

## A Convenient HR Guide for Nonprofits

The typical MAS assignment responds to an enquiry or request from a nonprofit organization. When the request is specific, it is easy for MAS to match the problem with volunteer skills. But often the request is more general, reflecting the client's belief that their organization should be operating more effectively.

Recently, a number of our clients have asked for help in diagnosing and correcting what seems to be a rising level of employee complaints or dissatisfaction. This is not surprising in a sector characterized by increasing workloads and low pay, often made worse by a sense of unfairness in dealing with the situation. A closer look often reveals there has been an absence of clear explanation of organizational policy/procedure. This makes for problems that need not have arisen.

Michael Landa, a leader in the Human Relations area, has developed a comprehensive employee information and policy manual as a guide for reviewing the HR policies of nonprofits based on legislated requirements and best practices.

Some 10 chapters cover almost 60 everyday topics related to the terms of employment and the treatment employees can expect to receive. These include not only legal employment standards but also an explanation of internal policies that agencies can adapt to meet their particular requirements and the needs of their employees.

If any organization is interested in talking with Michael Landa or a volunteer consultant from the HR group, contact the MAS office and we will arrange a meeting to discuss your organization's policies.

## Special Meeting Approves New Governance

A special meeting of members of the MAS Ontario corporation in March has approved a new governance structure and elected seven new directors, bringing the total to 10. Three of the directors are also members of the Management Committee, providing continuity. The directors will serve for one year.

President Ed Monahan explained that a nominating committee sought out candidates and members were invited to make additional nominations. The committee put forward seven names and an eighth was also put forward. The nominations were closed after several weeks but reopened on the day of the meeting. One nominee withdrew and no new nominations were received at the meeting. The Board of Directors will be responsible for policy and the Management Committee for operations.

This brings MAS governance into line with current practice in the nonprofit sector.

The new directors are Bill Barley, Jim Campbell, Rita Daniel, Chris McGovern, Elizabeth Greaves, Fred Simons and Don Taylor. The current directors are President Ed Monahan, Secretary Aubrey Russell and Treasurer Peter Morgan (see below).

Several members at the meeting raised issues they felt the board should deal with and some of these were discussed at the board's first meeting. These included the need for an audit in 2007 (an audit was not required for 2006 which was the first year MAS had charitable status), strategic and budget plans, the importance of honoraria from our clients and so forth. It will be a busy year.

A case study, led by Mark Ellwood, (*Cont'd on p. 2*)

## Expanded Board of Directors for MAS

In mid-March Management Advisory Service held a special meeting of members of the corporation to elect a new and enlarged 10-member Board of Directors (see story page one). With the establishment of the new board, MAS now has a traditional bi-cameral structure with a board of directors to address policy matters and a management committee to deal with operations. To assist in the development of this new governance structure, several members serve on both the board and the management committee. The board has already held its first meeting and is proceeding apace to establish committees and get down to business. Information on board activities will be provided on a regular basis.

Our marketing team under the able direction of Rita Daniel, continues to expand its activities. A mail campaign to contact city politicians and local nonprofit

agencies with information on what MAS is and the services it offers, with follow-up telephone contacts, is being extended. It requires a good deal of hard work, which has begun to pay off with a welcome increase in the number of enquiries received and projects undertaken.

A telephone survey is obtaining feedback from MAS volunteers on our "Learning Days". By this means, we hope to find out what our volunteers would like to see by way of interesting and informative future programming.

Given the increase in the number of requests for assistance, MAS is beginning to feel pressure to expand our volunteer base in several program areas. Future issues of the Newsletter will contain a Help Wanted section listing where volunteer consultants are needed.

**Ed Monahan**

## Special Meeting Approves New Governance

*(from page 1)*

followed the election of directors. This focused on improving consulting skills and criteria for membership.

Brief profiles of the new directors:

**Bill Barley** An executive with Dupont for many years Bill is currently treasurer of the Ontario Division Canadian Cancer Society. He joined MAS in 1996 and has served as Chair of the Operations Committee.

**Jim Campbell** Jim is a retired banker and information technology consultant with his own practice and has helped with the redesigned MAS website. He joined MAS in 2004.

**Rita Daniel** Rita has had extensive marketing experience in the private and public sectors and has her own firm. With MAS since 2002, she is a member of the Management Committee.

**Christine Govern** Chris, a former vice-president, small business banking, has a broad business experience which she has applied to many MAS projects, including 16 last year. She was a member of the Operations Committee 2002-2005.

**Fred Simons** Fred, a senior insurance company executive, is Vice-Chair of the Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs and Executive Director of ICA Canada which uses facilitation to effect social change. He has been a MAS volunteer for 10 years and is on the Management Committee.

**Elizabeth Greaves** Liz has executive experience with Native Child and Family Services, Youth Link and Dixon Hall and has volunteered on numerous other boards including Voices for Children, Nellie's Hostel, Fred Victor Centre and the Salvation Army.

**Don Taylor** Don has been "Mr. MAS" for many years. After a career in public service he volunteered with Ontario Parole Board and CESO before helping to found MAS and becoming virtually fulltime as office manager and anchor of the operations and management committees.

**Ed Monahan**, President, **Aubrey Russell**, Secretary, and **Peter Morgan**, Treasurer, are long-time stalwarts of MAS and members of the Management Committee.

# Jim Evans: Master of the Database

Jim Evans has had a long history of volunteering both in England, where he was born, and in Canada since he arrived in 1964. He worked with the Heart and Stroke Foundation and other agencies recently and, looking for other opportunities, went to the Volunteer Centre of Toronto where he met Don Taylor, a founder and mainstay of MAS which had its offices at the Centre at the time. Don invited Jim to join MAS and suggested "there is probably something around here you can do". Jim has spent at least one day a week at the MAS office ever since.

Jim's working career was in the engineering/construction business as an estimator, specializing in petro-chemical and heavy water installations. The success of any contract depends largely on the skill of its estimator who must know precisely how his company can complete a project and how much the job will eventually cost. Jim's skills have stood him in good stead over a long career working as a manager and consultant on many engineering and construction projects.

When he was introduced to MAS some eight years ago it did not take Jim long to see that we were essentially a communications centre matching

volunteers and their talents, clients with particular problems, projects current and past and potential clients or prospects. At its core MAS is, in effect, a linkage of various, rapidly expanding databases, but at that time without adequate tools.

Over a period of several months, Jim rearranged and amplified our databases and moved them from what amounted to little more than a Roll-a-Dex to more suitable, expandable and more easily accessed Excel spreadsheets. With the expert assistance of Ethel Freedman, he upgraded the databases using Access software. Since 1999, Jim has been responsible for the maintenance of our databases, the core of our operation, and enabled Don Taylor to match the skills of our volunteers with the needs of our clients despite an increasing workload.

For an organization of our size and complexity MAS may be unique in that it continues to depend totally on volunteers. That we can continue this way (envied by all who know about us) is because of the contributions of Don Taylor and Jim Evans. Now, as our work continues to expand, we need additional help to maintain our operations. Any volunteers?

## ***Visit Our New, Expanded Website***

The measure of a website's success is the number of 'hits' and by that measure the revised and expanded website [www.masadvise.ca](http://www.masadvise.ca) has certainly sparked a sharp increase. New pages have been constructed to showcase the varied talents and expertise of our volunteers which should make it easier for nonprofit organizations looking for help with specific, or more general, problems.

Other links provide various ways for visitors to find the areas in which they are interested and for which MAS can provide the appropriate expert assistance. There are also links to related organizations that may be of interest.

Have a look and tell your friends.

## **Facilitation Made Easy**

*Comments from a satisfied client:*

"(The volunteer) facilitated our session skilfully and exceeded expectations. A number of the staff said they felt very good for having mustered enough courage to name their 'elephants' which had not happened in the past...very approachable and allowed staff to be honest with one another and themselves...we plan a follow-up."

# The Legal Responsibilities of Volunteers

One of the vexing issues nonprofits have to deal with is the extent to which volunteer members and directors have legal responsibilities for what goes on within their organization. And while there may be some debate over specific situations it is clear that although “volunteers are not paid for their work they may still be responsible for the consequences of their actions”.

This quote comes from a thoughtful review of the issue published by the Government of New Brunswick in 2004, in which the report also states that volunteers who fail to meet a “reasonable standard of care may have to pay damages if their actions cause harm or injury”. What is a reasonable standard of care? “It is what the average, reasonable person would do in the same situation”.

Dramatic examples of a lack of care have surfaced recently in nonprofits in Ontario where long serving volunteers and/or paid staff have absconded with their organization’s cash. Final decisions from courts have yet to come in most of these cases but it is thought to be unlikely that a reasonable amount of oversight was exercised.

The directors and managers in these organizations may well have some liability – in these cases liability for mismanagement – for failing to ask reasonably penetrating questions with respect to how monies were accounted for.

If you are not sure what you ought to know urge your board to plan an education session – in this as in other cases ignorance may well be no excuse. And for further research on your own you could start at [www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca](http://www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca) or [www.charityvillage.com.cv/research](http://www.charityvillage.com.cv/research).

*Disclaimer: This document is not legal advice, but general information which is commonly encountered. MAS is not a law firm and is not a substitute for a lawyer.*

## One Project Leads to Another

When the funders of a community service centre expanded its role, it hired a professional consultant to develop a program for processing applications and maintaining records. Unfortunately there was no provision for training and with no budget and a network of seven agencies needing to access the system to help hundreds of low-income families, they turned to MAS.

This experience was so positive that within a year they turned again to MAS for two more projects. The first was to update its bylaws and constitution, which had not been reviewed for 30 years, to bring its governance up to date.

They faced a similar situation with their human resources policies on a number of issues including employees’ rights regarding sick time and vacations. In addition to preparing a comprehensive new HR policy, the MAS consultant has continued to provide the centre with ongoing advice.

The executive director commended MAS for being patient and understanding the challenges that face small, under-resourced nonprofit agencies.

## 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.