

Substantial Progress Reported at AGM

President Ed Monahan reported substantial progress during the past year at the Annual General Meeting of Management Advisory Service, held on December 14, 2006 at the Rogers Communications Centre.

While uncertainties continue and more work needs to be done, MAS is making progress thanks to new marketing and other initiatives, Ed said. These have resulted in increased enquiries and projects undertaken and stable finances following a period of reorganization. Assistance to client agencies, "our principal objective", was up with 130 enquires, 50% more than last year. Of this number one-third was from agencies MAS has helped in the past and two-thirds from new organizations. These enquiries will result in almost 100 projects in 2006 plus a number of new leads this year.

An ongoing marketing campaign, led by Rita Daniel and supported by an enthusiastic group of a dozen volunteers has, among other initiatives, contacted all members of Toronto City Council (David Ferguson) and a large number of client agencies informing them of what MAS is, what it is doing and what it can do for others. The Sales Task Force is planning to build on this expanding number of contacts through the newsletter, website, advertising on the Charity Village website and other available means of communications including direct contact.

The evaluation program enables MAS to confirm the client has been helped, MAS standards have been met and generate new business. Ed pointed out "this is a very important activity because it tells us how well we are doing in terms of customer satisfaction and at the same time provides the kind of information that donor agencies always ask for." Dave Snow and his team have conducted 23 reviews to date in 2006 and there are plans for more in 2007. Dave is looking for more volunteers to help with this work.

Ed said an ongoing concern has been involving more volunteers. During the past year a number of VCs have contributed in non-project activities such as marketing and sales, evaluation and administration. Mark Ellwood initiated a series of Learning Days during 2006 and a case study was incorporated as part of the AGM. Clovis Grant, General Manager of Eva's Phoenix, whose mission is to help homeless

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MAS Moves to Expand Membership

For years, MAS existed as an informal association of volunteers. A year ago it became formally organized as a nonprofit corporation registered with Industry Canada. At that time, Management Advisory Service of Ontario (MAS O) established simple provisions for membership and a Board of Directors. Now it is time to expand.

The stated object of MAS O is to provide management services, without charge, to charitable organizations operating in Toronto and surrounding areas and municipalities. Membership in the Corporation is open to persons interested in furthering the objects of the Corporation. Members of the MAS volunteer roster are being invited to become members of the Corporation. However, it is not necessary to be a member of the Corporation in order to be on the VC roster.

At the same time, the MAS Board of Directors is to be expanded from 3 to 10. Members of the Corporation will elect these Directors at a special meeting of the Corporation scheduled for March 15 2007.

Successful Recruiting – And Retaining Employees

Rick Anderson, a MAS volunteer and consultant in private practice, has advised clients on recruiting and retaining productive employees. These are some highlights from a presentation to a meeting of volunteer administrators.

Rick observed one of the keys to attracting excellent employees is to ensure the recruiter is trained in all aspects of recruiting, including what is legally appropriate to ask in an interview. (See MAS September 2006 Newsletter.)

Remember, the recruiter provides the candidate with the first impression of the job.

The recruiter should be competent in all aspects of recruiting and be a positive role model.

The recruiter must have an updated job description for the position to be filled and he/she should focus on the appropriate criteria.

For example, the criteria for an accountant could be:

Ability to do calculations accurately, record figures legibly and orderly, work quickly and sometimes alone, have a thorough knowledge of accounting procedures, systems and methods and be able (if appropriate) to take direction from a superior.

The criteria will be different for other positions. The recruiter should probe into each criteria to satisfy his/herself the candidate has the ability and/or skills.

The recruiter should also assess the candidate in the following areas: 1) technical ability (the basic knowledge, skills and background to handle the job);

2) leadership potential; and 3) maturity.

Interviewing skills should include how to ask “open-ended questions”, how to paraphrase and probe, how to test for reactions and how to close an interview.

Keeping Employees

There is no single prescription to motivate and retain employees. The following are a number of proven actions that can result in increased employee motivation.

- Personally thank employees for doing a good job, one-on-one, in writing, or both.
- Be willing to take the time to meet and listen to employees.
- Provide employees with specific and frequent feedback about their performance. Support them in improving performance.
- Recognize, reward and promote high performers. Deal with low and mediocre performers so that they improve or leave.
- Provide information on how the organization operates and explain the employee's role in the overall plan.
- Involve employees in decisions, especially those affecting them.
- Give employees a chance to grow and learn new skills. Show them how you can help them meet their goals; create a partnership.

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More Accolades For Our Volunteers

Volunteers in the nonprofit sector are used to working quietly and efficiently without recognition. But it is always nice to hear from satisfied clients. Here are a couple of recent examples.

“(She) has continued to be an amazing resource and ballast for us...I can't imagine what our organization

would be like today if we hadn't been matched up with her a few years ago.”

(In response to an earlier message.) “The pleasure was all ours! We have done nothing but brag to other organizations about MAS and what a great service it provides”.

Michael Landa: Focus on Leadership

Like many of our good volunteers, Michael Landa was an import to Toronto. Born in Western Canada, he earned his B.A. at the University of Saskatchewan and an M.A. (Cultural Anthropology) from the University of Manitoba before moving east.

He chose not to be an academic preferring to 'accomplish something'. His career with more than 25 years of experience in both the public and private sectors has included the broad range of activities that comprise the contemporary human resource management sector. Of particular interest to MAS clients is his work in the Ontario public service, especially the early innings work on Employment Equity which, although in place here since the early 90s, is still not fully appreciated by the many agencies and organizations of the nonprofit sector.

He holds the CHRP (Certified Human Resources Professional) designation and today combines a consultant practice in what he calls OAC (Organization Assessment and Change) with his role as the volunteer co-ordinator of the MAS Human Resources activities.

Michael credits MAS with providing him with new and quite different, even unique, experiences and an endless stream of challenges that can be found in no other sector. "I am in awe of the people in the nonprofit sector," Michael says. "They are most admirable, truly altruistic. Vastly overworked and not paid much, their commitment is such that they would work for even less."

His focus on organizational assessment has led him to pay particular attention to the requirements of leadership. The textbooks focus on the leader as the boss at the top. They take the models of Alexander the Great, Churchill and Attila and are, thus, usually unsuitable as guides for most managers in more humble roles.

Michael prefers to pick up the stick by the other end. He points out that "people may join 'good'

companies but they leave 'bad' supervisors". Staff turnover is a function not so much of the 'boss' but of the management style at every level of supervision. The qualities of leadership, obtaining support and cooperation, are required at every level of the organization, perhaps most especially where one meets the clients. Leadership is found on the front line as well as in the general's tent.

As a matter of interest, MAS is currently giving serious thought as to how we can bring such thinking to our clients in addition to our conventional one-on-one consulting assignments. With his teaching background, Michael will play a key role if we can develop a series of workshops or seminars.

And, he has been surprised that so many MAS clients still attempt to operate without human resources policies. Says Michael: "Flying by the seat of one's pants is becoming a major source of employee dissatisfaction and grievance and many of these disruptions can be avoided with an easily crafted policy manual."

As MAS now enters its 15th year, Michael's role as one of a team of Human Resources volunteers becomes increasingly valuable to us and our clients.

Recruiting (continued)

- Provide employees with a sense of ownership in their work. This can be symbolic, for example business cards whether needed or not.
- Strive to create a work environment that is open, trusting and fun. Encourage new ideas and initiative. Learn from rather than punish mistakes.
- Celebrate successes – of the organization, the department or the individual. Take time for team and morale building. Be creative and fresh.

For more information about Human Resources organization and management contact Management Advisory Service.

How Long Should a Project Last?

MAS does not define projects in terms of time spent by the volunteer. While there is an unofficial span of three months, after which the situation might be assessed, a review of successful projects shows they can last anywhere from one visit to many months.

An example of a very short project was a neighbourhood group seeking to raise money to improve their local city-owned park. The city agreed to put in some seed money but also wanted to control the money raised from the community, creating the problem of how to reassure volunteers and donors that the project was indeed still theirs. The MAS volunteer, experienced in the ways of bureaucracies, advised on how to work with city officials so that both parties would be satisfied.

In another one-shot project, a local organization that advises Third World farmers on ways of increasing productivity faced the dilemma that its CIDA grant would be reduced as the organization increased its revenue through fundraising. The MAS volunteer was able to put the executive director in touch with the key person who had the authority to change the terms of the grant. As one senior government official put it, there are plenty of resources available, it's a question of knowing which buttons to push.

On the other end of the scale, some projects drag on for quite legitimate reasons. Service organizations providing social services, health care and other support activities for seniors, require Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation. This can be an arduous task because the policy and procedures manuals and other documentation cover a wide variety of activities. Several hundred pages of information was prepared by staff over a period of months. MAS was asked to provide a volunteer to edit this material for consistency, style and language. English is the second language for many of the staff in this case. One assignment began in November and ended in April, the designated deadline. Another lasted longer than that because of the amount of information required

An analysis of recent MAS projects indicates the average time spent by a volunteer is 35 hours, ranging from just a few to 100 or more. These latter ones would probably involve more than one volunteer and discipline

A project does not necessarily end when the assignment is completed to the satisfaction of both client and volunteer. If appropriate, a period of mentoring kicks in after sign-off. The volunteer remains available to the client for advice or for just talking things over. In one case, four volunteers with different skills such as communications, finance and governance, were involved over a period of three years.

A home support agency wrote "...the volunteer did a considerable amount of preparation work with our Board and delivered an excellent strategic planning workshop in November...she followed up with a report that we approved in December and are now using to develop a revised three-year strategic plan...(we) look forward to her visioning workshop in January."

AGM Progress (continued)

youth become self-sufficient, presented a challenge: How do we identify success? Some innovative and useful ideas were put forward.

Treasurer Peter Morgan presented the financial statements. MAS has modest requirements and with revenues from honoraria, the generosity of some VCs and a recent grant the books are balanced. Both Peter and Ed cautioned that the future is still a bit iffy.

Ed left to the last item on the agenda the matter of expanding membership in the newly incorporated nonprofit organization known officially as Management Advisory Service of Ontario. (See separate story on page one.)

Following Ed's presentation, questions from the floor were taken and a discussion of the issues followed. A special meeting of the Corporation has been scheduled for March 15, 2007.

MAS Charitable Number

MAS has official charitable status (**Number 86043 1667 RR0001**) which means we can issue receipts for income tax purposes for donations in various forms.