VV itself rarely engaged volunteers in its ongoing operations.

This was the situation when Barney Ellis-Perry assumed board leadership at the end of the 1990s. According to Ellis-Perry, he found a “stunningly static – stable, but sleepy – organization.” Deciding it was time for a change, Ellis-Perry concluded, “Volunteer Vancouver needed to walk the talk.”

With some prompting from the board, Volunteer Vancouver’s executive director acknowledged his lack of passion for the organization and moved on to pursue aspirations more closely aligned with his interests. Several board members decided that they also lacked the fortitude to move the organization in a new direction and resigned as well. Change was afoot. With the executive director’s position now vacated, the search for a new director ensued.

Leaving a somewhat similar position in Calgary, Colleen Kelly assumed leadership of Volunteer Vancouver in 1999.

Moving Volunteer Vancouver into the New Millennium

The early years of the new millennium would test Kelly’s mettle as she began to work the reins of an organization that found comfort in its “steady state” of program continuity. Kelly acquired a staff of 12: three program directors, three program coordinators, a researcher, two project specialists, a librarian, a receptionist, and a bookkeeper.

Recalling the three inherited program directors, Kelly said, “They lacked an entrepreneurial spirit, rejected my leadership, and proved recalcitrant at best.” While she was building a new organization, it became clear to her that replacing these staff would require paying some significant severance packages – an expense that taxed an already strained budget. The first set of replacement hires proved equally unsatisfactory. The new employees used their positions at Volunteer Vancouver to jump-start a private consulting practice – and seemed blind to the ethical implications of their actions. They, too, were helped to depart.

Complicating the mounting financial, personnel, and morale challenges at VV, the summer of 2002 brought another blow: the sudden illness and death of the centre’s longtime bookkeeper. Within an eight-week period, the bookkeeper’s health declined; she died without an opportunity to orient a replacement to her “personalized” bookkeeping methods and financial systems. A new bookkeeper came on board and did her best to sleuth through the records and assess the organization’s financial situation. By December of 2003, it appeared that Volunteer Vancouver would close the calendar year with a \$50,000 surplus. But this good news was short-lived. When auditors arrived to check the financial position at the end of 2003, it became apparent that the accounts receivable ledger had not been transferred from 2002 to 2003. Although the organization had appeared to have a healthy balance sheet, Volunteer Vancouver was, in fact, \$179,000 in arrears.

Meanwhile, VV’s external service environment proved both competitive and complex. The densely populated lower British Columbia mainland housed not only Volunteer Vancouver but also nine other nonprofit volunteer centres. VV’s efforts at change affected the equilibrium among these players, exacerbating turf tensions and straining the veneer of goodwill. The

United Way stepped into the breach by constructing a document establishing service boundaries. To keep the peace, VV signed the document.

As the years passed, however, Kelly's leadership began to make a significant difference. Volunteer Vancouver found its footing, developed a coherent cadre of new programs, and successfully realigned staffing to support critical organizational functions. (See Appendix B for a list of staff and their functional responsibilities.) In their rebuilding efforts, Kelly and the board elected first to address the area of volunteer recruitment and placement, a fundamental and established revenue-generating area of the centre's work. Although the system was automated to a degree, advances in technology offered promise for a major retooling that would enhance this core service area. VV quickly realized, however, that it possessed neither the technical know-how to accomplish the task nor the monetary resources to purchase the required expertise.

Board Chair Barney Ellis-Perry reiterated his mantra: "Volunteer Vancouver must walk the talk!" In early 2000, VV assembled its first Information Technology (IT) Advisory Committee to survey the situation and tackle the job of creating a fully automated volunteer referral system. With the assistance of the board, the centre examined its connections within the high-tech industry and quickly assembled a team of nationally renowned experts from the Vancouver area willing to volunteer their time. GoVolunteer.ca emerged as a web-based tool for potential volunteers, allowing them to browse by activity or organization, perform a keyword search, and refine a search with other advanced options. Not only did the site effectively automate a critical organizational function, but the product was largely developed through the voluntary contributions of skilled volunteers. Volunteer Vancouver was indeed "walking the talk." The staff was effectively leveraging the ability of specifically skilled volunteers to achieve critically important organizational goals.

Recognizing the power of GoVolunteer.ca, Kelly wove the service into the centre's membership system, using the tool to add value and drive revenue. A complex multi-leveled membership structure emerged. Each tier provided varying levels of access to the technology, along with the ability to post direct-service opportunities and board positions. At the apex of the membership structure was service to area volunteer centres. A licensing agreement provided member centres with an opportunity to purchase a seamless web interface with GoVolunteer.ca and market the site for a fee to their own constituents.

By 2006, GoVolunteer.ca listed more than 1,000 service opportunities at any given time, and received over 4 million hits annually. Nonetheless, the site was not generating the anticipated revenue. Creating the right pricing structure and membership-product bundles remained elusive.

This time, the needed skilled volunteer assistance surfaced serendipitously. Rob McNair, a colleague of a board member and a graduate MBA student at a local university, approached the centre. Tasked with the assignment of developing a product pricing-strategy analysis, McNair hoped to wed his management skills with his interest in the nonprofit sector. Additionally, doing work for the centre would provide a nice addition to his resume. "Could Volunteer Vancouver possibly use my skills pro bono?" he asked.

McNair's thoughtful report began by noting that current "membership fees (including licensing fees) are not designed to cover the operational costs of GoVolunteer.ca... Given Volunteer Vancouver's focus on sustainability, this is not ideal" (n.d., p. 3). Alternating between analysis and clear recommendations, the report clarified which products were conducive to bundling and suggested alternative approaches to encourage new member subscriptions. He separated core services from advanced products. His recommendations, driven by statistical analysis, included options to increase pricing, reduce complexity, and frame the value of bundles and individual product offerings. Volunteer Vancouver instituted each of McNair's recommendations to arrive at a new membership benefits structure. (See Appendix C for an overview of the centre's membership options.)

Both McNair's efforts and the IT Advisory Team showcased the value of highly skilled volunteer labor. As the board and staff worked to "walk the talk," VV molded an organizational culture that effectively utilized such service. At VV, highly skilled volunteers were not limited to periodic large-scale projects, committee functions, or technological innovation. Rather, engaging volunteers became an expectation for all management staff.

Staff members learned to team with—and be held accountable for tracking their time spent engaging—volunteers in all aspects of VV's work. Utilizing an Excel Spreadsheet, management staff began recording all volunteer interactions, tracking the time the volunteers spent assisting with the work of the centre and the time the staff member took with the volunteers. Although figures varied on a month-by-month basis (see Appendix D), in 2007, a management staff of six averaged 64 volunteer contacts per month, with a 2.6-hour time return for every staff hour invested in working with volunteers.

Results like these convinced Colleen Kelly that the staff/volunteer teaming on a wide array of the centre's work allowed the staff to be significantly more productive. These teams also worked to facilitated smooth transitions between staff positions when the inevitable staff turnover occurred. Repeatedly, Kelly found that the volunteer teams and assistants provided critical continuity and facilitated the transmission of institutional memory with ongoing projects.

Kelly discovered: "It is relatively easy to access very specialized skills on a short-term basis. However, the skills we require in the people we pay are different now—they must have an ability to work with people, so we have fewer paid people and large numbers of specifically-skilled volunteers. This has meant that, as the budget has grown, we have been able to pay higher salaries to the paid people and to wisely and productively steward all the centre's resources."

Volunteer Vancouver's Signature Initiative: A People Lens©

Volunteer Vancouver's own use of volunteers had implications far broader than meeting the organization's specific technological challenges or retooling its membership strategies. As VV was engaging skilled volunteers in positions that took advantage of those skills, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the skilled volunteering trend was also growing in the larger community. More and more, the people walking through VV's doors and searching its website were looking for opportunities to utilize their skills in service. In fact, fewer and fewer people were responding to the relatively routine service opportunities traditionally posted by area nonprofits. A supply-and-demand disparity had started to come into focus: VV was finding a growing supply of skilled, talented volunteers, yet nonprofits continued to demand volunteers for routine administrative tasks.

Concurrent with the centre's observations of its changing clientele came the release of two influential Canadian reports. Aware of the challenges facing the nonprofit sector, the *National Canadian Survey on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* noted that nonprofit and voluntary organizations:

have at their disposal the services of significant numbers of Canadians, in the form of both volunteers and paid staff. However, many appear to be experiencing substantial difficulties fulfilling their missions and organizational objectives. In short, their size, scope, and ability to harness the energies of individual Canadians are impressive, but the benefits they intend to deliver are not being fully realized (Statistics Canada, 2003, p. 4).

The Vancouver Foundation echoed the survey's concerns. The Foundation concluded that nonprofit organizations in British Columbia were facing three significant challenges: 1.) retaining trained staff and competent, skilled board members; 2.) competing successfully for volunteers; and 3.) adapting to shifts in volunteerism (Vancouver Community Foundation, n.d.).

With full support from her board, Kelly sought to take the knowledge and experiences VV had gained in effectively engaging skilled volunteers and to make this a new and critical programmatic thrust for the centre. Not only had Volunteer Vancouver demonstrated the power of skilled volunteers, but it also had strong outcome measures, as a testimony to the strategy's success. Since coming to Vancouver, Kelly had reduced her staff by three FTE's; increased staff compensation, paying each staff member more generously; and leveraged staff talents through the effective engagement of volunteers – while increasing revenue, from \$593,000 to \$965,000, over the nine-year period. Engaging volunteers was now an expectation for all professional staff members and was explicitly discussed as a requirement for all new hires. With the growth in the centre's budget, VV was now in the enviable position of creating an endowment to support future operations.

As VV changed, so did its mission statement. To reflect the attention given to skilled volunteering, and the potential of a skilled volunteer workforce, Volunteer Vancouver adopted a tagline that captured the centre's purpose: to “inspire and build leadership in the voluntary sector.” According to Kelly, this broad mission continued to promote volunteerism, by expanding on the ways in which volunteer engagement remained “the intended outcome of

everything we do. Capacity building *through volunteer engagement* is the component that distinguishes us from a nonprofit management support organization. We have also learned that we have to build strong organizations to engage volunteers. An ineffective organization cannot involve volunteers in their infrastructure in any way.”

Still, putting the pieces together and formulating a central organizational initiative to promote skilled volunteers as a capacity-building agent for nonprofits proved challenging. “Our experience tells us that skilled volunteers are there and that they can work wonders, but we still have to put the puzzle together so that our members and the nonprofits in British Columbia will ‘get it’ too. That,” Kelly noted, “is the challenge. We have the pieces but we’re still struggling to put them together right – all of the pieces of the puzzle are about creating better organizations.”

In their first effort to market and promote the changing face of volunteerism, VV coined the term “Integrated Human Resource Planning.” The basic idea was to get nonprofits to consider all their human-resource needs—salaried and non-salaried (volunteer) staff alike. VV then secured funding for and built a skills bank to capture and promote the unique talents of volunteers. But it just didn’t work. “Skills banks,” Kelly concluded, “damage volunteerism. People register and then no one accesses it.” After about a year, the centre dropped the terminology of Integrated Human Resource Planning as well: “It just wasn’t working. Nonprofits didn’t ‘get it,’ and the focus was too individualist,” Kelly said. In order to reach any economy of scale, the centre needed to focus on organizations.

Kelly’s staff shared her convictions. Describing team volunteering and networking lunches, Maria Williams, one of the program directors, noted, “We have to achieve our mission more effectively. We can’t meet today’s needs by working individually with 10 volunteers who walk through the door. We have to manage projects and build the capacity of organizations to really effectively engage volunteers. That’s what we’re about.”

To further this shift in organizational focus, Kelly organized a working advisory committee of 25 nonprofit leaders to help develop the concepts and programs associated with skilled volunteerism. The cross-sectional group included agency representatives, active volunteers, university and business representatives, and proponents of school-based service-learning ventures. Findings from two focus groups with executive directors augmented the information reviewed by the team.

Using VV’s success with skilled volunteers as a model, Kelly pointed to Jim Collins’ *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* (2005) for a philosophical grounding to VV’s work. Collins’ recommendation that leaders approach planning and organizational strategy “by asking ‘who?’ before ‘how?’ or ‘how much?’” fit well with VV’s approach. Kelly maintained that the benefit of the “who first” perspective is that it allowed nonprofits to access and engage the specialized skill sets of unpaid employees, thereby allowing organizations to strategically leverage finances to achieve important organizational objectives.

Kelly organized the input she received from her advisors and used it to coin what has become VV’s A People Lens© approach. As a white paper Kelly wrote on the concept describes it, A People Lens© is “about growing the organization from the inside out. This is about a philosophy that focuses on the talents of the people, starting with the CEO/ED” (p. 7).”

A positive public image was one of the benefits enumerated in A People Lens©' philosophy. "By really involving the right people... there is the opportunity to build a word-of-mouth marketing campaign most organizations would never have dollars to create" (p. 3). An orientation to skilled volunteers also would better facilitate the engagement of the Baby Boomer retiree, as well as the last part of the Generation X population, those potential volunteers born between 1970 and 1983, who, much like the Boomers, want to use their skills when they serve (Kelly, 2006).

Concurrent with the emergence of A People Lens© was the centre's Probono initiative. Using a term generally associated with professionals contributing their skills on a gratis or reduced-rate basis, GoVolunteer Probono (GVPB) emerged as a product designed to promote specifically skilled volunteers.

Volunteer Vancouver now offered several ways to access volunteers. An organization could seek traditional volunteers through GoVolunteer.ca; board volunteers could be solicited through BoardMatch™; and nonprofits could learn how to design roles for and access specifically skilled volunteers through the GoVolunteer Probono(GVPB) program. Collectively, all of these initiatives fell within the broader philosophical umbrella of A People Lens©.

GVPB: A Program Still in Transition

The task of operationalizing the GoVolunteer Probono volunteer project has been the responsibility of Virginia Edelstein, one of VV's program directors. Edelstein set up the system to screen and select Probono volunteers. Once accepted, the volunteer signs a letter of agreement detailing program expectations, including participation in a training program in which the volunteer learns more about the nonprofit sector and gains knowledge about how to assess a nonprofit organization. Utilizing the McKinsey Capacity Assessment Grid (2001), GVPB volunteers agree to spend 40 to 50 hours working with their assigned nonprofit, interacting primarily with the executive director and the board and undertaking a full-scale organizational assessment. Each volunteer agrees to develop a set of written recommendations for the organization at the conclusion of the assessment. These recommendations then form the basis for subsequent support from other skilled volunteers. Area nonprofit organizations apply to participate in the program and pay a fee of \$750 to VV for a trained Probono volunteer. (See Appendix E for GoVolunteer Probono materials.)

In describing the GVPB program, Edelstein clarifies that this particular initiative is geared to nonprofits interested in increasing their capacity. "The program doesn't work well for organizations in crisis, but it is appropriate for nonprofits that want to improve their capacity," Edelstein acknowledged. She also explains "the centre has a steady supply of volunteers for the program," all of whom are highly skilled and eager to work. For example:

- GVPB volunteer Joanna Whalley came to the experience after serving as an active volunteer on a variety of area nonprofit boards of directors, in addition to her career as a human resources manager. When describing her experience as a specifically skilled volunteer, she speaks positively of the resources available to her in a password-protected section of the VV website. Nonetheless, when discussing one of the

organizations that she assisted, Whalley acknowledges that she was “surprised at how green the board really was.”

- Maureen Ewing, another GVPB volunteer, feels the program has allowed her to keep her hand in the professional world after retiring from a successful corporate-sector career. Ewing returned to school to further her true passion of adult education, recently completing a graduate degree in leadership and training. Her work for VV, she feels, gives her the opportunity to give back.
- Brian Fraser, a retired Dean from a local seminary, sees the Probono program as a way to give back as well. A member of the Probono Advisory Board, Fraser brought not only his personal time and talent to the undertaking but also negotiated a structured relationship with VV on behalf of the International Coach Federation and the local Executive Coaching Association of British Columbia. Through the Probono program, volunteer coaches agree to provide six to eight hours of coaching for local executive directors and board chairs. If the nonprofit wants to continue the coaching relationship following the Probono sessions, they are free to negotiate a separate contract.

In spite of her success attracting and preparing highly skilled citizens to serve as Probono volunteers, Edelstein remains challenged to sell the program to nonprofits. “The demand among nonprofits for specifically skilled volunteers is missing,” she says. Even with the planning committee and stakeholders’ participation, VV has struggled from the beginning to generate a paying clientele for the GoVolunteer Probono program. (In fact, members of the Skilled Volunteering Advisory Committee – who were supportive of the concept in the meetings and repeatedly had said they liked the program in theory – refused to enlist their own organizations in a pilot program to launch GoVolunteer Probono, each vaguely indicating the program “wouldn’t work” for their organization.) Thus, the great enthusiasm among potential Probono volunteers continues to meet with apparent indifference from the nonprofit community VV seeks to serve.

Both Edelstein and Kelly acknowledge that the GVPB process as designed is complex. Nonetheless, they are quick to defend the system as currently conceived. Initial efforts to engage skilled volunteers through a more fluid and open process backfired. The initial skilled volunteer program model used a simple matching system, which mistakenly assumed that nonprofits could identify their key needs for a volunteer. In those days, the skilled volunteer would be directed to the nonprofit organization based on the nonprofit’s face-value request. Too frequently, what happened next would leave volunteers feeling abused and burned out by the process. For example, in one telling instance, a recently formed nonprofit had determined it needed a graphic artist to assist with development of a brochure, something the organization’s leadership had identified as the key next step in the organization’s development. VV located a talented and experienced artist eager to help. Unfortunately, when the artist arrived for duty it turned out that the nonprofit lacked a mission statement, was unclear about its service package, and had no copy ready for a visual and print translation of their work. As these stories multiplied, VV realized the need for a more thoughtful assessment process as a way to support nonprofits and to protect volunteers from ill-conceived service opportunities. Over time, the guided assessment process emerged as the gateway experience necessary for an effective match.

In spite of Volunteer Vancouver's internal success engaging highly skilled volunteers, Kelly wonders what to do next to further the goal of building the capacity of the nonprofit sector through the inspired service of highly skilled volunteers. Despite screening and careful training of the volunteers, nonprofits' response to the GVPB program remains underwhelming.

Should VV secure funding from a local foundation to jump-start the program? Is the pricing of the program – not just in terms of dollars, but also in time expectations – excessive or problematic in some other way? Is the concept of “paying for” volunteers anathema to the public perception of the role of this resource? Or is the centre perhaps “selling” too many new products at once and marketing them under complex and possibly confusing terminology?

It remains unclear what interventions or changes will be necessary to open nonprofits to the wealth of experiences and expertise offered by volunteers in Vancouver. In the meantime, it's clear VV has more work to do to ensure its roster of committed and highly skilled volunteers no longer remain relegated to the sidelines, left to wait impatiently as they reach out to provide assistance to the critical causes championed by nonprofit organizations in their communities.

Volunteer Vancouver: Finding the Right Volunteer Mix in the Face of Changing Demographics

Appendix A: Audited Financial Statement

Appendix B: Staff Overview

Appendix C: Membership Options

Appendix D: VV Volunteer Tracking

Appendix E: GoVolunteer Probono, Summary Overview,
Agency Recruitment Letter and Sample Volunteer
Contract

A People Lens© is available online at
http://www.weinspireandbuildleadership.ca/files/A_People_Lens.pdf for the full text)

Appendix B: Staff Volunteer Vancouver

Colleen Kelly - Executive Director

Leading a staff of eight and 203 volunteers and working with 12 trustees, Kelly has led Volunteer Vancouver since 1999. She served as national co-chair of the National Volunteerism Initiative Table, which created the Canada Volunteerism Initiative. Kelly has served as trustee on the boards of Volunteer BC, Leadership Vancouver, the Centre for Child Development, and the Centre for Sustainability.

Shirley Weir - Communications Director

A contract employee, Weir works closely with all staff and reports directly to Colleen Kelly. Weir is engaged in special events such as the centre's new Volunteer Celebration Event, held at the Vancouver Orpheum, which includes a special performance by the Vancouver Symphony.

Virginia Edelstein - Program Director

One of two full-time program directors, Edelstein has an MBA and a background in both the private and the nonprofit sectors. Fifty percent of Edelstein's time is devoted to GoVolunteer Probono and shepherding VV's A People Lens© initiatives. She also facilitates the centre's technology initiatives and is overseeing the introduction of a comprehensive new centre-wide data-management system. Edelstein is responsible for the front desk and supervises Lynda Gerty and Carlene Brownsey.

Maria Williams - Program Director

Like Virginia Edelstein, Williams has an MBA and works full-time for Volunteer Vancouver. Her responsibilities include content and strategy for the centre's public workshop series, the Governance Circle peer learning initiative, BoardMatch, Book for Breakfast, Teen Volunteering, and the Executive Director's Learning Circle. The centre's Business Relationships, the *Vantage Point* periodic newsletter, and VV's various membership programs are part of her program portfolio. She supervises Amanda Spear and Alvin Grado.

Lynda Gerty - Program Coordinator

The opportunity to work for Volunteer Vancouver brought Gerty's corporate-travel work experience together with her passion for the nonprofit sector. She handles the centre's membership function, including reviewing service-opportunity postings, and is facilitating the transition to the new, more streamlined membership system. In addition, Gerty works with special events, particularly volunteer celebrations, open houses, and the centre's newest event, the Time Raiser.

Amanda Spear - Program Coordinator

Spear handles the many workshops provided by the centre, including arranging for speakers and special programs tailored for members and others. She also works with individual organizations that approach Volunteer Vancouver for board training and for customized workshops for their individual organizations.

Merna Johnston - Office Manager

The centre's general office administration is the responsibility of Merna Johnston. In addition

she handles all bookkeeping and space rental as well as supervises the upkeep and cleaning contractors for the space.

Carlene Brownsey - Customer Service Representative

Carlene Brownsey is the centre's frontline staff contact. She greets people entering the office, answers the main telephone, provides computer assistance to technologically challenged people seeking volunteer opportunities, and handles odd jobs as they emerge. Brownsey oversees the online distribution of the two newsletters: *Vantage Point*, with a distribution of almost 7,000 addresses to a membership-oriented audience, and *Fast Facts*, with a distribution to more than 3,000 addresses. She also oversees the centre's library lending and manages general office "clutter control."

Alvin Grado - Online Customer Service Representative

Primarily responsible for BoardMatch™, Alvin Grado contacts organizations and individuals who are interested in being part of a board of directors. Grado updates the Volunteer Vancouver website and the govolyunteer.ca website. He also supports Carlene Brownsey with front desk responsibilities.

Appendix C: VV Membership Options

Modified from

http://www.volunteervancouver.ca/membership/join_us.asp

Not-for-profit Membership

For a small annual fee, you can connect your organization to thousands of potential volunteers and board members, a large network of not-for-profit organizations and outstanding learning opportunities. Join now and see why so many organizations are raving about Volunteer Vancouver!

Choose the package that is right for your organization:

- **Basic Membership - \$99/year.** Perfect for small organizations, this package includes 10 volunteer position postings per year on www.govolunteer.ca, and five board member position postings on www.BoardMatch.org
- **Comprehensive Membership - \$149/year.** Ideal for organizations that frequently engage volunteers, this package includes *unlimited* postings on both www.govolunteer.ca and www.BoardMatch.org

** Both membership packages include a 15% discount on Volunteer Vancouver workshops, borrowing privileges from the Volunteer Vancouver **Resource Library**, a subscription to Volunteer Vancouver's issue-based publication, *Vantage Point*, and monthly updates through our **Fast Facts** newsletter.

Volunteer Centre Membership - govolunteer.ca

govolunteer.ca connects more than 100,000 Canadians to volunteer opportunities in their communities. In 2006, the website received more than 4 million hits!

Volunteer Vancouver offers other volunteer centres throughout Canada the chance to license this invaluable tool for their membership by joining Volunteer Vancouver as a Volunteer Centre Member. Through this membership, each of the volunteer centre's not-for-profit members is able to post their volunteer positions on the site.

Business Membership

Businesses play a vital role in community initiatives and volunteerism. Benefits to employers of employee volunteerism include enhanced employee skills, enhanced corporate profile in the community and higher employee retention rates. Business sponsors at Volunteer Vancouver have access to an array of programs and services, all of which focus on supporting corporate social responsibility and employer-supported volunteering programs. Business sponsorship ranges from a basic level of membership, which allows access to programs and services, to a sustaining level of philanthropic contribution, which enables Volunteer Vancouver to fulfill its mission to inspire and build leadership in the voluntary sector.

Basic Business Membership with less than 100 employees - \$500

Large Employers: \$1,000

Appendix D: Tracking VV Staff/Volunteer Interactions

2007 Summary Table
and
Complete Data for One Representative Month

Appendix E: GoVolunteer Probono

1. A New Program of Volunteer Vancouver
2. Letter designed to recruit nonprofit participants
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