



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Actuary

August/September 2010 – Volume 7 Issue 4

Volunteer Management Program

VOLUNTEERS ARE LIKE COFFEE TO THE SOA

BY SHEREE BAKER

MANY PEOPLE RUN ON COFFEE, but the Society of Actuaries runs on volunteers. Volunteering has become part of the fabric of many people's lives, and the ideas, knowledge and expertise needed to keep the SOA moving forward would be impossible without the involvement of our members.

Recognizing how important volunteers are to the success of the organization, the strategic leadership of the SOA has made the development of a comprehensive volunteer management program one of its 10 Strategic Initiatives. The Leadership Development Program (LDP) began in 2008 as a three-year initiative to develop and implement an all-encompassing volunteer program that would identify, recruit, track, manage and recognize volunteers. The Leadership Development Committee (LDC), a Board committee chaired by Martine Sohler, has the responsibility for the development of this program. Other members of the Leadership Development Committee are Jim Toole, vice chair; Christopher Fievoli, Philip Gold, James Miles, John Nigh and Kevin Pledge. In addition, the SOA has a full-time staff member dedicated to the program.

Some of the main goals of the LDP are to recruit new volunteers, provide skill-building opportunities for those entering into the volunteer process, and develop new leaders.

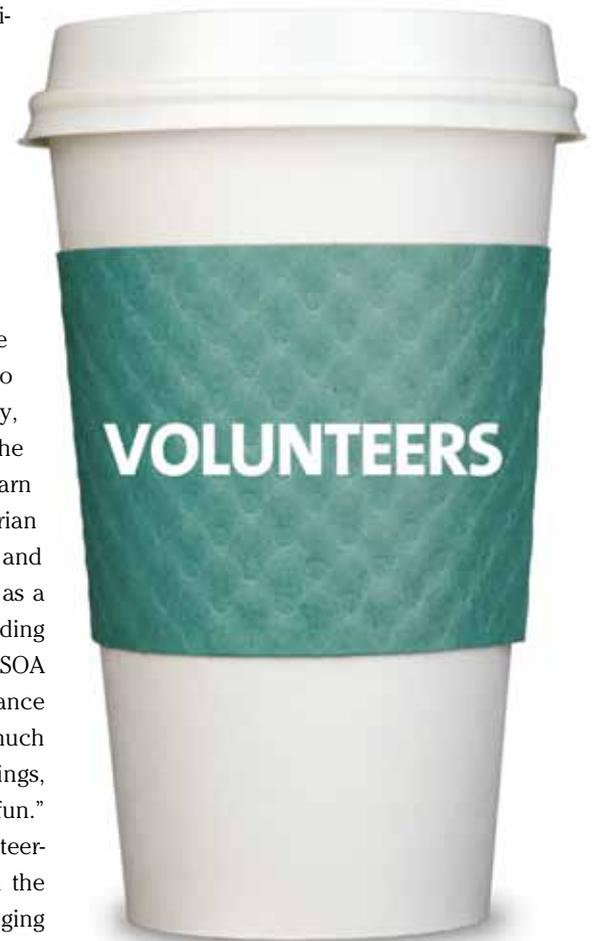
We also hope that implementing this new program will minimize burn-out of our most active volunteers.

In order to better understand what motivates our volunteers, the program seeks not only to clearly define the types of opportunities available, but to identify what the member hopes to gain from the volunteer experience. The SOA's goal is to provide a consistent and rewarding experience for its volunteers.

WHY DO ACTUARIES VOLUNTEER?

Some of the reasons may surprise you. Conversations with our members indicate that many volunteer because they want to give something back to the profession. Nadeem Chowdhury, USAA, volunteers "to keep up with the industry, network with peers and learn new skills." Suzette Huovinen, Securian Financial Group, echoes those thoughts and adds that, after completing her exams as a candidate, she "was interested in finding out what exams looked like from the SOA side." Errol Cramer, Allstate Life Insurance Company, says that he gets back much more than he invests—"new learnings, friendships, networking and mostly fun." Sue Sames, Towers Watson, says "volunteering creates a feedback loop (for both the volunteer and the SOA) that keeps bringing

volunteers back ... often in different areas." Volunteering for the SOA offers the opportunity to develop skills such as leadership, communication, time management, negotiation and management of a virtual team. It's a safe place to learn and practice these skills



CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

without any repercussions—skills that can be brought back to the workplace.

WHO ARE SOA VOLUNTEERS AND HOW ARE THEY RECRUITED?

A recent informal review of SOA volunteers provided some interesting details. Volunteers range in age from their 20s through their 80s. They consist of members who are both employed by large companies and who are entrepreneurs. And interestingly enough, they are usually very busy, not only with volunteering for the SOA, but volunteering elsewhere as well. In other words, all kinds of people, with varying backgrounds and levels of experience and expertise, volunteer at the SOA.

Personal contacts play an important role in recruiting volunteers at the SOA. A majority of volunteers are recruited by someone they know who already volunteers. However, the SOA continues to reach out to the membership directly and, as part of the Leadership Development Program, has developed an online Volunteer Interest Form for those interested in volunteering at the SOA. This form can be found at www.soa.org/volunteer. In late 2010, we will be

launching a new area on the SOA website dedicated to volunteer information.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES, ENTRY POINTS AND PATHS TO LEADERSHIP?

The volunteer opportunities at the Society of Actuaries represent a wide spectrum of categories including committees, teams, task forces, project oversight groups and individual contributions. These can be found throughout the organization in Education, Research, Publications, Professional Interest Sections, Strategy and Governance.

Many of the volunteer positions at the SOA include participation in one of the Board-appointed committees, which include Education, Research, Strategy and Leadership. The Education group, for example, offers a multi-level structure in Curriculum, Exam and e-Learning Development. This structure offers both entry-level positions as well as leadership pathways for volunteers who want to advance within their volunteer career or seek an elected position on the SOA Board of Directors. There are even opportunities for new FSAs to begin as exam item writers

and exam graders as soon as they receive their FSA!

While participation on Board-appointed committees requires the knowledge and expertise of an FSA, there are many volunteer opportunities for ASAs as well, particularly in the Professional Interest Sections. Besides the networking opportunities found here, many subcommittees, research team members, article writers and presenters at seminars and meetings are drawn from our section members. In addition, serving on Section Councils offers another leadership pathway within the volunteer structure of the SOA.

It is the contributions of our many talented volunteers that enable the Society of Actuaries to provide an extensive variety of information and services to its members. The SOA would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers for their hard work and dedication—it is these volunteers who keep the coffee pot full and keep the SOA running! **A**

Sheree Baker is the director of Governance at the Society of Actuaries. She can be contacted at sbaker@soa.org.

PRODUCT TAX SEMINAR

SEPTEMBER 13–14, 2010, WASHINGTON, D.C.

This unique seminar investigates all aspects of life insurance, annuity and long-term care product tax compliance. This is **your opportunity** to be brought up-to-date on the recent changes in the qualification requirements and a host of product tax issues beyond compliance with **IRC Section 7702 and 7702A**.

Learn more at soa.org.

