

## Leading Volunteers

by: Steve Snelling

On your first job, whenever you can, try to volunteer for something outside of work, such as an officer in a local IISE Chapter, or to lead a Community Help drive (like a school supplies drive, or a volunteer clean-up day). The leadership skills you develop off-hours will carry over to your work and career.

There are some special circumstances to consider, when leading a group of volunteers:

- Be a good team member first, before trying to be the Leader
- It helps if you have previously done a lot of the duties involved, as a team member, before being the Leader
- Understand the larger group that you are working with, if larger than the Leadership Team (such as a Student IISE Chapter, or ISE department)
- Make sure everyone knows the end goal & key deadlines
- Be organized and develop a good timeline/plan
- Do the prep ahead of time, to make things go smoothly
- Get into the details, so nothing important is missed
- Plan for contingencies
- Practice good communications, including explaining expectations
- Try to get everyone involved in the activity
- Try to get volunteers rather than make assignments
- Respect the other volunteers' time and try to set everyone up for success
- Encourage initiative and creativity by each team member
- Monitor progress regularly, and share with the entire Team
- Use a "*trust but verify*" approach, when monitoring results from individual Team members
- Make it fun for everyone (including yourself)
- Observe other leaders and copy their best practices
- Celebrate success with the entire Team
- Be aware of individual team members' skills, to ensure everyone is safe, such as when leading volunteer groups doing potentially dangerous activities (like a downhill ski trip, or a white water rafting trip).