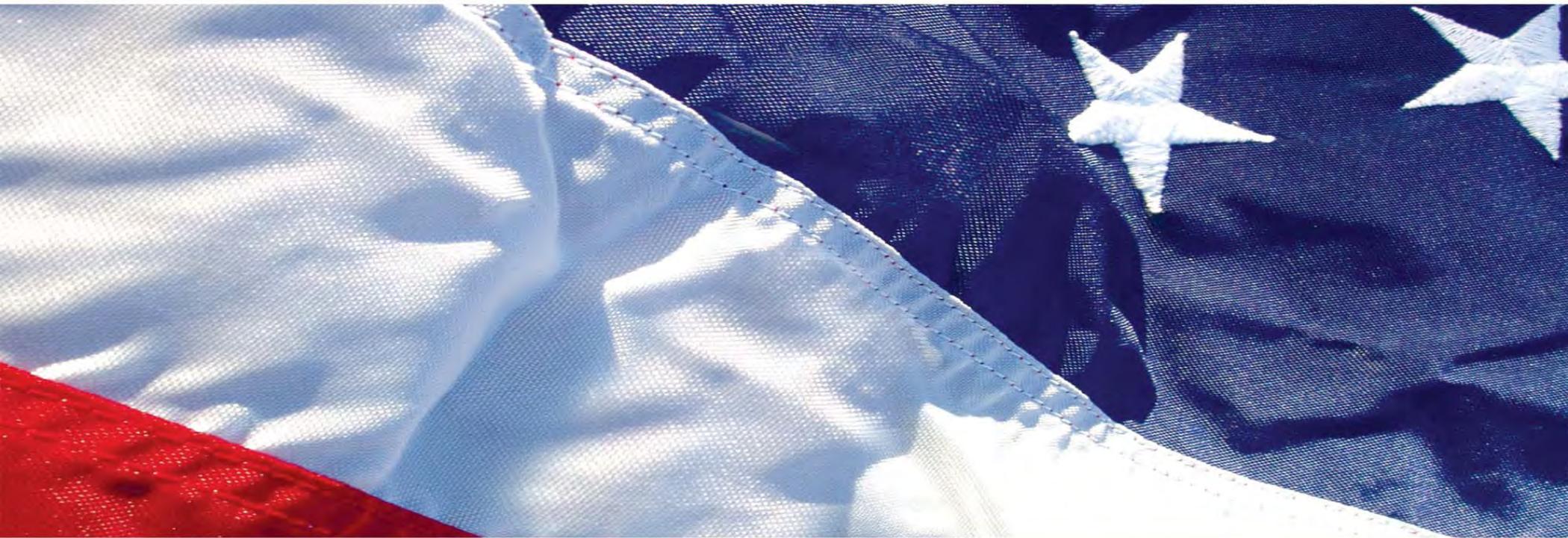


# 2008 Medical Reserve Corps National Leadership and Training Conference



**Prepared Volunteers, Resilient Communities, Strong Nation**



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**Portland, Oregon**



# Motivating and Engaging Volunteers: A Communication Training for MRC Leaders

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# Goals

- Understand what is meant by communication – and how to “employ” it successfully with your volunteers
- Learn why communication is important for sustaining and mobilizing your volunteers
- Engage in hands-on exercises
- Have fun!

# What is communication?

- The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information by speech, signals, writing or behavior
- Interpersonal rapport
- The art and technique of using words, actions, or behaviors effectively to effect change or action

Adapted from *American Heritage Dictionary*

# Why is communication important?

- To further MRC mission/values, want others to:
  - See you as a viable asset *of* the community with direct benefit *to* the community
  - Achieve buy-in
  - Spread the “gospel”
  - Build capacity (human, financial resources)

# **Communication: Aligned with mission and goals**

All communication efforts must start with the mission and goals of your MRC.

# Effective volunteer communication

- Know your audience:
  - how do your volunteers need to hear/receive communication?
  - what's important to them?
- Understand your intent:
  - what do you want your volunteers to do?

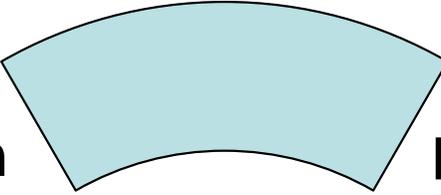
# Effective volunteer communication

- Provide direct benefit to your volunteers
- Listening = most important tool
- Anticipate pushback
- Remember – they are volunteers!

# Effective volunteer communication

- Understand bias – yours and theirs
- Recognize context
- Look for signals (unspoken)
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"

# Effective communication

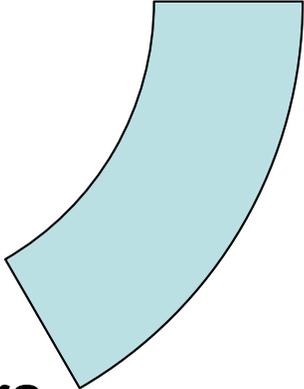
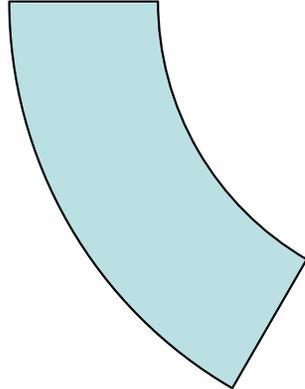


## Medium

- Most effective
- What's your comfort level
- Accessible and adaptable

## Message

- Know your topic
- Be clear
- Understand your intent



## Volunteers

- Understand what motivates them
- Know how they can hear you best
- Listen to them

# Use of communication

- Recruit volunteers
- Advertise for volunteers
- Train volunteers
- Retain volunteers
- Build volunteer base

The cycle repeats itself

# Use of communication

- Build your MRC's capacity
  - Emergency preparedness
  - Fundraising
  - Community connections/liaison
  - Financial, media, other skills

# Use of communication

- The voice of your MRC
  - Volunteers as an extension of your MRC
  - Volunteers are your MRC
  - Volunteers are your feedback mechanism

# **Small group exercise (20 minutes)**

- Break up into groups of 3-6
- Your charge:
  - Communicate with a volunteer (first-time; long-time volunteer)
  - Develop a strategy to guide your conversation with volunteer(s), reflecting on and using what we've discussed

# Challenges to volunteer communication

- Lack of **clarity** in your volunteer needs
- Not **listening** to your volunteers
- No **alignment** between the first two
- Poor/limited volunteer **cultivation**
- Volunteers are busy and have limited **time**

# Challenge: Clarity

- Determine your greatest needs; prioritize
  - \$\$; management skills; PR; inroads to the business community
  - Practice talking through the priorities with others (before you talk with your volunteers)
- Is there one person who can take on volunteer recruitment/management?

# Challenge: Listening

- Ask your volunteers lots of questions -
  - find out why they want to give their time and expertise to the MRC.
  - Look for openings/opportunities to match their needs with yours

# Challenge: Aligning needs

- Sometimes the synergy is obvious
- Strategies to use when not clear
  - Identifying related needs
  - “Bridging” the needs
  - Continuing the conversation
- Be careful of square pegs in round holes

# Challenge: Volunteer cultivation

- The continued “care and feeding” of volunteers is very important -- think donors
- Keep talking with them about their experience -- are their needs being met and are yours?
- Needs (of your MRC and volunteers) evolve

# Challenge: Volunteers are busy

- Most volunteers have full-time jobs -- use their time and skill “wisely”
  - Be clear about time expectations
  - Make strategic decisions re: volunteers
- The right fit
- Remember -- they are volunteers!

# Quick review

- **Definition:** Interpersonal rapport
- **Importance:** Further mission of the MRC and build capacity
- **Being effective:** Listen, listen, and learn
- **Uses:** Skill, expertise acquisition
- **Challenges:** Not listening, no alignment

# Don't forget...

- Communication is never static
- Communication will break down
- Need to delegate
- Actions speak louder than words

# Communication is not

- Absolute (but relational)
- Adversarial (but consensual)
- Finite (but ongoing and evolving)
- Informational (but action and goal oriented)

# What's missing?

- Feedback from the field



# Small group exercise (20 minutes)

- Break into small groups of 3-6 again
- Choose a challenge:
  - Clarity
  - Alignment
  - Time
  - Listening
  - Cultivation
- Create a scenario around this challenge and then mitigate/overcome it

**“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”**

**- *Epictetus, Greek philosopher***

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**Thank you!**

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