

Volunteer Resources Committee Section Manager Survey Results

The first question in the survey presented to the Section Managers was:

1. In your opinion, what are the five (5) most important functions in the Field Organization? In your opinion, what are the five (5) least important functions in the Field Organization? Please explain why you feel they are important or not important.

1.A. What are the 5 most important functions in the Field Organization?

The VRC, in its in-person meeting, consolidated the answers into the following general categories, ranking them in order by the number of votes:

Question 1 – Emergency Communications – 1st

Clubs – 2nd

Member Support – 3rd

Public Information – 4th

OO – 5th

It was noted that only 6 stated increasing ARRL membership was important.

The predominant most important function among the Section Managers responding was Emergency Communications. The answers used to arrive at this general category were responses related to public service, relationships with government and private agencies, emergency communications training, and the Field Organization appointments that dealt with emergency communications (SEC, DEC, EC).

Clubs was the second choice among responding Section Managers. Answers making up this general response were the ACC appointment, involvement with club activities, and hamfest/club visits.

Member Support was third and responses here were related to growing ARRL membership, provide answers to members, creating interest in the ARRL, Section News web pages, etc.

Public Information was fourth with responses like public relations to the non-ham community, the PIC and PIO appointments.

Official Observer function was the fifth with responses contained to the OOC and OO appointments.

Analysis:

It was heartening to see emergency communications at the top of the list. It was obvious that most Section Managers considered emergency communications important and put emphasis on this function. With ARRL emphasis on emergency communications certification and the success and acceptance of the three levels of emergency communications courses, it appears that there is general agreement between the Board and the Section Managers about the importance of this function.

Several on the VRC have expressed the opinion that clubs are key to the success of the future of the ARRL. It was unclear whether the Section Managers agreed with this sentiment, but as a group the Section Managers placed a great deal of importance on clubs as well. This emphasis by the Section Managers is, however, in contrast to responses to later questions that dealt with other aspects of club support.

Member Support was third highest vote getter. This general category covered a fairly broad range of specific areas many of the Section Managers listed as important. One area that was seldom mentioned as important, however, was increasing ARRL membership. The VRC thought

this was an important area for Section Managers that only six (6) of the Section Managers agreed. This is not intended to be a criticism of the Section Managers as a group, but indicates an area that can be improved within the Field Organization.

The fourth general category in order of importance was Public Information. While many on the VRC agreed with the importance of this function, answers to later questions indicated that this was an area most Section Managers had difficulty managing and promoting. Again, this is a function of the Field Organization that can be strengthened.

The Official Observers were the fifth category. Most Section Managers had a firm understanding of this appointment and the function performed by these appointees, as well as the importance of this function.

One function that received some mention, but was noticeable by a lack of greater emphasis by the Section Managers was the State Government Liaison. With more emphasis on PRB-1 issues on a local level and PRB-1 legislation at state levels plus the proliferation of restrictive covenants banning antennas, it was surprising that more Section Managers did not list this function.

1.B. What are the 5 least important functions in the Field Organization?

Ten (10) SM s did not answer part B. of question 1.

These functions were combined into more general categories by the VRC and the results are as follows:

Bulletin Manager/OBS
ORS/OES/STM/NM

It was noted that 7 thought ACC was one of the least important, several thought SGL/LGL, several thought PIO

Analysis:

It should be noted that 10 Section Managers did not respond to this part of question 1. This may have been because they missed the question after answering the first part or they chose not to answer.

The Bulletin Manager/Official Bulletin Station appointments were the clear least important functions listed by the responding Section Managers. 28 listed the Bulletin Manager function as the least important, or 46% of those responding. By contrast, only one Section Manager listed that function as important.

Surprisingly, those appointments related to the National Traffic System and traffic handling were a strong second for least important among the responding Section Managers. Many responding provided strong opinions regarding this function and responses to a later question provided much insight into to this response. The responses that included the ORS and OES appointments in the least important category generally agreed that these functions were often carried out by stations whether they had the appointments or not.

There were no clear general categories to complete a top five least important functions. However, it should be noted that seven(7) thought the ACC was not important which contrasted with the second place finish for clubs in the most important functions discussed earlier. These

responses indicated that there is room for improvement in how the Section Managers deal with clubs and utilize their ACC appointees.

In like manner, several thought the PIO appointment was not important despite the fourth place finish of the public information function as a most important function. This again indicates an area for attention.

Several responding Section Managers felt that the SGL/LGL appointments were least important. Responses to following questions will provide further illumination on some of this sentiment, but it was apparent that many did not fully appreciate the purpose of this function. Again, another function that needs attention.

2. What are the five (5) functions in the Field Organization that require most of your time and energy as Section Manager? What percentage of your Section Manager time and energy is applied to these five (5) functions?

Analysis:

The purpose of this question was to determine the areas that the Section Managers are spending most of their Section Manager time and hopefully find areas where they could spend their time better. Unfortunately, nothing helpful jumped out. The top five functions that the Section Managers spent most of their time is below:

1. Visit Clubs
2. Emergency Communications
3. Correspondence
4. Section News preparation
5. Appointments

These functions are those we would expect Section Managers to spend their time. It was heartening to see that giving attention to clubs was number one and emergency communications was second. Correspondence could be termed member support as well for third. Section News preparation was 4th which was not too surprising. Appointments included appointment maintenance, management, and recruitment.

One function not present in the top 5 was traffic handling and related management of the NTS/STM, etc. A few respondents mentioned this function, but it was not a predominant function.

Only about one third provided percentages of their time for these functions. In general, the weighted percentages for these functions aligns with the above list.

3. Consider each of the section level appointments listed below:

State Government Liaison
Official Observer Coordinator
Affiliated Club Coordinator
Public Information Coordinator
Bulletin Manager
Technical Coordinator
Section Emergency Coordinator
Section Traffic Manager

In the sense of a "customer" being someone who is served in your section, who is the "customer" being served by the function managed by each of these appointees? Keep in mind that a "customer" can be both inside and outside the amateur radio community.

A list of potential customers might be ARRL membership, local/state politicians, non members, unlicensed individuals, clubs, served public agencies, governmental agencies. Please do not be constrained by this list and add others in your response as you feel appropriate.

Please explain and be as specific as you can.

Analysis:

This question was designed to determine who the Section Managers thought were the customers of each of these appointments. In retrospect, this question did not reveal any surprises and its help to this survey was not certain. In any event, the results are shown below:

- SGL – City/Local/State Government (22)
 - Hams (19)
- OOO – Hams (30)
 - FCC (23)
- ACC – Clubs (27)
 - Hams(12)
 - ARRL Members (9)
- PIC – Public (16)
 - Media (13)
 - Hams (13)
 - ARRL Members (11)
- BM – Hams (20)
 - Nothing (13)
- TC – hams (26)
 - ARRL Members (9)
 - Public (9)
- SEC –Served Agencies (30)
 - Public (15)
 - Hams (12)
 - ARRL Members (8)
- STM – Hams (20)
 - Public (18)
 - Served Agencies (7)
 - Nothing (6)

The resulting categories are the combination of the many answers given.

4. Which section level appointment(s), if any, presented you the most difficulty in finding the best individual to appoint? Please elaborate on the difficulties, if any.

One of the intentions of this question was to determine which appointments they considered important, though it is an implied determination.

1. SEC
2. PIC
3. SGL
4. STM/OOC
6. ACC

The choice of SEC as first on the list was a bit of a surprise, but it is actually consistent with the answers to questions 1 and 2. The placement of PIC as #2 was consistent in that some Section Managers indicated their PIC appointments were not filled or those holding the appointment were not effective. SGL was not a surprise on the list, though the placement was a bit lower than expected. STM and OOC were tied for number 4. OOC was not surprising, though the presence

of STM on the list at all was a surprise because of the answers given to other questions. The ACC was included on this list as well since the results rated closely to the previous two. It was not too surprising to see the ACC on the list since many respondents commented they did not have a particularly effective ACC.

5. Does your Public Information Coordinator maintain a speakers bureau of those who can give effective presentations on amateur radio to non-amateur radio groups? Is the speakers bureau currently being used? If so, how frequently is it being used and to what audiences.

Analysis:

This question was designed to see if the Section Managers were aware of this part of the PIC's duties as outlined in PIC task 7, "Establishes and coordinates a section-wide Speakers Bureau to provide knowledgeable and effective speakers who are available to address community groups about Amateur Radio, and works with PIOs to promote interest among those groups." The results are summarized as below:

Yes – 4
Sort of – 3
No – 51
No Response – 1

Those who indicated that they had the bureau knew what it was for. Those who indicated "No" either did not appreciate the importance of the bureau or did not understand its purpose. The disappointing part of the response was that most thought the bureau was to provide a source for clubs and for non-amateur audiences.

These responses showed a major problem with the PIC appointment function. It is safe to summarize that most Section Managers do not understand what the speakers bureau is for and, going one step further, do not understand the benefit of a PIC.

6. Have you found it difficult finding an individual who has the people and advocacy skills needed to be an effective SGL? Please elaborate.

27 indicated they had difficulty finding a person with the right skills for this job while 15 indicated they did not have difficulty. 8 indicated they did not need an SGL since their section was in a multiple section state and their section did not contain the state capital. 3 said they did not have an SGL and 1 indicated they did not see the need for one. 5 did not answer.

2 indicated their SGL was a state employee, either a legislator or on the staff of an elected person. These responses were troubling since they indicated that a minimum of a potential conflict of interest existed.

Many who indicated they had SGLs were not satisfied with the performance of their appointees.

One respondent indicated that the LGL appointees need a focal point.

7. What kind of training and/or materials are needed for SGLs? Please be as detailed as you can.

There were a few good ideas that came from this question, but some responses, or the lack of responses, were more disturbing.

21 gave no response. Some of these "No Response"s came from SMs from multiple section states.

13 said they have no idea! Honest answers, but disturbing.

12 said there should be a way to share information with other SGLs through some sort of network or reflector.

11 indicated there should be a manual, training video, workshop, or general training on being a lobbyist or on the legislative process.

4 said none is required, that if training is needed, you have the wrong person.

1 said common sense was what is needed.

1 indicated that an SGL needs the “dedication of Senator Goldwater and people skills of Jim Haynie.”

The disturbing trend in these answers were those 21 who indicated No Response and those 13 who said they had no idea! The 21 No Responders probably had no idea either. This again indicates a lack of understanding of how to use an SGL, how to select a good one, etc.

8. How would you rate the quality and quantity of message traffic being passed in and through your section? Please provide as much detail as possible.

SUMMARY

1. Most of the traffic is filler
2. Nonexistent. NTS has been replaced by the telephone and the internet.
3. Traffic has become the laughing stock. Meaningful traffic has declined. Some refusing to accept traffic unless hear text first. Have spam traffic.
4. Very large quantity being passed. Not all quality, but provide training.
5. 75% is “canned” “form” messages. “Hardest hit” from Internet and E-mail. Useless messages to run up message counts is a big “turn off”.
6. The quality and quantity of messages is not good.
7. Low and low – unfortunately. Messages “trains” operators, but amount and quality continues to dwindle. NTS supplanted largely by the Internet.
8. Volume in steady decline for years. E-mail and free long-distance plans are the reason. Quality complaints on occasion.
9. Volume of traffic in the NTS has been decreasing over the past few years. This may be due to the popularity of sending e-mail and the use of cell phones.
10. Very little “high quality” traffic. Many object to passing junk traffic.
11. Much traffic is a simple “post card” type of message.
12. Drop in both quantity and quality. Unofficial rumors say VRC has – or will recommend that NTS be rolled into the ARES reporting structure.
13. Poor – very few operators want to get involved.
14. Most messages are birthday or holiday greetings.
15. Quality of messages is not vital but provides training.

16. Quantity fairly high. Quality a disappointment. Generated to produce numbers. Many refuse same message every month. Does provide training.
17. ARES folks overlook NTS. Tired of same stations sending Happy Birthday messages via NTS.
18. Most of the NTS message traffic consists of net reports, station activity reports and "canned" messages. Helps keep all the traffic handlers in practice.
19. Quality is good. Quantity is down significantly from the 70's and 80's. Due to email and satellite low cost international phone service.
20. Overall volume has declined. Quality is still up.
21. Message traffic is practically non-existent.
22. Quality and content is not where it should be. Quantity is OK but would like to see more traffic from a wider variety of folks.
23. Poor quality and little quantity. Few have had any formal message handling experience, AND many are not interested.
24. Quantity on VHF/UHF is non-existent. Quantity on HF decreased substantially due to Internet and satellite telephones. Quality is very good.
25. Very good.
26. Quantity and quality both a little low.
27. Amount of traffic passed is down from a decade or two ago.
28. You are trying to get rid of NTS. NTS are retirees, lost its mission, don't associate themselves with ARES. Have NTS participate in SETs. Assign NTS problem to an ad hoc committee of ARES and NTS appointees.
29. Formal traffic is very good. There is also a lot of informal traffic.
30. Quality is more indicative of the mode. More accuracy with digital/CW.
31. Most have never heard of the National Traffic System.
32. Quantity-high; Quality-low. Worthless crap to rack up points. A contest for the most points. Abandon NTS. Roll into ARES. Eliminate competition of traffic handling.
33. Quantity is adequate. Quality is generally poor. Too many "make do" messages.
34. Traffic handling ineffective. There is march to eliminate the NTS. "Good riddance" attitude of ARRL leadership. Placing it in SEC a smart move, but SEC overworked and giving him STM will kill NTS.
35. Quantity is good. Quality could be better. Eliminate NTS and STM, expect to lose ARRL members and ARES backlash by those also in NTS.
36. Message traffic is very low.

37. Traffic consists mainly of "welcome, congratulations" or net reports.
38. I guess fair. Lack of participation, and I'm not sure how to solve it.
39. Quantity is very low, but does provide practice.
40. Message traffic is average.
41. Traffic quality is generally good. Quantity is quite low.
42. Poor. Hams no longer see need for message handling except during emergencies. Quality of traffic and volunteers greatly reduced.
43. Compared to E-mail the NTS system falls way short. Both quality and quantity are "very low" on both local and national basis.
44. Quality good. Not enough quantity. Get fair amount of bulk traffic, mostly as attempt for BPL, but is good experience.
45. Quality fair. Quantity good. Minimal amounts of traffic going through.
46. Excellent.
47. Routine, since the internet, traffic handling is not necessary.
48. From 1 to 10, a good solid 2. Eliminate PSHR or include ARES functions such as walkathons. Don't bet NTS will exist in another decade.
49. NTS almost nonexistent because ARES et al deals with higher priority traffic. NTS is an anachronism. Quantity small. Quality low.
50. Traffic almost null. Active operators resigned because of type of traffic received, i.e. "happy birthday", "congratulations" and "holiday greetings". Tendency to favor elimination of NTS, and developing well trained ARES net for traffic.

Analysis:

Excerpts of the SM responses are shown. The range of responses to this question is a study of extremes. This was quite surprising since a more positive response to the traffic handling function and NTS was anticipated. What is apparent is that the traffic handling function and NTS are not universally held in high esteem.