

GIVE AND TAKE OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE



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Associate Editor

SEVERAL PEO EVENTS I have covered over the last couple of years have included workshops or break-out sessions on such topics as stakeholder engagement, best practices in recruitment, and how to take full advantage of volunteer resources.

The recent PEO Education Conference, for example, featured a discussion of volunteer engagement strategies. The salient point was that the way an organization involves its volunteers is just as important as recruiting them in the first place. As well, the discussion focused on how volunteers better commit to an organization if they receive the

proper support, strategic leadership and recognition for their efforts.

In its most basic terms, PEO gets tremendous mileage out of its 1000-strong team of volunteers, from council members (who, we sometimes forget, are volunteers themselves) to the newly licensed recent graduate who is involved in his or her local PEO chapter.

Whether it is by way of a committee or task force or through the chapter system, volunteers remain the lifeblood of PEO operations. As such, it's only natural for PEO to make a fuss every so often about its dedicated team of volunteers through its Volunteer Recognition Program (see feature sidebar, p. 31).

As you might have guessed by now, the theme of this issue is volunteers and the contributions they make to the more effective governance of the engineering regulator. We've treated this issue a few times in the past 15 years, but it makes sense to revisit such a crucial aspect of PEO operations.

It would be trite to say that volunteers play an important role in regulating the profession and in developing policy ideas for its improvement. However, as the features in this issue attest, PEO has beefed up its efforts in recent years to celebrate and reward its volunteers, and

provide opportunities for leadership development (see pages 27 and 32).

The PEO *Volunteer Manual* updated just this year, outlines some of the benefits to individual members who answer the call to volunteer service. PEO provides volunteers many opportunities, such as:

- serving the engineering profession;
- sharing knowledge, wisdom and experience with others;
- promoting the engineering profession and reaching out to local communities;
- liaising with the provincial government;
- networking with engineers within local communities and across the province;
- learning and developing leadership skills;
- meeting new people, developing new skills and discovering new experiences; and
- receiving recognition for your services to the profession.

But as certain benefits accrue to the individual volunteer, there are also benefits to the organization as well. Simply stated, volunteering is an ideal source of talent for the development of future leaders of any organization. By providing leadership and development opportunities for its army of volunteers, PEO is in effect grooming the next generation of future leaders. It bears watching as the challenge to prove the benefits of engineering self-regulation play out over the next few years. Σ

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