

## **Volunteering and Leadership**

The sports volunteer, especially of Paralympic sports, has the opportunity at personal and professional level to feedback and exploit their potential through work played in the sports organization or Paralympic academy. It is clear that the volunteer must have certain attitudes to serve on this task; however it is also clear that organizations provide important inputs for training and participation of volunteers because they explore qualities and skills of volunteers, providing knowledge, experience and key tools for the development on participation, teamwork, leadership.

Continuing a study conducted for the organization Women Way in Philadelphia, USA, in 2006 under the leadership of Markitects, Inc., (Strategic Media Company of Marketing) and Comcast Foundation (foundation that invests into community services provided by non-profit organizations), the leadership, communication skills and resources development, the so-called 'power skills', were evaluated by personal interviews and online surveys of 90 business women with leadership capability. This study sought to determine when, how and why they participated in non-profit organizations and voluntary activities<sup>1</sup>. The study shows among others the following outcomes:

1. 83% of participants reported that they acquired, improved or developed their leadership skills due to volunteer participation, while 78% reported improvement in their communications skills.
2. 62% improved their problem-solving skills, 57% improved organization/multitasking and 53% improved marketing skills.

These outcomes show the benefits of volunteering for women as well as the manner how the business community can take advantage of volunteering for commonweal, because these communities are salutary and improve the opportunities of business.

According the study mentioned, we could ask us: what is leadership? There are different definitions, but mainly it is the capacity to influence the behavior of others to achieve goals previously established. This capacity is developed by the leader, who should motivate for excellent performance at work or academy, delegate responsibilities, guide and respect people.

In sports, there is the possibility of different types of leadership, like athletes, spectators, referees, health workers, educators and coaches, among others. However, neither is every coach a leader, nor every leader is a coach. This ability is acquired in situations on personal and professional levels, by making mistakes and makes the best choice for the whole working team and not for the

individual well. An existing premise about the subject is that the leader is made, not born.

There is a big difference between command and lead. When orders are issued against someone's wishes, they will lose their true meaning. The leader educates, guides and directs the members of the group in the best way.

To exercise leadership effectively, 3 factors must be unified: the individual, the followers and the conditions of the environment where they operate<sup>2</sup>.

Undoubtedly, to be able to direct and guide others, a person has to assess initially their qualities, values, ethics and experience. He/she must be responsible, fair, comprehensive, cooperative and be willing to do realize their work, have complete control of what he/she does, know the performance and activities of the athlete, volunteer or coach, appreciate and recognize the effort and accomplishment of performance<sup>3</sup>.

The followers are those that identify and develop the leader as such. They have different personalities, characteristics, disposition and behavior. Therefore a certain type of individuals responds to certain types of leadership.

Environmental factors have to be related to the nature of the area, degree of stress, the group size and time constraints among others

The sports volunteering, among many other possibilities offers the opportunity to lead in an organization that follows the ideals of Paralympic Movement regardless of socio-economic class, disability or profession carried out.

## Academic Report

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