

“Public Service”

“An exploration of why some do and some don't and some shouldn't”

The points I will try to make tonight, should apply to all kinds of public service communications: ARES/RACES, traffic nets, club service, public servant events, emergencies, disasters, and routine community events. We would almost need to be psychologists to understand all the attitudes and situations that affect hams' volunteer activity, and I am certainly not that. I will do my best to cover some important points.

WHY PEOPLE DON'T VOLUNTEER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

Too often, we say "Lack of interest" and go no further. But there are reasons, (not excuses but real reasons) why some people do not volunteer and some reason even why people shouldn't.

1. Lack of interest is one reason– Some people had just rather do other things with their time, no one part of the hobby is for everybody and that's the way it should be.
2. Age, health issues – A very valid, understandable and noble reason not to volunteer for some duties.
3. Burned out – Sometimes people just volunteer for too much at first and then disappear just as quick.
4. Turned off – Sometimes you have to be pretty “thick skinned” if you plan on working with others during stressful situations and so for some, they had just rather quit.
5. Lack of information – All too often, people volunteer, then find themselves in situations that they don't know how to handle, either because they have not been properly trained or briefed as to what they are suppose to be doing.
6. Changes in work patterns – often times in the family, both the husband and the wife work, and therefore it isn't easy for one to stay at home and hold down the fort while the other volunteers, and sometimes people work two jobs to meet the financials demands of there life, so little time is left to volunteer.

WHY PEOPLE DO VOLUNTEER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

1. At least for some, we feel it is our duty! According to part 97 it is at least part of why we are allowed the spectrum we are allotted and if we don't fulfill the role, then that spectrum is likely to get smaller and smaller.
2. Fellowship, make friends. You can meet the nicest people in ham radio and public service gives people a purpose to work together and train together as a team. The bond and the fellowship can be as good as you choose to make it. I choose to make it good.
3. It's interesting and exciting. Just training for an emergency event is very interesting to those who love to learn new things, and many public service events can be just plain fun to participate in. Naturally working in a real emergency is a serious event, but few will deny that it is exiting to be a part of something so important to the public.
4. It feels good to help others. This reason alone is good enough for some.
5. Some volunteer for the praise they will get. They are likely to get disappointed in short order and eventually they will quit. Volunteer workers that last, must do it because it makes them feel good to do what they do, regardless of weather anyone even knows their name.

For leadership officials, the "duty" angle may be primary. However, for most of us, the factors related to personal feelings are probably most important. So leaders we must make sure to pay attention to the emotion-based factors that motivate most of us to volunteer.

WHAT WORKS BEST

Be the kind of person you would be honored to follow!