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TOP-LEVEL PERFORMANCE

By George Stanois

What does it take for a non-profit to achieve its highest potential?

Firstly, the team needs motivation. On page two, in a follow-up article from our Spring 2016 edition on cultivating a successful team environment, **Ron Collis** explores the importance of a bold, inspiring message from leadership.



Secondly, everyone on the team should be a fundraiser. On page three, experts **Susan McLean** and **Neil Hannam** share some advice on how to extend the limited reach of your fundraising staff by educating entire teams, regardless of their job titles, on always being aware of opportunities to deliver on the organization's goals —including campaigns.

Thirdly, the team should always strive to improve. On page four, **Ken Wyman** looks at some of the pros and cons of effective altruism as a giving philosophy. While he doesn't believe it's for everyone, he does note that this evidence-based approach encourages charities to meaningfully measure their impacts, learn from their mistakes, and improve their services.

We believe that's something every practitioner should strive for.



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THE BOLD MESSAGE

What do non-profit leaders need to say to inspire their teams?



In the last edition of this newsletter, we suggested that the goal of any organization or business is to build an effective work culture — one where working together towards a shared vision is necessary and is everyone's focus.

In this type of organization, every member of the team, regardless of their position, understands their role and how it contributes towards achieving the organization's mandate. This is a work environment where teamwork, sharing and respect are truly evident.

To achieve this, it takes bold leadership willing to make two-way communication a priority. The leaders of the organization must set a positive example, and send a strong yet realistic message of their expectations to all levels of the organization.

We suggested that charitable non-profit organizations must also strive to achieve the same healthy work culture, but that this challenge can be complicated by the degree to which non-profits must rely upon volunteers.

We asked our readership to weigh in on this question. And, as an interim glimpse into what we are hearing, charitable non-profit organizations appear to be facing issues that go beyond the complication of juggling the staff-volunteer dichotomy.

On the one hand, we are hearing that a staff-volunteer environment leads to a weakening and inconsistency of expectations and standards, and a fragmented work structure that limits mobility within the organization. At the same time, there are organizations in an ongoing sustainability crisis mode due to funding shortfalls.

Our respondents suggest that this leads to budget cuts, increasingly rigid bureaucracies, limitations on creativity and, ultimately, places constraints on what staff and volunteers can accomplish.

The question then becomes, given the realities that non-profit organizations face, what is the bold message that leadership needs to focus on to help create a work culture that truly inspires all staff and volunteers to thrive and achieve the mandate of their organization?

Give some thought to this question and then go online to www.collis-reed.com/goldie_nl to let us know what that message should be.

A complete summary of our findings will appear in an upcoming edition of this newsletter.

— **Ron Collis**

ON THE LOOKOUT

*Vigilant fundraisers never miss an opportunity to support their organizations. How can you ensure your entire team recognizes them, too? We asked two experts, **Susan McLean** and **Neil Hannam**, for their tips.*

A vigilant fundraiser is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to support an organization's long-term sustainability. But how do you encourage vigilance in the staff of your entire organization?

Susan McLean, CEO of the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Foundation, says a philanthropic culture begins with education. "Our small staff at the foundation does not often interact with patients and visitors, but many of our colleagues at the hospital do," she says. "Since they can identify potential donors faster than we can, we started by going to their meetings and orientations."



Susan McLean

At meetings, McLean and her staff often provide details about current campaigns. They also explain how gifts from donors can help hospital staff with their work. "If they are armed with this information when patients and their families say they're grateful for the hospital's work, the conversation becomes easier. Staff can suggest following up with the foundation."

This approach pays off, she adds — and you never know what it might lead to. A few years ago, the hospital desperately needed a new CT scanner. McLean's foundation team talked to many groups, explaining what it would mean for the community, including shorter waiting times.

"One day, a patient approached one of our physicians and asked if there was some way he could help the hospital. Because he was ready with knowledge about the campaign, this physician shared details and explained how the hospital would use this patient's donation," she says. "To our surprise and delight, the patient's gift was an unprecedented leadership donation of \$500,000. Without educating the physician, we would not have identified that opportunity."

Senior leadership can set the pace

Neil Hannam, a fundraising consultant who spent nine years of his career with Campbellford Memorial Hospital Foundation, agrees that education is a key ingredient. He also advises that a philanthropic culture must include everyone, starting with the CEO.



Neil Hannam

"Your CEO must demonstrate commitment to the culture with personal giving and by thanking donors. At our hospital foundation, the CEO attended the majority of our monthly donor recognition events. If she couldn't come, she would send senior staff," says Hannam. "She also made time to speak with our donors and made regular commitments to answer their sometimes difficult questions."

Hannam says his CEO's leadership set the pace for staff, many of whom became engaged as donors themselves and acted as brand ambassadors. "That's very important in the philanthropic world."

But, he cautions, a philanthropic culture isn't sustainable without a solid program based on best practices. "As fundraisers, our role is to create comprehensive programs that work seamlessly in the background," he adds. "It can't be obvious, but we must be dedicated to seeing what works, tracking results, and improving them. That's part of what makes the culture work — we have to track it faithfully to demonstrate its impact."

EFFECTIVE ALTRUISM: SOME PROS AND CONS

Using evidence to make choices about philanthropy isn't a new concept, but over the past few years, several public figures have put the spotlight on the concept of effective altruism. Ken Wyman shares his thoughts on the pros and cons of this giving philosophy.

For many experienced fundraisers, the concept of “effective altruism” is not a new one. Ken Wyman, for instance, has used some of **Peter Singer's material** in his fundraising classes at **Humber College**. Singer is a proponent of this philosophy — one that favours the use of evidence of impact in decision-making about giving.

Wyman appreciates the concept's focus on international development, and on issues such as climate change. “Effective altruism espouses values associated with making the world a better place,” he says. “If you believe in the concept, it means we should focus more time on prevention than reactive responses to crises. It also means that charities should do a better job of measuring their impact, and adjusting their services to accomplish as much as they can for their cause.”

Wyman cites Engineers Without Borders (EWB) as an organization that puts measuring impact into practice. With its annual **Failure Report**, EWB explains that taking risks often leads to failures. The report reflects on how EWB will learn from these shortcomings in the future. “We learn by admitting that not everything we do works perfectly, and by having open discussions about it,” Wyman says. “Only then can we improve things. Charities do this internally, but how would donors react? This may be worth testing, or segmenting those donors who are responding well to effective altruist appeals.”

A rational approach in an emotional world

While Wyman believes that measuring success and improving services should be a normal part of running a charity, he does have some concerns about how effective altruism works in practice. “At the most basic level, effective altruism is a rational approach in an emotional world,” he says. “In fundraising, we have more success reaching for hearts rather than heads. In some ways, an evidence-based approach is doomed to fail.”

“ *If we can't all eat, who should eat? How do we decide that 100 lives are more important than 10 lives?* ”

He adds that donors who adopt this philosophy must be willing to make some difficult decisions. “How do you measure one charity's impact against another's?” he asks. “We don't have the tools to make charities comparable.”

In the worst case, effective altruism is based on scarcity — and scarcity requires us to set priorities, he adds. “If we can't all eat, who should eat? How do we decide that 100 lives are more important than 10 lives?”

All of this considered, Wyman says he prefers to believe in a philosophy of abundance. “This approach opens up the idea that there can be enough for everyone to thrive. I would much rather live in this type of society.”

While Wyman says his lessons about effective altruism often lead to interesting debates in the classroom, they can ultimately lead to one conclusion: people must make their own decisions about what they value most, and how they support those causes.