

## Manager's Perspective...



Russell Munz

### How to Get Community Business Done Faster & Easier

#### *Improve your Community Faster – Focus on High-value Tasks*

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This article is the fifth of a seven part series designed to help your community accomplish more this year. After working with numerous associations, our firm has seen a pattern of behaviors and processes that can be improved so you can operate your property more efficiently. In this article I will discuss the differences between low-value and high-value tasks and provide examples of different value tasks as well as sources of support.

The board consists of volunteers who in most cases have other commitments and limited time to concentrate on community business. So doesn't it make sense that the hours the board dedicates be used most effectively? Value in the context of this discussion is defined as worth in usefulness or importance to the Association. It is only logical that the board focus its time on high-value activities.

The first step is for your board to figure out what are low-value and what are high-value tasks. One tool to differentiate low-value versus high-value tasks was outlined in my second article titled: "Analyze How Your Board Uses Time to Better Focus Volunteer Hours" in the May/June 2004 issue of Common Interest. In the article, I describe how to assign a dollar amount to tasks; those with the lowest dollar amount are low-value tasks. Additionally, the value of a task can be determined by what effect it has on the value of the community. Examples of low-value tasks are items that do not increase the value of the community. These items include paperwork, and other mundane tasks such as: 1) making copies, 2) addressing envelopes and sending out mailings, 3) opening envelopes, 4) recording and depositing common charge checks, 5) opening bills, recording & paying bills, 6) maintaining the unit owner roster, and 7) dealing with delinquencies. Conversely, examples of high-value tasks are items

that preserve or increase the value of units. These items usually include major projects such as: 1) replacement of broken or deteriorated elements, 2) increasing the curb appeal of the community, 3) improving safety and decreasing insurance risk, 4) decreasing costs by improving utility efficiency or 5) fixing recurring maintenance and emergency maintenance items.

The second step is to list low-value and high-value tasks at your community. Using the method and examples outlined above, the board should be able to quickly complete this exercise and add specific activities and projects for their community. One technique your board can try is to take a

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sheet of paper, fold it in half and on one side list 6 low-value tasks and on the other side list 6 high-value tasks. Then discuss

### Recipe File

#### Autumn Pumpkin Bread

*A Yummy Recipe Perfect for Fall Baking*

*Submitted by Ellen Felix – CAI-CT  
Makes Two Loaves*

##### Ingredients:

- 3  $\frac{1}{3}$  cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup shortening
- 2  $\frac{2}{3}$  cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 can (16 ounces) pumpkin
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup water or orange juice
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup coarsely chopped nuts
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup raisins

Heat oven to 350°. Grease bottoms only of 2 loaf pans, 9x5x3 inches or 3 loaf pans, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ x4 $\frac{1}{2}$ x2 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Combine shortening and sugar in large bowl. Add eggs, pumpkin and water. Blend in flour, baking soda, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and cloves. Stir in nuts and raisins. Pour into pans. Bake until butter knife or wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 60 to 70 minutes; cool slightly. Loosen sides of loaves from pans; remove from pans. Cool completely before slicing.



what to do with the low-value tasks and prioritize the high-value tasks.

The third step is to delegate the low-value task activities. The choices are community volunteers, committees, or pay for services of a vendor. To save money, obviously individual volunteers or committees are the best bet. However, volunteers may not possess the experience, commitment or interest in the work.

If volunteers are not available, you can get help from vendors and pay a fee for their services. A service that most communities do not know about is called "Back Office Bookkeeping." Services include collecting and recording common charges,

dealing with delinquencies, collecting or paying approved bills, maintaining a unit owner roster, and providing financial statements. "Back Office Bookkeeping" is popular among self-managed communities and communities that are looking to reduce expenses by replacing their full management company with volunteers. An additional benefit of "Back Office Bookkeeping" is to relieve volunteers from collecting money from neighbors. It also eliminates the risk of suspicion or impropriety among neighbors. Whatever choice you make, by utilizing volunteers or a vendor to handle lower value tasks, your board will free up time to focus on bigger issues.

In my next article I will focus on how to get things done faster by utilizing people with experience rather than trying to learn everything for the first time. I will also discuss ways that experienced volunteers or professional advisors can save you time and money. Until then I hope you focus your volunteer hours on higher value tasks and watch the improvements at your community happen faster! ■

*Mr. Munz is a former US ARMY Captain where he learned the importance of providing clear guidance and delegating to teammates. Prior to military service, Cornell University business programs taught him the importance of focusing time on tasks that have the greatest impact. Now he works with Pyramid Real Estate Group.*