

To volunteer or not to volunteer, this is the question

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By now most of our Reliability Society members who wanted to vote in our AdCom election have done so, and this paper should have no effect on how members voted and who will win. As an AdCom candidate in this election I deliberately waited in writing these ideas after the voting is essentially over.

I reflected on why people run for a volunteer position such as AdCom membership and concluded that there are two fundamental reasons for volunteering:

1. Some volunteer because who they want to be, and
2. Some volunteer because of what they want to do.

I believe that the second reason is the nobler one the two, and it is primarily why I am a candidate for AdCom. However, I do realize that for some activities one must hold a specific position (to be) in order to be able to do what the individual may want. But even in this case the primary motivation is what they want to do. If one volunteers primarily, if not exclusively, because of a title to impress their employer or friends, and not because of a wish to contribute, such volunteers do a disservice to the society if their decision is not strongly couple to what they want to do.

I suggest that running for office is similar to applying for a job. One has to present what they have to offer the organization and make a commitment that they will deliver on the promise. As a result the society members, by their votes, hire the individual. The volunteer thus hired (elected) must perform his/her job independent of the zero pay they receive. Most of us know of people who are not delivering on their jobs based on their capabilities because they feel that they are under paid, or because a colleague in a similar position is getting paid more so they scale down accordingly in their efforts.

An employee who adjusts his performance based on their level of compensation is not a good employee. This concept also applies to a society volunteer who should consider himself as an employee with zero pay. New York City Mayor Bloomberg, who is financially independent, performs his duties at an annual salary of \$1.00, and the people of New York voted for him (hired him) for a third term, because his commitment and work is independent of his compensation. So he needed "to be" in order "to do." The same must apply to Reliability Society volunteers. From past experience I believe that most members of the AdCom are there because of what they want to do and not because of the title that goes with it.

The reason why I run again for AdCom is to be able to give back for what I received in the past, or to put it differently: *"As my predecessors planted for me, so do I want to plant for my successors."* So if I am hired (elected) I will go to work and try to fulfill my duties. But if I am not hired, I wish those who are my best for a productive job for the benefit of our society members and the profession.