



# THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE WORLD WARS, INC.®

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## MOWW LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

- **Why Volunteer?**
  - When volunteer organizations fail, the cause is often related to a disconnect between an individual's motivation to volunteer, and the way the group manages its cadre of supporters. People volunteer to give back to the community, to support a cause, or to feel socially connected to others. Some people volunteer for recognition or to exert influence within the community. A volunteer group that wants to avoid collapse should remain mindful of the wide mix of motivations that bring people to volunteer and structure its operations accordingly.
- **Volunteer Management.**
  - Small-scale volunteer groups often fail because the group's leadership fails to reward volunteers for their support or permits an environment where volunteers struggle among themselves for influence over the larger group. A leadership environment where "anything goes" and where there are no responsibilities put on volunteer members can create animosity among members whose competing reasons for volunteering brush up against each other. A strong leadership culture that is willing to "fire" volunteers who do not fit well is a good first step to avoiding this kind of organizational failure. In addition, groups that put too much burden on too few people will see higher rates of volunteer burnout, with no obvious candidates to fill the gap. Succession planning to create leadership in depth for key positions in the organization is essential to any organization's long-term success.
- **Networking Problems.**
  - Volunteer networks fail when the network is no longer able to bring in enough people to replenish the ranks of new members. This phenomenon can lead to "in-breeding," or the practice of having the same small group of people wield disproportionate influence in the group. To be successful, a group should continue to solicit volunteers and seek new volunteers outside of the usual pool of candidates.
- **Group Cohesiveness.**
  - Group cohesiveness occurs when: members of a group enjoy strong social relationships and a shared sense of identity; individuals are proud to describe themselves as group members and see group membership as important; group members are committed to their tasks and take pride in the output and achievements of the group. Members of cohesive groups deal with conflict openly and constructively. Cohesive groups increase job satisfaction and reduce stress because they offer social support to team members.
- **Group Norms.**
  - Members of cohesive groups tend to follow group norms. Group norms are the explicit and implicit rules that govern the values, actions, and behavior of group members, e.g., coordination, collaboration, and respectful engagement. Some norms enable the group to function more effectively, such as encouraging everyone to participate in decision-making or good timekeeping. However, low performance norms can be detrimental to group productivity. For example, in a cohesive group, members will be reluctant to put in extra effort to meet a deadline if the norm is to work at a steady or even a leisurely pace, or if some in authority positions do not perform in keeping with their position.

- **Groupthink.**
  - When highly cohesive groups make decisions, they run the risk of groupthink. Groupthink occurs when group members are reluctant to express dissenting opinions to avoid causing disharmony within a cohesive group. Opinions held by the majority or by key group members are regarded as unanimous and alternative views are discouraged. Overly cohesive groups are suspicious of contradictory opinions expressed by outsiders or insiders. Information from anyone that contradicts the group's opinion may even be hidden by group members. Groupthink can lead to poor or irrational decisions.
- **Resistance to Change.**
  - Resistance to change occurs when members of cohesive groups rely heavily on each other and resist external ideas and input. This can lead to isolation and a feeling of superiority over others in the organizations. As a result, cohesive groups find it difficult to change their values, actions, or behaviors, particularly when the change is driven by external forces. Moreover, even if an individual member of the group becomes convinced of the need for change, he may find it difficult to put needed improvements into practice due to the strength of the group dynamic.
- **Empty Optimism – or Pie in the Sky Dreams (without the proper ingredients to bake a pie).**
  - Some of the best, most needed, and earnest efforts falter and fail because the leaders simply did not accurately calculate the amount of support that would be available and the alliances and partnerships that they would need. In other words – they lacked a sound business and/or operational plan upon which to build a platform for success. The old saying, “Fail to plan is to plan to fail,” is a truism.
- **Values Vacuum – or Poor Organizational Development**
  - Healthy organizations establish core values that guide the way leaders and staff do business, and how they deal with each other and with outside people and groups at every point of contact.
- **Blinders – or “We’re unique; there’s no one like us in the market.”**
  - Nonprofit leaders and executives are frequently insular and blind to the external changes and “market” forces that will be their undoing. Often, it’s because they are so focused on the needs and crises around them, or they cannot imagine anything that would deter them from achieving their objectives. As detrimental, there is no ability to adjust programs to match changing situations, culture, or competition, and to respond successfully to change.
- **Mission Creep or “Yeah, we should do that too!”**
  - When a corporation goes beyond its initial product line and/or area of service, it’s called brand extension. In nonprofits, we call it mission creep. Because nonprofits are in the business of changing the world, their leaders often cannot seem to stop themselves from seeing every need as a call. The result is too many directions, no mission clarity, and diffused efforts.
- **The Data Conundrum – or the fear of information.**
  - Although many organizations have begun measuring every possible statistic, few have enough data to guide planning, analyze management systems, or redirect underperforming programs or communications. Also factor in the age-old truism, “There’s paralysis in analysis.” There’s a real and present danger for organizations who dive too deeply into studying the data or actionable information they have or take too long to act on it.

- **Not Having a Qualified Leader.**
  - Leaders of nonprofits need the following traits: a head for business, a desire to do good, sincerity, confidence, goal setting, organization skills, attention to detail, persistence, and rigor.
- **Poor Planning and Record Keeping.**
  - A nonprofit is much like a for-profit business. There must be a clear plan, it must be well known and applied, and it must be achieved, e.g., the MOWW Strategic Plan.
- **Giving Volunteers Tasks with No Instructions.**
  - Sometimes, volunteer organizations overlook the importance of job descriptions, clear visions and giving the volunteers an idea of the expected outcomes of their projects. This leads to failure in volunteer work. Remember, coaching, mentoring, and personnel development, are vital. So, too, are giving clear and timely guidelines, deadlines, support, and feedback as these things are essential to leading volunteers to great heights of operational achievement and personal fulfillment.