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BOARD BREAK

Online Newsletter for Board Members

December 2006

A publication of the
CENTER FOR NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT

An e-newsletter filled with the latest news and resources
on nonprofit board governance.

Short enough to read on your break!

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Having the Real Conversation in the Nonprofit Boardroom

Real conversations underlie real leadership, and nowhere is this more important than in the nonprofit boardroom. "Are you ready for the Real Conversation?" was the topic of the October Board Builder Session presented by Nancy Wonders Dearing of Courageous Change Consultancy.

How we engage one another around routine concerns, as well as strategically critical ones, evidences our capacity for real change, real responsiveness and real viability as leading organizations. Yet often we're habituated away from engaging in real conversation and towards polite conversation, also known as "terminal niceness," that can dilute passion and decisiveness. Dearing recommends having a real conversation in your business and personal life—and what is that?

She says: When you think of a real conversation:

- Think bold, innovative, authentic, fresh, alive and provocative.
- Think about what is possible.
- Think collaboration and cultural transformation.
- Think leadership.

The Real Conversation is:

- Any conversation that has energy - positive or negative.
- Any conversation that the group is avoiding.
- Speaking the unspeakable.
- Any conversation that makes you and others come alive.

She suggests that during a presentation or discussion to use these ideas and questions to provoke a real conversation:

1. What is the conversation that you most need to have, right now? And what has to happen for you to have it?
2. What would be different in your leadership if you stepped out from behind your identity (your inherited talents and ways of leading)?
3. How comfortable are you with "welcoming the dissenting voice"? Can you stand in the heat of someone disagreeing with you and see them contributing substantially

to you and your mission? If your answer above indicates that you have room to grow, what are your ideas to create the capacity in yourself and those you lead?

4. What threatens your peace? The business? Your health? Your personal fulfillment?
5. What is the most important decision that you are facing? What's keeping you from making it?

Join us for the next Board Builder session, "**Leadership Transition—Large Challenge / Large Opportunity**" on Thursday, February 15 from 11:30 to 1 p.m. Members pay just \$25 and non-members \$35.

To learn more and to register, [click here](#).

IN LOCAL NEWS

Restructuring, Merger & Collaboration in Nonprofits- Expert David La Piana Speaks

David La Piana, expert in the nonprofit field of strategic restructuring and mergers, spoke to funders in Dallas in November regarding the positive aspects of mergers and collaborations.

Results of David's research shows there is a wide range of types of "partnerships" including:

- Collaboration or alliances at a program level: ie., children's health programs collaborating to better serve the community
- Collaboration for administrative purposes: i.e., joining together to purchase printing services
- Joint programming: i.e., sharing space to integrate services
- Merging of two or more organizations: could include joint ventures or absorption

Why are organizations considering Strategic Restructuring?

- Internal decision to increase efficiency of the organization
- Increased overhead expenses
- Increased competition for funding
- Pressure from funders
- Leadership challenges, a tired board

What makes the probability of success higher?

- Both staff and board championed the alliance
- Positive past experiences with collaboration
- Board support and encouragement
- Positive board-executive relations
- Organization has a risk-taking / growth orientation

What are the benefits of collaboration?

- Increased programmatic collaborations (74%)
- Increased services (67%)
- Increased administrative capacity (63%)

- Increased market share (60%)
- Greater ability to pursue mission, more stability, reduced duplication

What are the risks?

- That nothing might happen from your efforts
- That a PR disaster might happen
- That a funder is blamed for the outcome

If your organization is considering a partnership with another nonprofit, call the Center for support with the process. An objective consultant engaged by both entities supports the opportunity in a very positive way. Charlotte Keany, Director of Consulting (keany@cnmdallas.org) can answer any questions you might have.

The Importance of Evaluating the Outcomes of Your Organization’s Programs

Many organizations are frustrated about choosing the best outcome measures to demonstrate their program’s effectiveness and overwhelmed by the number of options for choosing what to measure. More and more grant requests and funders are asking for measurable results and outcomes for your programs. The Center offers a combination of services to help your agency effectively plan and measure programs and outcomes.

First, the Center offers a fast-paced, hands-on, two-day workshop that teaches the fundamentals of how to employ effective program planning and program evaluation. At this two-day session **February 28 and March 1**, participants will learn the basics of program planning and outcomes evaluation. In addition, participants will be taught a variety of applied research techniques (both qualitative and quantitative) that can greatly increase their chances of achieving desired program outcomes.

Come learn:

- How to effectively build creative and sound programs through effective logic models
- How to effectively meet most funders’ program evaluation requirements
- How to effectively measure what is meaningful about your program
- How to effectively hire and use external evaluation services to help meet your needs

To register for **“Creating Effective Nonprofit Programs Two Day Clinic: An Introduction to Program Planning & Evaluation”** on Feb. 28-Mar. 1, [click here](#). Register and pay by February 15 and pay just \$300 (a savings of \$99)!

Not only can board and staff learn effective techniques for program planning and evaluation at the two-day clinic, the Center also provides expert consultants to work with you to move the project forward to completion. For more information on how a consultant can help you, call Charlotte Keany at 214-826-3470, ext. 244 or e-mail keany@cnmdallas.org.



Tools for Your Board

Practical, actionable tips you can apply to your board...



Q: How can a consultant help my organization with Program Evaluations and Outcomes?

The answer can vary depending on your needs, the type of program, and your stage of development for your outcomes. A consultant might support you in any of the following ways: design and lead the project, support your team, facilitate brainstorming sessions on measurements and research techniques, evaluate your measurements, and/or support you in the development of a logic model. Each project is unique, and support will vary in each case.



On the Board Member's Nightstand

Play to Win: The Nonprofit Guide to Competitive Strategy

By: David La Piana

Play to Win offers nonprofit leaders the help they need to develop their organization's unique competitive advantages and to use the power of competitive strategies to build their organization's capacity for advancing its mission. This book offers a clear description of competition and discusses its practical, ethical, and political ramifications within the nonprofit sector. It demonstrates how, by being a more effective competitor, a nonprofit can enhance its chances for both programmatic and financial success. *Play to Win* is filled with practical tools for assessing a nonprofit's position in the marketplace and developing winning competitive strategies to advance its mission.

To order this book or for more information, [click here](#).



Great Web Links

Below are Web site links that provide information on Mergers and Strategic Restructuring:

- Research from La Piana Associates: Strategic Thinking, Learning, and Development for the Nonprofit Sector: <http://www.lapiana.org/consulting/research/index.html>
 - Resources on Nonprofit Mergers: <http://www.nonprofitexpert.com/merger.htm>
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Board's Role in Fundraising

Monday, January 29, 1 pm to 4 pm

Speaker: Donna Miller, Principal, Miller Consulting

Today more than ever board involvement in funding support is essential to the nonprofits they serve. Simply knowing this doesn't make it happen! This session explores areas critical to agency survival in today's tough times. Participants will leave understanding not just the legal obligations of board members for their agency's financial stability, but will understand effective methods for getting them involved. Content covers the board's role in all aspects the fund development process, from setting goals and asking for major gifts, to participating in capital and annual campaigns and the agency's planned giving strategies.

Fee: \$60 members / \$90 non-members

Location: [Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship Church](#), 1808 W. Camp Wisdom Road, Dallas.

To register, [click here](#).

"Let's Form a Committee...Right?"

Tuesday, January 30, 1 pm to 4 pm

Speaker: Jonathan D. Schick, M. Ed., Director, The Goal Project

Committees are formed to solve problems, but more often than we like, they create them. Governance expert Jonathan D. Schick explores what frequently goes wrong with board committees – and how to avoid those common pitfalls. Participants will learn the latest wisdom about structuring committees, the "when" and "how" of forming task-forces, and best practices to ensure strategic and effective committee work.

Fee: \$60 members / \$90 non-members

Location: [Center for Nonprofit Management](#), 2902 Floyd Street, Dallas.

To register, [click here](#).

Board Builder Luncheon
[Leadership Transition—Large Challenge / Large Opportunity](#)
Thursday, February 15, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Speaker: James H. (Jim) Chambers, Partner, TNS Partners

Executive transitions at nonprofits are accelerating as the statistically large cohort of "baby boomers" approaches retirement. The challenge presented to an organization and its Board when an Executive Director departs can be daunting—it is an infrequent occurrence but is time-consuming and with serious implications for the nonprofit's health and momentum. Join nonprofit executive search consultant Jim Chambers, Vice President, TNS Partners, Inc. to review the implications of the ensuing leadership transition in nonprofit organizations. Jim will share insights on managing the process, practices that work, pitfalls to avoid and ways that Board members can best utilize their time and resources to identify, assess, and select a new Executive.

Fee: \$25 for members, \$35 for non-members. Lunch is included.
Location: [Center for Nonprofit Management](#), 2902 Floyd Street, Dallas.

To register, [click here](#).

In Coming Newsletters

Don't miss these upcoming topics...

- Key points from December's Board Builder, Cinema Culture: Bridging the Racial Divide
- Tips on Leading Change in your organization

Share the Wealth! Tell other board members about *Board Break*!

Do you know someone who would be interested in receiving ***Board Break***? E-mail Katie Greene at greenek@cnmdallas.org with e-mails to add or [click here to sign up now!](#)

Editors: Sally Lutz, Center Consultant & Sharon G. Bailey, Director of Education

Send comments and questions to lutz@cnmdallas.org. For more information, visit our Web site at www.cnmdallas.org.

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