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BOARD BREAK

Online Newsletter for Board Members

September 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!

IN THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER:

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IN NATIONAL NEWS

Leading Through Change – Ideas for your Leadership Team

Whether you're dealing with complex social problems or funding relationships, tough questions are on every agenda, and if they aren't there now, they are coming soon to a board meeting near you.

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. It is critical, especially within all-volunteer organizations, to work through tough issues —and there are ways to reduce tension and build relationships while acknowledging trouble spots. Marilyn MacKenzie's book *Curing Terminal Niceness: A Practical Guide to Healthy Volunteer/Staff Relationships* has been a resource since 1990 on this subject.

Real conversations underlie real leadership, and nowhere is this more important than in the nonprofit boardroom. We are pleased to have another expert, Nancy Wonders Dearing, Principal of Courageous Change Consultancy, speak on this topic at our October 11th Board Builder luncheon session, "**Having the Real Conversation in the Nonprofit Boardroom**".

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

IN LOCAL NEWS

Board's Role in Fundraising - 4 Keys to Your Success

In August, Carole Rylander, CFRE, Principal of Rylander & Associates, presented a well attended session on the four keys to board fundraising success. Carole is a frequent speaker for the Center and the nonprofit community and, as always, provided a wealth of information.

The four keys to board fundraising success are:

Strategic Planning

- o Strategic planning builds consensus for how an organization's mission will be fulfilled in the near future and identifies specific programs and activities to which donors may direct their support.

Adopting a Marketing Mentality

- o Listen to your constituency.
- o Segment your market.
- o Strategically target those segments with the highest potential.
- o Position your organization: What do you do well? How do you compare to others? How do you distinguish yourself?
- o Communicate your opportunities in terms that matter to the target groups.

Creating a Compelling Case for Support

- o A case for support is a carefully prepared document that sets forth, in detail, the reasons why an organization needs financial support.

Establishing Benchmarks and Measuring Performance

- o Provides evidence of impact.
- o Justifies the organization's value.
- o Provides direct links from gifts to impact.
- o Strengthens relationships with funders.
- o Supports the request when renewing gifts.

Please plan to join the Center's next **Board Builder** luncheon session, "**Having the Real Conversation in the Nonprofit Boardroom**" in October.

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

Assessing Your Organization's Maturity- What Are the Benefits?

How is our organization doing? Where are we in our development – our maturity level?

The Center's Organizational Assessment can help answer these questions. This Center-designed assessment tool makes it easy to collect, organize and evaluate critical information for twelve major functions of nonprofit organizational life: Mission, Programs, Operational Efficiency and Results, Strategic & Operational Planning, Board Leadership, Executive Director Leadership, Collaboration, Fund Development, and Financial & Administrative Structures, as well as Human Resources, Technology and Marketing Management.

The assessment includes a survey of your agency's internal and external constituents, a document review, and extensive interviews with key staff and board personnel. Center consultants assigned to your organization's assessment provide a written report of their findings and recommendations and present a summary of those results to your board.

The Center's assessment tool uses a maturity model format designed by nonprofit management professionals and based on accepted best practices of nonprofit organizations in critical effectiveness categories. Maturity is tracked using five descriptive levels, from Initial to Optimizing, as shown in the following model:

III. B. Board Leadership Performance Maturity Model

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
5 Optimized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board sets policy and strategic vision with strong involvement of the CEO/ED and staff• Board has the diversity, skills, talents, and commitment to accomplish mission• Comprehensive orientation program to educate new Board members• Governance policies monitored and adjusted to conform to best practices• Established expectations (job descriptions) for board members• Comprehensive Board self-assessment at least every three to five years• Board formally appraises work of CEO annually against goals and objectives
4 Managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board and CEO develop strategic vision tied to outcomes• Board operates in accordance with bylaws• Board members trained in leadership role and fiduciary responsibilities• Board evaluates its effectiveness and takes action to improve performance• Board gives performance feedback to CEO frequently
3 Planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board has a long term strategic vision• Board analyzes its composition and has plan to fill gaps• Board understands its fiduciary responsibilities• Board/CEO partner to some degree; CEO/ED receives some feedback• To some degree, Board looks beyond day-to-day matters towards strategic issues• Some Governance policies in place

2 Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board understands need for strategic vision • Board understands need for diverse, talented Board members • Board sees need to understand its fiduciary responsibilities • Board realizes that governance policies needed • Board understands the need to assess the CEO/ED's performance
1 Initial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization may have board in place; if so, may lack focus and vision • Board lacks the diversity, skills, talents, and interest required to accomplish the mission • Board members not trained on the organization or their fiduciary responsibilities • Governance policies not in place • CEO does not receive performance feedback

In conducting an assessment, Center consultants surface evidence that suggests the stage of development on the “maturity scale” a given agency operates. Their conclusions are summarized on a page that shows all the maturity scales for the various categories. See a brief example of the report below:

[XYZ Agency] IMPACT Performance Maturity Model Summary						
Maturity Dimension	Level 1 INITIAL	Level 2 AWARENESS	Level 3 PLANNED	Level 4 MANAGED	Level 5 OPTIMIZED	Comments
1. Effectiveness						
• Mission						Mission in place, but needs revisiting to reflect future direction of organization.
• Programs						Diversified programs in place but requires better Performance Measurement Indicators.
2. Efficiency						
• Operational Efficiency and Results						Have come a long way, but need to improve financial practices.
3. Capacity						
• Strategic & Operational Planning						No formal strategic plan in place, but have taken measures to identify strategic issues at annual board retreat.
• Board Leadership						Understands need for further Board development. Board too inexperienced and needs seasoned members.
• ED/AD Leadership						ED & AD highly regarded and have an excellent rapport.
• CONTINUES.....						

To properly use maturity scales, then, an agency might do the following:

- 1) Consider the importance of each scale to mission performance, the risks faced, etc.
- 2) Determine what level of maturity on each scale is best for the agency at this point in time.
- 3) Compare the agency’s current maturity on each scale to its “best” level and use the gaps as input when strategic goals are prepared.

In all cases, the best practice maturity scales will help by showing an agency its current standing and a pathway toward improvement in that category.

For more information on an Organizational Assessment for your organization call Charlotte Keany, Director of Consulting, at ext. 244 or e-mail her at Keany@cnmdallas.org.



Tools for Your Board

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



Q: Why is it suggested to do an organizational assessment as a part of our strategic planning process?

In order for your organization to plan for your 3-5 year horizon in a strategic planning process, it is critical to understand the “current state” of the organization. An organizational assessment will provide a snapshot of your current state in the areas of Mission, Programs, Operational Efficiency and Results, Strategic & Operational Planning, Board Leadership, Executive Director Leadership, Collaboration, Fund Development, and Financial & Administrative Structures, as well as Human Resource, Technology and Marketing Management.



On the Board Member’s Nightstand

Curing Terminal Niceness: A Practical Guide to Healthy Volunteers/Staff

By: Marilyn MacKenzie

This booklet is designed to make productive partnerships a reality in your organization. The author first explores the wants, needs, and fears of volunteers and staff, and then focuses on identifying opportunities to build better relationships and suggesting ways to reduce tension.

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



Great Web Links

Below are Web site links that provide guidance in organizational assessments:

Management Help’s links: http://www.managementhelp.org/org_perf/org_perf.htm#anchor127164

Board Source: <http://www.boardsource.org/Knowledge.asp?ID=3.399>

Mark Your Calendar

Board Builder Luncheon:

[*Having the Real Conversation in the Nonprofit Boardroom*](#)

October 11th, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Speaker: Nancy Wonders Dearing, Principal, Courageous Change Consultancy

David Whyte, the poet and leadership consultant to corporations and nonprofits, has said: “No one has to change. Everyone has to enter the real conversation.” Real conversations underlie real leadership, and nowhere is this more important than in the nonprofit boardroom. This discussion will center around how to value and lead the practice of having real conversations in our board meetings and throughout the organization.

The fee for the session is \$25 for members, \$35 for non-members and will be held at the Center, 2902 Floyd, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch is included. [Click here](#) to register.

Board Builder Luncheon:

[**Cinema Culture - Bridging the Racial Divide**](#)

December 13th, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Speakers: Jeremy Solomons, President, Jeremy Solomons & Associates, Austin; Susan Gore, Ph.D., Principal, The Mentor Group, Dallas

After the horrors of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, building a multi-million dollar wall at the Texas-Mexico border and other recent incidents, the racial divide seems to have widened in Texas and the US. Diversity and Inclusion consultants Jeremy Solomons and Susan Gore offer a different way to see and think about bridging this divide. Clips from the Oscar-winning film, “Crash,” provide intense examples of the pain created by the mistrust and hostility resulting from the intersection of race and power in Los Angeles’ fragmented community. Participants will engage in highly interactive open dialogue on each film clip and the implications of race and power differentials for society as well as for harmonious working relationships. New tools to help bridge and heal the divide will be provided, followed by an opportunity for participants to develop a personal action plan.

The fee for the session is \$25 for members, \$35 for non-members and will be held at the Center, 2902 Floyd, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Lunch is included. Register online in October.

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SAVE THE DATE

Free Nonprofit Legal Clinic – Tuesday, November 28, 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Wednesday, Nov. 1 by 5 p.m.

With generous support from The Texas Bar Foundation, the Center offers nonprofit executives and board members an evening to schedule brief, confidential, one-on-one 30-minute consultation with an attorney at no charge.

Time slots are limited, so agency representatives **MUST** register no later than November 1 to secure a spot. Register online in October.

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In Coming Newsletters

Don't miss these upcoming topics...

- Restructuring, Merger & Collaboration tips for nonprofits
- Tips on Leading Change in your organization

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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 greene@cncmdallas.org with e-mails to add or [click here to sign up now!](#)

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

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

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