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FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

By George Stanois

When The Goldie Company works with a charity to fill a leadership position, we look for a few key indicators. We want to find a professional with a stellar track record (that's a given), but we also want clear evidence that the candidate is the right fit for, and can help cultivate, the charity's work culture.



Staff, boards, and volunteers that share a vision and a common set of values can contribute to an organization's resounding success. But what does it take to get everyone on the same track? And how can your non-profit's work culture attract and influence people?

On page four, our friend **Lee Pigeau** says a good work culture is based on honesty and consistency. What does your charity stand for? How do you treat your staff versus your volunteers? In other words, does your team "fit" your charity, and vice versa?

A good and productive team projects (and lives) its organization's values. If you can cultivate this atmosphere, your charity is bound to thrive.



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PROMOTING A SUCCESSFUL TEAM ENVIRONMENT

Work culture isn't a slogan on a wall; it's a shared vision that requires vigilance. **Ron Collis** explains.



An effective work culture is one where everyone in the organization truly believes and applies a work ethic that enables the organization to thrive. It also relies on staff truly believing in the mandate of the organization. An effective culture is one where working together towards a shared vision is not simply a slogan on the wall, but evident in the actions and accomplishments of everyone within the organization. It is an organization where 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.

And to achieve this, it takes bold leadership willing to make two-way communication a priority. 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.

How well do charitable non-profit organizations fare at achieving this vision of a healthy work culture? Previous research by The Goldie Company suggests that many non-profits experience work culture problems that significantly impact the viability and sustainability of their organizations.

The staff/volunteer relationship

One challenge is the degree to which non-profits rely on volunteers, and how staff treat volunteers. Many charitable organizations have a volunteer board to direct them, and/or rely upon an army of volunteers to fulfill their mandate.

Sometimes, relying on a volunteer workforce is the only way that an organization can feasibly function. Volunteers play a critical role, but because they are donating their time and skills, they are not always held to the same standards of conduct as paid staff. This often leads to the perception that volunteers lack the same level of understanding, or the same values and commitment, as paid staff. This situation can impede the growth and stewardship of a healthy work environment of teamwork, sharing and respect.

The solution begins with strong messaging from the top that emphasizes inclusivity rather than distinctions, standards rather than exceptions, and clearly demonstrates that every member of the team is essential to the organization meeting its mandate. In other words, the very same standards of an effective work culture needs to be applied in a volunteer-based organization. It does, however, require more vigilance among the leadership team to ensure that the message is received and truly believed.

CANADAHELPS TURNS 15

*The successful self-funded online donation platform CanadaHelps recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. We asked **Paul Nazareth**, VP of Community Engagement, how the non-profit continues to evolve its services for charities.*

Q: What has changed for charities and online giving since CanadaHelps launched in 2000?

PN: Our organization's founders started CanadaHelps to enable charities and donors to leverage online giving when the internet was new. At first, the challenge was simple: accept donations online and save time and money by issuing instant tax receipts.

Today, the world of fundraising has changed. Increasingly, to succeed, charities need a multi-faceted online fundraising program.

More than 16,000 charities now rely on CanadaHelps to advance their causes, using our tools to accept one-time donations, monthly donations, and gifts of securities and mutual funds, as well as running high-impact ticketed charitable events and charity runs, walks and other "thons" where a charity's supporter participates in the event and fundraises for the cause.

Today our platform processes more than \$110 million per year.

Q: Behind the CanadaHelps "donate" button we see on charity websites, there must be a great deal of data that can help charities get smarter about their donors. How does CanadaHelps use this data?

PN: Everything we learn from working with charities and donors contributes to better tools and services. We're excited to be leading the way with new projects, programs, and platforms. For instance, we recently received an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant for a project to help both donors and charities understand their donation data.

In 2015, we launched the first phase of this initiative — new dashboards that provide charities with key donation metrics such as their new and repeat donor mix, and benchmark data on how their organization compares to charities like them.

“ More than 16,000 charities now rely on CanadaHelps to advance their causes...our platform processes more than \$110 million per year. ”

Q: What motivates CanadaHelps to keep improving its services?

PN: Our work is about making giving simple. When we help one charity raise more funds, learn about best practices, better its online infrastructure, communicate its story more effectively, engage more donors or use technology to save time and money, we see it as an important step toward a world that our founders hoped to see.



FOUR WAYS YOUR WORK CULTURE CAN ATTRACT VOLUNTEERS

A positive work culture can have the power to attract volunteers to your organization. We asked **Lee Pigeau** and **Teresa Vasilopoulos** to offer their advice on achieving a winning balance.

While a charity's mission and vision drives its activities and goals, its values — and the work culture that grows from these values — propel it to success. How can you cultivate an environment that helps get your charity the results it needs? Here's some advice from two front-line fundraisers.

1**Consider who you are and what you need.**

An organization's culture has to align with its mission, but it also has to align with the types of volunteers it wants to attract, says Lee Pigeau, Director of Philanthropy at the Queensway Carleton Hospital Foundation. "Being honest and consistent about your work culture with volunteers is critical. For instance, at our foundation we focus on what our fundraising volunteers need to get results and to meet goals. Fewer meetings and more individual attention — just like how we acknowledge and support our staff."

2**Make it rewarding and fun.**

"People don't have a lot of time and their volunteer options are vast," says Teresa Vasilopoulos, International Campaign Director at Free The Children. "Organizations need to respect that volunteers have chosen to spend valuable time with them. To make the volunteer experience meaningful and inviting, people should understand how their efforts are having a direct impact, and the culture should be a good mix of working hard and playing hard. If you can structure the experience so people are making an impact and having fun along the way, you've hit the perfect balance. Your volunteers will feel rewarded for their hard work and inspired to do more."

3**Be professional.**

It's important to have a good time with your volunteers, Pigeau says, but it's equally critical for everyone to be professional and reliable. "Mistakes and bad management can drive away good volunteers. Supporting your volunteers with training, research, and materials — everything they need to do their jobs — is part of a positive work culture and contributes to success."

4**Build genuine relationships.**

A successful charity work culture involves building genuine relationships based on common philanthropic goals, Vasilopoulos says. Providing opportunities for staff, board members, and volunteers to engage with each other and create friendships is a good way to start. "Sharing the feeling of making an impact helps teams grow stronger," she says. "They will be inspired by what they can accomplish together."