



# The Benefits of Service

The previous year has been a difficult one throughout the world. Financial crises, natural disasters, and other destabilizing events have left more people than usual needing outside help.

Your community and your profession offer many opportunities for you to serve others. It's obvious that the benefits of such service accrue to the organization served. But that service also benefits the ones who give of themselves—mainly in the satisfaction of knowing that they've helped and made a difference. There also are less-obvious and more-subtle benefits.

First, let's explore the obvious benefits with a few examples:

- ◆ Involvement in your community of faith, supporting the programs that help build community, teach right from wrong, and work to promote peace, justice, and charity among all people.
- ◆ Involvement in a charitable organization, such as a humanitarian effort dealing with relief efforts after a tornado, hurricane, or flood. You volunteer numerous hours loading and unloading supplies, clearing debris, delivering food and water, or providing clothing and shelter to stricken families.
- ◆ Involvement in a local United

Way, calling on companies or individuals to help fund programs to care for the needy, keep youth safe after school, or benefit the less-fortunate elderly.

- ◆ Involvement in a cultural organization such as a theater, symphony orchestra, or museum, working to provide programming that improves the quality of life in your community.
- ◆ Involvement in IMA®, your professional management accounting organization, working to increase the competency and sharpen the skills of your fellow accounting professionals.

IMA has a long tradition of service. The examples above are just a few that reflect our members' volunteer activities—there are many more. While most organizations seek our members to fill accounting and financial roles, such as a member of a finance committee or a treasurer, there are opportunities to serve in other roles as well. My personal service began in such financial roles in the organizations with which I served. I then moved on to operations, programming, fundraising, and senior leadership roles.

Now for the more-subtle, less-obvious benefits of service.

First, you learn new things. I

have long believed in the value of continuous learning, particularly learning as much as you can about many different things. Assuming new and different roles in diverse organizations offers many opportunities to stretch yourself and expand your skill set.

Second, you hone the professional and leadership skills needed to succeed in your career. Say, for example, that you're a member of a not-for-profit board, and you speak to your board about a new initiative. You'll need to:

- ◆ Diagnose the situation,
- ◆ Fully research and understand the issue,
- ◆ Explore and articulate the range of outcomes,
- ◆ Assess the risks of alternative courses of action,
- ◆ Select the desired course of action,
- ◆ Persuade peers (who don't report to you) that this is the right course of action,
- ◆ Secure the votes to proceed, and
- ◆ Lead the action.

By doing this, you've used the same skills you'll need to be successful in your career: critical thinking, research, risk assessment, decision analysis, salesmanship, negotiation, executive presence,

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## Perspectives

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and leadership. Not-for-profit boards are great places to practice these skills.

Many organizations offer opportunities for you to be of service, to realize the satisfaction from making a difference, and to develop your professional skills. Choose the organization where you'll make your special difference, and put your heart into it. Our communities need us. And don't forget IMA. With service to IMA, your professional organization, you can make a difference in your chosen profession. Don't wait to be asked—contact your chapter leaders and express your willingness to serve. Your profession will benefit, IMA will benefit, and you will benefit in both the obvious and subtle ways.

Please share your thoughts with me at [wknese@imanet.org](mailto:wknese@imanet.org). **SF**