

As I near the end of my Beacon Capital Partners Fellowship with the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago, I'm able to look back with pride on the past 12 months. I came on board without much knowledge of the Red Cross organization or what precisely it meant to be the Manager of Planning, Analysis and Evaluation. I leave having defined the role and built a team to ensure that the work I began will carry on after my departure.

The position that I originally applied for, the position that I agreed to take, and the position that I ended up filling were three different roles. The person who submitted the Red Cross project to the Beacon Capital Partners Fellows program left the organization before I started last summer. This caused me a bit of discomfort and stress, but in the end I decided to join the Red Cross, as I wanted to explore a career in Emergency Management. Before my first day on the job, however, I received a call from the Chief Response Officer, and he offered me a role in Disaster Services (as opposed to Preparedness, where I was originally slated to begin). I jumped at the chance to take part in the response activities of the chapter, and agreed to become the Manager of Analysis & Evaluation.

It soon became very apparent to me that this job title omitted a large part of my job – planning. I negotiated a change in title (fortunately before the business cards were printed), and I soon found myself the Manager of Planning, Analysis and Evaluation. Looking back on my initial job description, I see how much the role has changed. In addition to performing after-action evaluations of our responses and completing the chapter's planning activities, the Planning Department I built now serves as consultant to the regional chapters for their emergency response plans, has a 2-year calendar of planned drills and exercises, and is recognized as a valuable asset of the Greater Chicago chapter.

Perhaps 'Project Manager' should also have been added to my job title, as my role also included a little bit of 'getting done whatever needed doing.' In this capacity, I feel that I was really able to put the breadth of my business experience and especially my education to use for the Red Cross. I brought a refined analytical approach to the organization, and was able to drive change with evidence backed up by the data already captured by the organization, but not analyzed to the same level as I was able to do. My coursework in MORS helped on more than one occasion – it can be a challenge to manage a team of volunteers, for all the reasons managing anyone is hard, let alone someone who is working for free. And it was not only my coursework that helped me at the Red Cross. Indeed, many of the most valuable lessons I learned about working in a group and leadership were learned through my extra-curricular activities while at school. I didn't intend to learn how to be a better manager by taking part in the Social Impact club and Special K!, but in the end that's precisely what happened.

I entered the role knowing that I had one year to make an impact. I'm happy to look back at that year and see all the good that I did, such as getting all four regional chapter disaster response plans to full 'approved' status (a first) and developing a framework for the chapter to work with our community partners to plan for a pandemic flu. I also find myself in the unique position to be able to look back critically, but without blame, at the

initiatives and projects that I wasn't able to take as far as I wanted. The volunteers that I have worked with and trained will be able to carry on in my stead, and I'm confident that chapter is stronger for my having been a part of it. The opportunity for reflection is not one that I have previously taken advantage of in my career, but will be sure to do so in the future, as I found it valuable.

As I alluded to at the beginning of my update, I will not be continuing on with the American Red Cross at the conclusion of my fellowship. Instead, I will be moving to New Orleans with my wife, a native New Orleanian, to pursue other opportunities. While I will no longer be employed by the Red Cross, I will maintain my volunteer relationship with them. My professional future is uncertain, but one certainty is that my Kellogg education and the opportunity afforded through the Beacon Capital Partners Fellowship have not only prepared me well for a variety of roles, but have most certainly given me a unique set of experiences to draw upon. I was sorry to learn that the fellowship program will not be continued, so please let this be one voice telling you how valuable a long-term position has been for me. I hope that future students will be afforded similar opportunities that will serve to develop a broader base of alumni with unique backgrounds and experiences.

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