

# multiplying your effectiveness

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Donald D. Juchartz

If you're committed to doing everything yourself, then read no further, for I'm writing about working with and through others. If you subscribe to the idea that "the ideal committee is made up of three members, two of whom never show up!" then enhancing staff effectiveness will have little meaning for you.

However, if you're dedicated to the twin precepts of Extension: (1) making information available to people in a form and manner in which they can use it and (2) motivating and inspiring them to adopt and implement it, then you're also dedicated to enhancing your effectiveness through using the multiplier effect.

In Wayne County, Michigan, we have the opportunity to reach great numbers of people for this county is the third most populated county in the U.S. (2.7 million people). It contains the sixth largest city, Detroit. We have more than 840,000 homes and over 500,000 youngsters of 4-H age. We have more than 600 commercial farms, as well as the distinction of having the U.S. metropolitan area with the greatest number of owner-occupied homes. If we had Extension staff commensurate with the population we have, we'd probably use all of the field staff available in Michigan. We have to make our staff as effective as possible and our job, as managers, is to enhance this effectiveness.

## Principles

Here are some principles to consider in helping you multiply your staff effectiveness.

### *Job Responsibility*

Regardless of the size of staff, there's a fundamental principle that must be observed. Each person needs to have as definitive a job and position description as possible. The plan of work will be correlated with the needs of the clientele, but internally assigned to staff whose job responsibility will allow them the greatest freedom to carry on the individual program.

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It's absolutely impossible for Extension staff to be all things to all people . . . at least at the same time. Conflicting pressures, to do all things at the same time, can often be resolved through the use of advisory committees or groups. But, it can also be handled through the intervention of administrative counseling and suggestions from the county Extension director. This administrator must be ready to back up his people based on a sound plan of work, derived in consultation with local citizens, with logical and rational consequences.

*Resource  
Assessment*

One of the least done activities in Extension programming is to determine, list, and count all of the costs that go into each program. These costs should include personnel time (Extension staff, secretarial, program assistant), supplies, materials, equipment use, mailing costs, etc. When these are all put down so they can be visually assessed, gaps and shortages often show up. We preach to clientele to look at their options and alternatives and to select the best one(s) depending on the varied circumstances. If you look at only the present resources, the program will be limited to those resources.

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We encourage staff to consider the maximum size of a program to achieve the desired results. For example, in the 4-H youth program, lack of volunteer leaders often limits the size of the program. Getting youngsters into the program isn't the problem, but locating and training volunteer leaders often limits the effort.

Imaginative programming allowed us to pursue a grant program (CETA) that had as its main objective the locating and training of volunteer leaders in selected neighborhoods. Employed staff identified potential leaders and trained and assisted them. At the end of 1 year, when the funding ceased, we had 300 new leaders in place.

Or consider, as many county staffs have done, the incorporation of the Master Gardener program, where Extension staff train interested horticulturally based lay leaders to help their neighbors by disseminating Extension information. Couple with this the requirement that a certain number of

public service hours be put in before certification and you build a dedicated volunteer staff. In our case, 70 Master Gardeners are available for trouble calls, speaking engagements, staffing booths at special events, etc.

*Funding* There are generally two main types of funding: "hard" and "soft" dollars. "Hard" money is supposedly the best because it keeps coming, while "soft" money is here for only a while. Many Extension people refuse to use soft money because when it stops, the program generally stops. If this is what's happening to you, then you really aren't using soft money to its full advantage.

Every Extension office has a core staff. These are the professionals who provide continuity. Everyone has jobs or programs they want to do, but don't because of staff limitations. Quite often a carefully described program, to terminate at a prescribed time, will allow staff to accomplish these special tasks. The real trick is to write the program in terms of objectives, and not activities, and then plan to have the programs in place and continuing after funding ceases.

For example, our urban gardening program (called "Growing Roots") was funded by Congress on a year-to-year basis. The first year, 1977, our staff of 1 agent and 5 program assistants involved 35,000 people in gardening—who produced over \$120,000 in vegetables. How do we know? We had a professional evaluation done (not by Extension staff) that gives credibility plus a real guide to what happened.

The second year was devoted to putting trained volunteers in place so they can continue expanding and maintaining the program when either the funding ceases or we move into other areas in program expansion.

Soft money has a place, but be aware of the potential for getting trapped into total dependence. *Professional* evaluation can be used to enhance the future effectiveness of your staff.

*Time* There's only one thing that everyone has the same amount of . . . *time*. To become more effective, staff need to become better time managers and efforts must be made to allow them to concentrate on the priority items. Routine tasks can readily be assumed by program assistants and others. We must remember, though, no job is unimportant. The philosophy of "if the job will not glorify the individual, then the individual will glorify the job" should be engendered.

Our staff routinely does many of the common time-savers: lists, grouping tasks, etc. It's surprising how many extra jobs can get done if proper time management is installed.

*Spend some time with the book by R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap*, McGraw-Hill, 1975, and put into practice the suggestions.*

*Visibility*

To avoid getting lost in great metropolitan areas, it's necessary for Extension to be visible in some tangible way. It doesn't take long for people to forget who and what you are if your programs are small compared to the great mass of people.

We, in Wayne County, hope to have solved this problem, to some degree, by building a county-financed \$4.7 million, 26-acre Extension and Education Center where the staff will have an opportunity to visually demonstrate the recommended practices. The center will contain a 40,000 square foot Administration Building, complete with offices, conference rooms, a 250-seat auditorium, a demonstration kitchen, laboratory, print shop and mail room, data processing, etc.

Also, a part of the complex will be a farm park with a large multipurpose barn (suitable for animal and equipment demonstrations), a large greenhouse in which to grow farm crops, parking for 400 cars plus 10 buses, a 6-8 acre trial and demonstration area for home horticulture, an extensive trial and demonstration commercial farm crop area, and 2 ponds to demonstrate pollution control methods plus fish farming.

Staff effectiveness will be increased when they can bring people to an outstanding demonstration area and make their programs part of an integrated series of events.

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**Summary**

To capitalize on the opportunities, extra support staff must be available and qualified. This includes competent program assistants who know what their job is, what's expected of them, and are trained to do it. Running and managing a large Extension program increases the risks involved of everything not going just the way it would if you were doing everything yourself. Working with and through others can multiply your effectiveness. Despite the high risk, there should be no reluctance on the part of any staff to have failures. The only bad part of failing is if you fail a second time, in the same way, because you haven't learned.

To be really effective, an Extension agent needs to be oriented, motivated, a manager with the right combination of "tools," a team worker, and a person willing to let his/her people stretch their abilities as he/she, also, has been given the opportunity. Putting it all together can mean an Extension program that reaches over 1 million people a year, has a budget of \$2 million, and a staff of more than 100.