DIRECTING THE WORK OF OTHERS;
A Guide for Volunteers

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As a Girl Scout volunteer who directs the work of other volunteers you may have one of many titles; advisor, consultant, specialist, coordinator, chair, resource. Whatever the name, as you work you will find yourself performing each in turn, sometimes advising or consulting, sometimes sharing special knowledge and skills, sometimes organizing, coordinating and guiding.

The way you carry out your job will depend on many factors—the number of people involved, their geographic spread, the kinds of jobs they do—but the objective and principles behind the method apply to all.

Many of the principles presented here also apply to supervisors of employed staff, but there is a difference between their methods and the ways of supervising and guiding the work of volunteers.

As a volunteer yourself, you know that a volunteer is not paid monetarily for her/his services but finds rewards in many intangibles; volunteer symbols of achievement that are not salary increases but recognition and growth on the job. A paid worker’s job has a first claim on her/his time, and attention; a volunteer’s primary obligation is elsewhere—perhaps at home or in a profession.

The motivations that prompt a person to volunteer or take a paid job are often different, too. But everyone has the right to know what the job is, to expect advice, guidance, on-the-job training, and to review progress with someone responsible for her/his activities. Your guidance will strengthen the volunteer’s commitment in the responsibility.
YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS ESSENTIAL

Regardless of other duties your job may have, your responsibility for the activities of others may be the way you make your greatest contribution to Girl Scouting. Guiding other volunteers will not always be easy, but your success in helping others carry out their assignments with satisfaction can bring you a sense of accomplishment and compensate for the difficulties.

You were probably chosen for this job because of qualities of your own. As you begin, you may feel a need to develop new skills, to examine certain of your attitudes, to grow on your job as you are helping others grow in theirs.

Some of the attributes you need if you are to direct the work of others are:

- Acceptance of differences in people—the way they work, their incentives, their skills and experience—and the ability to adapt your methods to their differences
- Ability to give suggestions or advise and to recommend changes constructively and objectively
- Knowledge about Girl Scouting beyond your job and skill in interpreting both the facts and the principles
- Some skill in organizing your work and your life in order to be free when others need you
- Belief that what you are doing is important and interesting and the ability to convey this feeling to others

There is always a temptation to extend such lists until they include most of the human virtues. If you can develop these five attributes, and you become skilled in the other qualities of a good consultant, you will be more than an asset to your council.

Of the five attributes we’ve listed, which do you think you already do well and which will you work to strengthen?

Many satisfactions await your as you carry out your responsibilities. A volunteer who takes a job tentatively, planning to serve for a year, stays in Girl Scouting and moves on to bigger jobs—take a little credit for the part you played in changing her/his mind! An individual who first seemed uncertain and insecure in the job calls on you less and less with minor problems and uses more of your time together to report successes and make creative suggestions—you must have done a good job giving help!

Many job satisfactions may come to you as by-products rather than direct achievements. That is expected if you have moved from doing everything yourself to directing work done by others.

What achievements do you hope to see accomplished by those you supervise? What will indicate that you have done a good job of supporting the volunteers?

When you are puzzled about your job, when you need advice and guidance, remember that there is someone you can turn to who is responsible for your work.
Most volunteers share certain needs which serve as general guidelines to those who direct their activities. Within those guidelines, each volunteer’s individual characteristics and needs will temper your approach.

Beyond what they have in common and their personal differences, volunteers also come from a variety of backgrounds with different degrees of experience, and their motives for volunteering vary widely. Consider these types of backgrounds and levels of experience and the most obvious special needs they indicate:

**New to Girl Scouting** but experienced as volunteers. Their special needs may be:

- To widen their knowledge of Girl Scouting beyond their own jobs
- To “catch” your feeling of conviction about the value of Girl Scouting
- To be encouraged to use what they have learned from other volunteer experiences

**New to the job** but not new to Girl Scouting. They may need help:

- To feel ready and able to do this particular job
- To adjust to new ways of work and new relationships

**New to volunteering.** They will need:

- More explicit information than experienced volunteers on what they can expect and what is expected of them
- Help in developing a sense of pride in being a volunteer
Old-timers with a long history in Girl Scouting. Before you can establish good working relations with these volunteers you may need to help them:

- Feel that you value and respect what they know and have already contributed
- Be challenged to accept new ways and new ideas

Young adults—some former Girl Scouts, others perhaps young activists eager to help create a better world. They may need help:

- To see the difference between their past roles as girl members of this or another organization and their present adult role
- To understand the framework within which adult members operate
- To feel free to initiate valid and creative change

Older adults whose home or job responsibilities have decreased and who are ready to be more active in the community. For them:

- Hand-tailoring their jobs may maximize their potential contribution

Highly specialized volunteers with limited time to give. They need help:

- To apply their specialties to Girl Scouting
- To widen their interest in and knowledge of the organization

Many other backgrounds and experiences indicate special needs, and even within these few examples, individuals may belong to two or more groups and have a combination of special requirements. Some may belong to minority groups as well, and be concerned with widening opportunities for their own young people. The may need help:

- To become and feel a part of the total Girl Scout picture
- To find the best ways to utilize Girl Scouting to achieve their goals

People don’t sort out into neat little boxes. The groupings used here are just suggestions to get you started in your own thinking. The point to keep in mind is: if you are to direct the work of others effectively, you must recognize what they bring to the job and make use of and expand their experience. It is the blending of what they bring and what the work requires that builds success.

Examine yourself.

- What are the chief skills YOU bring to your job?
- How could those skills best be used within our organization?
- How will you determine the skills of the people you supervise?
Establish the relationship. If you are directing the work of others for the first time, your immediate concern will be to establish a good, working relationship where others feel free to come to you for advice and are at ease sharing their concerns and ideas with you.

Arrive at a mutual understanding of your role. You may have a written description of your job including the part that gives you responsibility for the work of others. Read it carefully; identify points that are not entirely clear to you and discuss them with the person you are accountable to. If you haven’t a written description, it would be good to write down your understanding of your role and confirm it with your supervisor.

The initiative for the first get-together is yours. You may choose individual, face-to-face conferences or decide to meet all those you are responsible for at one time. Due to distance, you may need to meet via telephone or electronic media. There is no one best way. The key is to have a flexible approach—to encourage a feeling of easy communication and an understanding of your role.

Even if some are experienced Girl Scout volunteers, in your group there will quite likely be a few who are new to their jobs. Assisted by the experienced volunteers, review with the new people the way Girl Scouting is set up in your council and the channels of communication. Help them see where you and they fit in, how and where you serve as spokeswoman for them. If there are others besides yourself to whom they can turn for help and advice, be sure that the difference in your roles is clearly understood.

Be aware of each other as individuals. This is the beginning of any successful relationship.

Each person brings to Girl Scouting qualities, experience, tastes, a life-style, and even a few quirks and prejudices all her/his own—this includes you as well as the other person. As you begin to know each other, you see better where each can contribute and what help is needed. Although it is in their work
that volunteers may call for your guidance, work and worker cannot be neatly separated. However many volunteers you work with, the one-to-one relationship of individuals is important.

Develop an awareness of the difficulties some volunteers may encounter:

- Loneliness for the new volunteer in an experienced group whose members know each other
- Alienation in a new setting for the volunteer who comes from a different cultural background
- The burden of many small expenses (transportation, toll calls, postage, lunches) that can greatly strain a limited personal budget
- Finding it hard to admit needing help and feeling reluctant to call on you

Select one of the four difficulties listed above and tell how you will help a volunteer through it so that she/he will be able to give her/his best to our movement.

Clarify the job. Discussing and clarifying a job with a volunteer and making adaptations to fit her/his situation help you get off to a good start. Although someone else may have recruited the person for a specific job—and presumably also interpreted the particular job—it is a good idea to be sure that you both understand the work at the outset of your relationship.

Let the volunteer know what is expected of her/him. Over and above what appears in the job description, or what may have been said during recruitment, the volunteer is entitled to know from you what you expect. This is your opportunity to show that you consider the job important and that you have confidence in her/him. Anticipated demands on the worker’s time should have been discussed when she/he was asked to serve, but if they were not, discuss them now and make adjustments as needed. Time is precious for many valuable volunteers and adjustments at the outset will avoid later frustrations.

If, as a part of the job, the worker is expected to participate in special meetings, keep certain records, make written reports, or direct the work of another person, be sure that you both understand and agree how those things will be done.

Be sure hat the volunteer understands the specific period of time she/he has been asked to serve.

There are other, less tangible things that you will convey by your own attitude and your approach, such as a belief in the worthwhileness of the job, your own willingness to let others help make decisions, your ability to accept change and to rise above minor frustrations.

If a volunteer has already been told about the responsibilities of her new position by the recruiter, why is it important for you to review the information and expectations again?
Let the volunteer know what to expect from you. Expectations go both ways and it is important for the volunteer to know what she/he can expect from you in return:

- Availability—a listening ear when help or advice is needed
- A voice in decisions that affect the job
- Information about opportunities that will enrich the job activities and about plans that affect the volunteer
- Help in solving problems or referral to sources that can help
- Opportunities to review job progress with you and to plan the next steps together

There are intangibles for the volunteer here, too, and your help may be needed in finding them— involvement, opportunity to influence action, sharing skills and learning new ones, association with interesting people, and satisfaction from making a positive contribution to the community and its young people.

By no means the least of the intangibles a volunteer should expect to find is genuine enjoyment in the job and in being associated with other Girl Scouts. Enjoyment, like enthusiasm, is contagious. A volunteer can catch it from you!

Develop a system of communication. If you are responsible for the work of a number of persons, you will need a plan for keeping in touch, reviewing progress and reporting. This will be a two-way plan and should be discussed and agreed upon by each person involved.

If all the individuals you were responsible for lived close by, or if, in the normal act of doing their jobs, the routinely checked into an office where you sat waiting for them, communication might be easy. Unfortunately, this is seldom so. They are more likely to be widely dispersed—some at the end of a telephone call or electronic message, some on the other side of the region or council.

To maintain regular and effective communication you will need ingenuity and careful planning. Your first step may be to review the channels already setup by the council—the newsletters, teleconferencing systems, mailings, and scheduled meetings.

Take advantage of all opportunities. Learn to send specialized information electronically. Use inter-office mail. See if there is a way to arrange individual or small-group conferences at scheduled meetings that all or some of you already plan to attend. Find out about teleconferencing and webinar opportunities. Explore free web sites that will allow you to post and share documents, minutes,
conversations or sites that assist with selecting meeting dates, issuing invitations, and the like. Know what records should be kept for income tax deductions.

With this information from your council and from your explorations, set up your own plan to keep in touch with each individual or the group as a whole. Establish, where, and how to hold meetings, how to reach each other by phone and e-mail, where to get together for face-to-face discussion, and if feedback seems needed, how and when they will report.

What is your preferred method of communication and why? How will you communicate with others who have different preferences?

Good to Know:

www.meetingwizard.com is a free web program that is useful for selecting a meeting date/time that works for the most people

“Yahoo Groups” http://groups.yahoo.com/ offers a free spot to house/share Service Unit/Troop events electronically. It allows electronic communication in input from all members. Google Docs is a free web program for sharing and joint editing of files.


Free Conference and other sites offer free web/telephone conferencing for small groups.

https://www.freeconference.com/splash.aspx?SR=sr3_108808448_ms&Source=adCenter&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=MPUS_Competitor_NOSET&utm_content=competitor+go+to+meeting&utm_term=go%20to%20meeting&Campaign=MBUS_Competitor_NOSET&Group=competitor/competitor%20go%20to%20meeting/#4458273&SR=sr3_108808448_ms

Go to Meeting offers a free trial period for teleconferencing/web meetings http://www.gotomeeting-free-trial.com/gotomeeting.php?sid=MS-Go+to+meeting-US

Evite, another free web program, is handy for planning/inviting people to an event and collecting their responses http://new.evite.com/#home
Increase the volunteer’s authority and independence. In the beginning most people, volunteer or paid, need time to become familiar with their jobs, to adjust to special demands of their work, and to determine where they need help. During that time, your encouragement and advice may be needed often.

After a time, however, a worker seldom needs this kind of help and can be increasingly independent. Be sure to recognize growth in the job as it takes place. Wait a little longer for her/him to find answers alone; make a point of noticing and commending specific acts of initiative and independence. Although you still retain responsibility for the worker’s activities, the way you handle your role changes. In a sense, you stand back and take a longer perspective on the way the job is going.

Along with growing independence comes the need for increasing authority and responsibility. Sometimes the job itself can be expanded to provide more latitude and opportunity; sometimes the volunteer’s sphere can be widened to participation in a task group or committee.

Be wary of overlooking a volunteer with many small, extra jobs that take up much time but require little skill and experience. She/he may feel overworked but unfulfilled.

In helping people whose service is in your care, you also have a wonderful opportunity to help keep Girl Scouting alive and growing.
Encourage creative ideas and suggestions for change. The new, fresh look of a fresh individual sometimes leads to new and better ways of doing things. Your role is to create an atmosphere where people feel free to make suggestions, where an honest opinion gets a fair hearing. When an idea catches on and influences new action or ways of work, be sure to remember its source; keep the contributor informed of its progress and see that appropriate recognition is given.

Proposing new ideas in an organization steeped in tradition is sometimes risky business. How do you react to new and different ideas?

How will you support and encourage others who think outside the box?

Help volunteers sense the need for new learning. Many people are alert to every opportunity to learn, to enrich themselves and improve their work, but others need a little help.

Most human beings benefit from exposure to new ideas and the opportunity to share learning with others of like interests. If a volunteer is finding certain parts of her/his job especially difficult, or if you are aware that areas of work are neglected or not done well, your help may be needed. If the worker seems less stimulated by the job than before or feels “in a rut,” this too shows a need for help. If a worker seems to have potential for growth in the job or seems ready to move on to another one, she/he is ripe for new learning.

There are many ways learning can take place: independent reading, get-togethers to exchange experiences and ideas about a pre-determined subject, meetings where experts speak on topics of community as well as Girl Scout concern.

Learning takes place in formal and informal courses and workshops offered by a variety of organizations and institutions, as well as opportunities available through Girl Scout councils. Do not underestimate the learning that also takes place when an experience person—you—sits down with someone to discuss her/his plans, progress, and concerns.

Your wider contacts will enable you to keep in touch with what is being offered by other organizations and institutions in your community and region. Some of these workshops, courses, and conferences may be just what a particular individual needs most.

Let your council know what training is needed and share your observations on the effectiveness of training given.

What skills and knowledge are required of the positions you supervise?

List at least three sources for where a volunteer might find the continued learning she/he needs to strengthen those skills.
**Widen a volunteer’s interests** and enrich her/his experiences in Girl Scouting. This should be a part of the plan for the development of all volunteer workers. If you assume that individuals want to continue to learn and to grow on the job, you can help foster a positive attitude toward continues learning experiences.

New volunteers are introduced to that part of Girl Scouting immediately touching their jobs and are given a general view of the organization as a whole. Work becomes more interesting and its value more personally meaningful as they see it more in the context of the council, the nation-wide movement, and the worldwide association.

Encourage volunteers to participate in meetings to which Girl Scout adults are invited—and take some time to brief them on the purposes of such meetings, pointing out how they directly or indirectly affect volunteers’ jobs.

Watch for opportunities to involve individuals in council-wide projects; check the national and council Girl Scout websites and newsletters for local, council, national and international opportunities and pass the information on. Highly qualified volunteers may have heard about some event, but may take little notice of it, feeling that such opportunities are beyond their reach. You can do much with a word of encouragement, an indication of faith in their ability, advice on how to apply, an appropriately placed recommendation.

**Keep in touch.** Although a volunteer needs less help as she/he becomes more confident and skilled in the job, it is still essential or you to keep in touch.

The communications plan you set up in the beginning needs to be reviewed from time to time to test its effectiveness. If the e-mail system of alerting people to learning opportunities produces too few results, try a new method. Sometimes you can get a better response just by changing to an e-invitation, with a question to be answered in the reply.

When you first start working together, it is a good idea to find out the best time to communicate with the volunteer by telephone, how frequently she checks e-mail, whether she can accept calls at work. Avoid contacting her/him at inopportune times or using methods that are ineffective.

If you use meetings as one way of keeping in touch, but are discouraged by poor attendance, check the following: Is the meeting held at a good time for the majority? Would even a slight shift in schedule make it easier for some? Would a telephone or e-mailed reminder the day before tip the scales in favor of attendance?

Who has a share in planning the meeting? Who has a role to play or a job to do as a part of the meeting? Do those who helped plan or those who had assignments for the meeting tend to be present?
more regularly than the others? Is the location accessible, with good parking facilities? Is the meeting place comfortable and conducive to a give-and-take atmosphere? After the meeting is over do those who attended seem to feel they had a part in making decisions and are they glad that they made the effort to come? Are those who were absent followed up, brought up to date, made aware that they were missed?

There is no substitute for the occasional face-to-face contact, and somewhere within yours and the volunteer’s busy schedules an individual conference should take place. It is here that you can discuss specifically and frankly the problems encountered in the job, review progress, and plan the volunteer’s next steps in this or another job.

**During the first three months of appointment, how often do you plan to communicate with volunteers you supervise? And what method(s) will you use to facilitate communication?**

**Consulting is a large part of your role** regardless of the title your job carries. Being a good consultant calls for specific skills in dealing with people, most of which can be developed through practice. Some useful skills and attitudes are listed below. Although they are by no means the only ones you need, and others may be more important to your success, these are important skills that you will want to train yourself to develop.

- Be available when you are needed—this may call for quick adjustment of your own plans in time of greatest need.
- Avoid seeming hurried or too busy to listen when someone comes to you with a problem or suggestion.
- Give counsel, but don’t take over the job.
- Give advice without implying finality about it. You are giving advice; the other person should feel free to accept or reject it.
- Recognize when you cannot help and see that volunteers get help elsewhere. Being a good “supervisor” does not require you to know all the answers.
- Find your satisfaction in helping other people do a job well, achieve and be recognized for achievement, and become increasingly less dependent on you.

**Review progress and problems.** This is as important of the growth of a volunteer as it is in the development of an employed staff member, but it is usually done less formally. Here are some points that may help you.

- Do it together. If there is a time when you need to encourage the other person to speak freely and honestly, this is it.
- Tackle problems as they arise. IF you sit down together from time to time to see how the work is going, minor irritations and mistakes can be dealt with while they are still minor. The end of the year might be the point of no return.
Focus on the work, not the worker. While the two are sometimes hard to keep separate, the more both of you keep your minds on what is happening in the job, the more objective you can be.

Look for strengths not weaknesses. Help the volunteer find her/his own strengths and build on them.

Encourage individual differences. There is seldom just one way to do a job. Out of different approaches there emerges a more creative program—and a more resourceful and self-confident volunteer.

Identify successes. They are even more important than the problems. Figure out together what contributed to a success and how these same factors can be built upon later. Perhaps some problems can be solved by applying what is learned here.

Avoid giving false assurances. Assume that the other person is intelligent enough to recognize a false approach. Be honest but gentle.

Give some thought to what you may need to do differently in this relationship in the future.

What are the most important reasons you see for conducting one-on-one reviews of progress or problems?

Although this rarely happens, sometimes it does become necessary to encourage a volunteer to resign from a job.

- Talk the situation over with the person to whom you are accountable so that you can operate within council procedures.
- If it is clear that the job is yours to do, keep the interview as objective as possible. Focus on the job needs rather than the worker’s personal limitations, and show appreciation for what has been contributed.

Wherein lies job satisfaction? To hold the interest of a volunteer or anyone else work must be satisfying. You can help by keeping in mind some of the factors that contribute toward job satisfaction:

- Involvement... identifying with what is going on, having an opportunity to participate in important decisions affecting the job
- Personal growth... feeling that even while giving so much a person is learning a lot, widening her/his circle of friends, expanding interests
• Feeling needed... being convinced that the slot a person fills is important in itself and to the whole picture, and that others think she/he has a special contribution to make to it

• Enjoyment... of the associations, the successes, the experiences... A bed of roses would not be very stimulating and no one needs or expects one, but a person expects to feel good about the job often enough to make up for frustrations.

• Recognitions... Even when the volunteer is already aware that she/he is doing a good job, it is important to feel that others think so, too.

What makes a job or a task satisfying for you?

Speaking of recognition, it is so important to the satisfaction and retention of workers that it deserves special consideration. Too often, in the pressure of work to be done, the need to say “thank you” or “congratulations” gets pushed aside.

Our council traditionally presents typical Girl Scout adult recognitions of the Appreciation Award, Honor Award, Thanks Badge, and other awards for outstanding performance following our annual business meeting in the spring. Many service units also hold recognition ceremonies. It will be a part of your responsibility to see that names of outstanding volunteers from your particular group are presented to honor at these ceremonies.

Recognition comes in many forms: individual and group; tangible and intangible; for person, performance, or job itself. But the scheduled plan of the council’s only a small part of recognition—here are some points to consider as you develop a broader recognition plan for yourself.

• Recognition should be continual, as close as possible to the special achievement.

• Recognition does not have to wait until a job is completed and a worker is ready to retire. It can even start when a leader affirms commitment to leadership and receives a pin.

• Recognition may be most appreciated when a presentation is made by someone close to the individual: a girl to a leader, a committee member to a chairman.
• Sometimes it may add glamour to have a presentation made by a person symbolic of Girl Scout “greatness.”
• On-the-job incentives, selection for participation in an event beyond the council, an invitation to move on to a more responsible job are all forms of recognition.
• A story in the council newsletter or a local newspaper about an accomplishment is also recognition. Too often only pictures of council Board Chairs and girls appear in the papers.
• A personal note of thanks or congratulations, a word of commendation in the presence of co-workers for a job well done, even an invitation to report to the group on some successful venture make a worker feel appreciated.
• As a check on yourself, think about the people whose work you direct—when and how have you recognized their contributions?

**Share—and commit to—three ways you will recognize the good work of the volunteers you supervise.**

**Recognize growth on the job.** One way to measure your own success in the job you are carrying is by the growth of those for whom you are responsible. As a worker’s skills develop and mastery of the job increases, the job itself can change or expand to utilize added potential. This kind of change stimulates the worker and expands service to Girl Scouting. Review the job with each volunteer from time to time to see what changes are indicated.

You may in time find that a worker now has more to contribute than the present job demands or that the work no longer is challenging. Recommend the volunteer for some other job that will utilize her/his talents and provide the needed stimulation. Much as you hate to lose the worker, you should congratulate yourself for helping to bring her/him to this point.

**Resignations and what to do about them.** When someone resigns, you will often be the first to be told and the one who has to deal with the resignation. If the person is moving to another town or area, part of your job is extending a sincere thanks for the work done and reporting the resignation to the person responsible for finding a replacement. But don’t stop there. Be sure that the council in the new location is given the worker’s new address and told of her/his special strengths. The council will thank you and so will the volunteer.

Often resignations are unavoidable because family or job responsibilities change. In these circumstances, the individual is ready and eager to move into a sort of associate relationship and to come back when time permits. Unfortunately, moving away and changing responsibilities are only some of the many reasons people leave jobs. Sometimes the reasons are obvious, other times carefully and tactfully hidden. The more you can find out about the true reasons behind a resignation, the more you will learn about better ways to work with other volunteers. The resignation may result from long months of frustrations, not feeling truly needed or appreciated, boredom in a static situation, or lack of involvement beyond the immediate job.
As you gain experience in your job, you will become alert to danger signals pointing toward resignation. The earlier you see the signals and set about correcting the problems, the fewer unnecessary resignations you will have to face.

Whatever the reason for the resignation, take time to talk with the person who is leaving. Give her/him a chance to tell you what went wrong—if something did—and explore together the possibility of satisfaction in some other job. A sincere and somewhat public act of recognition as a volunteer moves on sweetens the memory of the job and may even inspire those who remain.

How will you handle a resignation when you feel it is due to a personality conflict between you and the volunteer you supervise?

A WORD ABOUT VOLUNTEERS

You, and all of the many volunteers in your council, and hundreds of thousands of adults throughout the country give time, energy, service, and wisdom to keep the organization strong. As an active volunteer you are one of your community’s most valuable resources. As a volunteer who makes it possible for other volunteers to contribute effectively, you are doubly valuable.

One Girl Scout leader described her involvement as “part-time work that brings full-time rewards.” We hope your job in Girl Scouting brings you that kind of satisfaction.

To receive credit for completing this course, send the following information to training@girlscoutsp2p.org or GSCP2P, 530 4th Street SW, Hickory, NC 28602

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