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Frontline Perspectives

FOR NONPROFIT BOARD AND STAFF LEADERS

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Bryan Orander, president, Charitable Advisors



What does staff development look like for your nonprofit?

Over the past few months, I have been working on a project in another community to identify training and development needs of nonprofit staff. As in Indianapolis, people talk frequently about the importance of attracting and developing strong staff members.

The learning topics in most demand have been fundraising and leadership, followed closely by management and marketing. The formats desired are more cohort-based, more advanced, and in a format they can readily apply. There is a sense that most staff are well beyond the plethora of most 101-level webinars and entry level seminars presented by various vendors for marketing purposes.

The latest report from Gallup says that 33 percent of employees are actively engaged in their work. More than 50 percent see this as a good time to find a new job. How are you doing at making your organization the kind of place where staff members want to stay and engage? Gallup's #1 recommendation is to "transform your workplace from old command-and-control to one of high development and ongoing coaching conversations." [Click here to read report.](#)

I am also learning that nonprofit leaders are their own worst enemies when it comes to budgeting and funding staff professional development. Recently a funder shared that a nonprofit CEO asked if they could change their \$210,000 unrestricted grant to a \$200,000 grant, plus a \$10,000 grant designated for staff training. The reason: their internal budgeting and prioritization process would not allow them to budget that much for staff training.

But some leaders are taking a more direct approach. Last summer, David Siler, President and CEO of Families First, was approached by the Lilly Endowment as a first step in what eventually resulted in a multi-million dollar award for financial sustainability. Through a series of discussions with staff and board, Siler and his team identified staff development as one of their "big ideas" for long-term financial sustainability and, as part of the grant, budgeted both for a leadership training program and an on-going income stream to help fund staff development and retention efforts.

Few organizations will have that type of grant opportunity, but the commitment to staff and the future of your operation warrants a change in thinking about how nonprofit leadership invest in staff.

RESOURCES:

Below are a few additional resources to explore as you strive to support, challenge, and grow your staff team members:

- [Best Senior Staff Development Idea We Have Heard in a While-Or Maybe Ever - Nonprofit Quarterly](#)
- [52 ways \(one for each week!\) nonprofit leaders can engage promising staff members in critical skill development for free - Bridgespan.](#)
- [A Cheer for the Next Generation of Leaders from a retiring CEO - Nonprofit Quarterly](#)

Contact Bryan at 317-752-7153 or Bryan@CharitableAdvisors.com to learn more or talk about applying these insights to your organization.



QUICK TIP

"Getting acquainted"

A common frustration among board members, and a barrier to effective board work, is that relationship building among board members can get stuck at a polite, surface level. A special social event or time during a retreat can go a long way to developing relationships if schedules allow.

Another approach is to use short ice breakers at the beginning of board meetings. Depending on the size of your board, you might break into groups of three to five, and give members a question to briefly respond to - maybe 1-2 minutes - ideally linking back to your organization in some way.

Examples:

- What birth order are you in your family and how did your family influence your interest in community service?
- What did you do or see over the past month that made you appreciate a local nonprofit or posed an opportunity for our organization or another nonprofit to respond?
- What is the link that you have drawn between the work we do or the people we serve and your own life or aspirations?
- Go around the board meeting table and share personal good news - graduations, good checkup, grandkids, new house, new job, etc.



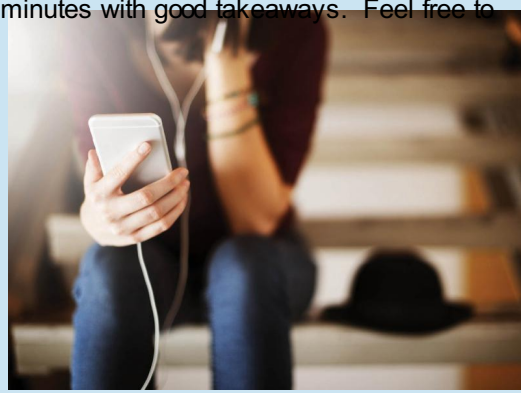
YOUR READING LIST

Discovering podcasts

I am uncertain whether I have embraced podcasts because I view them as current information in a convenient format or because they feel a little like the old "books on tape" that kept me sane through a season of long Chicago commutes in the late 1980s.

If you haven't tried, just click on the podcast app on your phone and explore all that's available - and free. Here are some of my favorites and I would love to hear about yours:

- **Nonprofit Hub Radio** - Most are less than 30 minutes with good takeaways. Feel free to close out the occasional dud. Recent conference recordings are long, but there is some good content. They also have a thing about promoting local Nebraska bands.
- **Stanford Social Innovation Review** - Most around 40 minutes. Dive into a range of topics, so feel free to skip what doesn't engage you.
- **HBR IdeaCast** - Hard to go wrong with Harvard Business Review and their take on many relevant management and people topics. I love that the host often asks the question I am currently thinking about.



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SELECTED CHARITABLE ADVISORS NONPROFIT RESOURCES

[Nonprofit Job Board](#)

[Real estate to lease or for events/meetings](#)

[How to place a Job ad](#)

[2016 Charitable Advisors Nonprofit Salary Survey](#)

I started Charitable Advisors in 2000 with a vision to offer more than traditional consulting services and to become a connector, advocate, and problem solver for the nonprofit sector. This approach has made Charitable Advisors a critical component of the central Indiana nonprofit infrastructure. Over the past 6-7 years, we have supported more nonprofits through leadership transitions and retirements than any other area firm. Nonprofits post 1,000 job openings each year on our nonprofit job board. We research and publish the local nonprofit salary survey and we keep thousands of nonprofit leaders informed each week through the Indianapolis Not-for-profit News e-mail newsletter.

Contact me if your organization is preparing for its next strategic planning cycle, envisioning a new focus on board development, or preparing for a planned or unexpected leadership transition.

Bryan Orander, President - Charitable Advisors

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