

# The Burden of Being a Volunteer

"But it's a Volunteer Organization ....."

One of the most used and abused clichés around Rotary is "It's a volunteer organization". This is normally used as an excuse when a job is not done, done improperly or done incompletely. The inference is that since we are an organization of volunteer members, we cannot expect a person to meet their obligations and commitments. It should be the other way around. Because we are a volunteer group and you cannot force anyone to take on a job there is a higher level of expectation when a person volunteers and says "Yes". This Rotarian stepped up and said they would do a job or accomplish a task. No one forced them to accept. No one forced them to "volunteer".

All Rotarians are capable. Each is at some level in their profession that indicates success and capability. A Club President should not have to do every job in the club, they should not have to follow everyone to see that each individual task -is completed; they should be able to expect that their "volunteers" will complete the tasks they have accepted. As a leader, when assigning a task there should be guidance, direction and instruction so that the job can be understood and completed. Leaders offer further assistance as needed. When a Rotarian accepts a task, they should therefore know if they can accomplish it or not. Unfortunately then, it follows that if the task is not completed it is probably due to the Rotarian not wanting to finish the task. ... ***This lack of commitment to completing the task and the Club is unacceptable and yet often brushed off with an excuse 'Well it's a volunteer organization and you can't expect someone to honor their commitments.***

Another cliché is "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime" ...or more apt in Rotary, "If you won't complete the job, don't volunteer for it" ...just say no. A voluntary "yes" has set a level of commitment and expectation in the person asking. They should be able to expect that the job will be completed. A voluntary "no" ...rather than a job poorly done, benefits the entire Club and allows you an opportunity at another time.

One of the reasons we have difficulty getting members to accept the obligation of Rotary leadership is that in many cases we are expecting the leader to do everything. Why is the leader the only one expected to live up to their "voluntary" commitment? Other members see this lack of support and the heavy workload placed on leadership and they are unwilling to be put in that same position.

It is time for all Rotarians to take the business of and commitment to volunteering seriously. We begin our Rotary life accepting the motto "Service Above Self". To be successful in Rotary, as in our professional lives, we must be prepared to honor our commitments and complete the work at hand for which we volunteered.

Are you meeting all your commitments, all you "volunteered" to accomplish?  
Are you helping others to do the same?