

## If you have a job.....

MOHAN MURTI\*

“Association volunteerism is an example of the old saying : If you have a job to be done, ask the busiest person you know, and it will be done.”

The busiest people, i.e. those who get the job done for their associations, understand a basic truth : you gain from your association only as much as you put into it. They know the benefits, both personal and professional, that accompany the challenges of volunteer leadership in associations : the satisfaction, prestige, contacts, management and decision-making skills, and so forth.

They also realize, however, that the challenges for both their associations and the country are growing, that if either is to survive and flourish, a new dedication to volunteer leadership is necessary, and that the benefits of dedication to this endeavour extend well beyond the personal or professional level.

### Repayment of debt

Each leader comes to accept the challenges of association leadership in a different way, some by accident, some by design. The common thread that unites them is that they are all activists—people who by their nature get involved. Ironically, for many, the motivation for becoming a volunteer leader is not the benefit they receive from leadership but the repayment of a debt to the association.

If you are successful in a field, you should put something back into that field by working to improve the association and the industry. Volunteer leadership is as much a part of being a member of an association as paying dues.

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\*Mr. Mohan Murti is a Assistant Director in Confederation of Engineering Industry.

One of the frequently mentioned benefits of association leadership is the contacts a leader makes within his or her field. It's just like playing golf or tennis—it's good to play with people who are better than you are.

The ability to implement change is yet another of the professional skills one obtains on the way up the leadership ladder. Many people start out believing they can make sweeping changes, but they learn that change is a gradual process that requires a consensus. The leader has to get others to believe in a solution, and it takes time to convince some people.