



DID YOU KNOW that quality supervision is no different than effective leadership?

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AN INFORMATION SHEET FOR ST. JOHN AMBULANCE MEMBERS

Supervision is the process of helping others understand what is expected of them and then working to create an environment in which they can function at their best. Volunteers and staff in leadership roles are key to SJA's success. Their leadership skills are the deciding factor in terms of recruiting, training and retaining the right person for the right job.

The 1996 St. John Ambulance Brigade Leadership Manual (available on the intranet) lists the characteristics of superior leaders. Why not check it out?

Due to the nature of St. John Ambulance's role in the community, one of the biggest challenges in management is supervising those volunteers who work outside the normal office setting: "the sometimes invisible volunteer." This separation, while small in appearance, is quite significant in practice. Anyone who has ever worked in a separated environment realizes the increased potential for frustration, inefficiency, dissatisfaction and occasionally even outright revolt. Those volunteers often come to believe that the central office doesn't understand the "real problems" and those in the central offices see those in the field as not seeing the "big picture". People are harder to locate when you need them; communication more often gets delayed, distorted, or goes totally awry; all people don't have access to the same resources, equipment, and support.

Regardless of setting, the following 12 supervisory rules apply:

1. **Ask** – there are always people who are willing to help.
2. **Be prepared** – nothing will kill the passion of a volunteer faster than to arrive at a volunteer event and find the supervisors (paid or unpaid) not prepared. Have the materials and venue ready for the volunteers well in advance of their arrival.
3. **Be organized** – thoroughly organize your activities so that you can make the best use of their time. Be mindful and respectful of the gift of time freely given by volunteers.
4. **Delegate** – don't be afraid to ask a volunteer to help prepare and organize the event.
5. **Communicate** – communicate the event well in advance and then send a reminder. E-mail is your most efficient form of communication, if available.
6. **Know your volunteers** – know which volunteers you can count on. Then, know all volunteer's names at any event.
7. **Involve staff** – make staff part of all volunteer events. This will go a long way in breaking potential barriers between staff and volunteers.
8. **Involve your Board** – the Board should be your best source of volunteers and leadership. Involve them!
9. **Involve the family** – for major volunteer events, have activities planned for the whole family.
10. **Feed the volunteers** – solicit donations from local food sources.
11. **Recognize the volunteers** – a simple thank you goes a long way. Acknowledge the volunteer's contribution in your newsletter, on the bulletin board, in the board minutes, or with a short note signed by you and the Board Chairperson.
12. **Form volunteer councils** – For each of your major programs, form a volunteer council. This council might then provide volunteer leadership for that particular program.

Information Source: Energize website (www.energizeinc.com) and Barbara Gemmell of Gemmell Training & Consulting.