

Letter from the Director

Margarita McCullough, MA

Philosophers, politicians, even your next door neighbor, have perspectives on change and how best to deal with it. Regardless of which credo you adopt, the reality is... change happens, and depending on the scale, managing it is often not easy. A big change many of us are currently facing is prospective budget cuts. This kind of change can be especially challenging and may require a reprioritization of agency programs and goals.

While this is a complex subject that should involve well-developed strategies, there is one basic principle to keep in mind: Most changes impact everyone in the organization to some degree. Your staff, board and volunteers may initially feel discouraged about whether your organization's mission can be achieved with reduced resources. At times like this it is vitally important to get feedback from all of those who are affected to ensure "buy in" when the time comes to implement your new game plan.

The Gang's All Here

Solicit input that represents various levels of your program or organization. Those who may not be part of a management team (e.g., direct service providers, line staff, volunteers) can offer diverse and oftentimes unique perspectives based on their experiences and positions. There may be a way to streamline services and reduce costs, or to recruit volunteers and donations from people outside the agency who are known to staff and volunteers. The federal government took this approach in the 1990s seeking input from employees across the country and the result was significant cost savings and efficiencies.

From Resistance to Commitment

Some staff may be resentful of the changes and, as a result, resist participating in a solution. Acknowledge that it is difficult to offer services with less funding and stress that you are seeking their input as valuable members of the team. I think you'll find most are willing to take on the challenge. There are many great stories of communities that have come together with creative ideas and succeeded in offering services with limited financial resources. By providing information and inviting employees to participate in generating solutions, you are demonstrating their importance to your agency and increasing the likelihood of commitment to a successful implementation.

Feedback and Follow Up

Always provide a forum to follow up anytime you've solicited ideas whether or not you are able to adopt the recommendations. Many people hesitate to offer suggestions because they fear their ideas might not be useful or will be rejected. Make an announcement at a staff meeting and meet individually with those who offered specific recommendations to thank them for their efforts and provide some explanation as to why you were or were not able to incorporate their ideas.

How you approach change is important. If your organization is seeking support in managing change, CONNECT offers several services that can help you as you tackle new challenges. Please contact us to learn more.

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Orangewood Children's Foundation



Successful Strategies to Diversify Your Board

Lee Draper, Ph.D.

This article focuses on one of the themes that Lee will be addressing in her stimulating CONNECT workshop, Building an Active and Effective Board of Directors. [See sidebar for details.]

The number of nonprofit organizations in the U.S. now exceeds 1.5 million. Given the average board size of 17 members, the nonprofit sector needs more than 25 million people to serve in board leadership roles. Each year nonprofits struggle with the challenge of identifying and recruiting new board members who will become active and effective in planning, fundraising, and contributing to the organization's long-term success.

Traditionally, nonprofit leaders tap into their current board's networks to recruit new members. But what do you do when their networks are tapped out, or when you are at risk of creating a board where new members are nearly carbon copies of current members? How do you fill strategic needs for diversity when no one on the current board has the appropriate connections?

Here are some practical steps to take to help you leap frog out of your current networks into expanded prospects for excellent, diverse, and willing-to-work board members.

1. Begin by defining your board's key gaps. Does it include younger as well as older members? People who work in diverse industries? Individuals who reflect the ethnic diversity of your community and your organization's clients?

2. Once you've identified your gaps, have current members think about who they know who would make good *conduits* or *connectors* to help you fill them. Conduits are well-connected members of the community who, although they might not be appropriate for or interested in serv-

ing on your board, have strong networks among people who could be a perfect fit.

The best conduits are those who have regular interaction with up-and-coming leaders who aren't as visible or over-committed and might be looking for opportunities to get involved in the community, assume a volunteer leadership role, or "give back" at this point in their careers. Some examples of conduits are: corporate executives or upper managers, elected officials or their deputies, membership directors at chambers of commerce, active community leaders or philanthropists, or officers of professional or alumni associations.

3. Stay focused on your key gaps. Open up the board's brainstorming by relieving the pressure of having to think of people who would be willing to make an investment of time and resources to your organization. All you are asking the conduit to do is to help identify people who might share your mission and enjoy the opportunity of exploring a volunteer leadership role. Hopefully the conduits are aware of your organization, but they only need to have a friendly relationship with someone involved.

4. It is important to do the following in order to take full advantage of conduits' time and networks in the effort to recruit new board members:

Prioritize your list of connectors. Start with the top five and only reach out to the next group of five when you've completed all the steps below. This will help you avoid getting stretched too thin and not following through effectively.

Call the connector and ask to schedule a 30-minute meeting at a convenient place (usually his or her office or home). Keep the phone conversation simple, indicating that you hope to gain his or her input on some important developments at your or-

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Come join us!

Building an Active and Effective Board of Directors

Workshop presented by Lee Draper, Ph.D.

When:

July 24th
9:00AM–12:00PM

Where:

Orangewood Children's Foundation
1575 E. 17th St.,
Santa Ana, CA

Cost:

\$65

(Fee waived for grantees of the Children and Families Commission of Orange County)

Register:

Click Here to register online.

A Successful Collaboration in Action!

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Camille Hill

Camille Hill is the Project Coordinator for the new collaborative Family is Home Partnership which assists families with young children who are living in motels.

Many of us have seen or been a part of collaboratives and partnerships. When at work or at home it seems life will take you down this route at one point or another. Whether or not it is positive and successful depends on the attitudes and actions of those involved.

Family is Home Partnership (FHP), though still a new venture, has been extremely successful mostly because of the strong commitment of its partners. We serve families living in motels with children ages 0-5 in the cities of Garden Grove and Anaheim. This is one of the first projects serving motel families funded by the Children's and Families Commission of Orange County. FHP staff consists of one Case Manager and myself, the Project Coordinator. With our target population growing everyday, and so many different agencies already working with motel families, it just makes sense to work in partnership.

Getting Started

When organizing the first partner meeting, I invited everyone I knew who worked with motel families. The goal for this first meeting was for us to create a mission and vision that reflects our work. As a result of this initial session and a few follow-up emails we came up with a new name, mission, and vision in a very short time. Of course, not everyone invited to that first gathering agreed with the path the majority decided to take. We knew before beginning that would likely be the case and understood that some people would choose not to work with us. But we were fine with that. To have a partnership that works, everyone who eventually be-

comes involved needs to be on the same page. Letting people walk away who have a different path in mind is in everyone's best interest.

Defining Roles

Once we had our stable and committed group of individuals, we began the process of getting to know one another. We created a system that specified and acknowledged what were determined to be the necessary roles and responsibilities. We went over each person's work plan and figured out ways we could support each other in meeting our goals. We let each person practice his or her scope of work respectfully.

In our partnership, Roberta Moradi, School Readiness Nurse from Magnolia School District, handles all of the medical and developmental screenings for the children. David Seman, Outreach Coordinator for Operation Keeping Kids Safe, a program of Visiting Nurses Assoc. Home Health Systems, inspects and provides safety equipment for client's motel rooms to ensure they are safe for children. Martha Hurtado, FHP's Case Manager and myself focus on clients' basic and emergency needs. This includes linking them to services in the community for things such as parenting classes, counseling, food, clothing, etc. Each of us provides something different and important.

Making Decisions

Home visits are an integral part of the services each of us provides, and although



To learn more about Family is Home Partnership please contact:

Camille Hill
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Tips for Partners

- **Make decisions together.** Decide as a group how to handle situations and delegate responsibilities.
- **Back each other up.** When the other partners aren't around it's your job to represent your partnership well.
- **Keep communication open.** Meet and speak to each other on a regular basis—it's part of building a healthy and happy partnership.
- **Work by the Golden Rule.** Whether it's a single mother with a substance abuse problem or an agency executive, we treat everyone the way we would want to be treated.

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A New Way of Recruiting FIRST 5 SERVICE CORPS UPDATE

Ava Anderson

Is your organization in a recruitment rut? This article informs and inspires by describing First 5 Service Corps' new approach to volunteer recruitment. It will get you thinking of ways to jump start your efforts too!

2008 has brought about great changes in the recruitment process for the First Five Service Corps of Orange County. Thanks to brainstorming between VISTA Leader Judith Serafini and Project Coordinator Erica Beggan, a unique recruitment method has been developed and put into practice.

Those who serve in the First Five Service Corps serve in two distinct roles: 1) "AmeriCorps" members offer direct service working with families with young children. 2) "VISTAs" commit to a year as full-time staff in capacity building positions with organizations serving this same population. Both the AmeriCorps and VISTA programs have applied a new process as a fresh and innovative way to help prospective applicants understand more about donating six months to a year of their time to public service.

Traditionally, those who think they might be interested in the program contact staff individually to ask any questions they have. The application process can be time consuming including one-to-one telephone interviews which are typically applicants' main opportunity to learn the in-depth details and specifics of being VISTA or AmeriCorps members. Until they get that information, they can't know whether or not it's right for them. The new process saves time and effort by gathering together groups of interested individuals and giving them the chance to ask questions so they can decide if the program is right for them *before* they submit an application.

Judith explains that she struggled at first with the overwhelming task of re-

cruiting new VISTA members. Even though all of the relevant information was available on the AmeriCorps web site, she saw the need for a new, streamlined method of presenting the material. She, along with Erica, created an all-encompassing presentation in order to showcase the material in one relaxed, approachable sitting. AmeriCorps Information Sessions and VISTA Prescreening Sessions are held separately, and generally alternate, allowing candidates the opportunity to explore both options before deciding which program (if either) best meets their personal goals and vision.

The new VISTA Prescreening Sessions last about two hours. Applicants preview open VISTA placements, view a presentation outlining the benefits offered and the commitment required, and fill out a questionnaire regarding their interest in volunteering. The presentation is followed by a break. Those who aren't interested leave; those who are come back afterward for an on-site interview with either Judith or Erica. While waiting for their interview, candidates are given the opportunity to speak with current VISTA members to ask any lingering questions they may have. The feedback is very positive. Applicants especially appreciate having current VISTA members in attendance to give an insider's view of the program.

Just as there are differences between AmeriCorps and VISTA service, there are a few differences in the way the new recruitment process is implemented as well. Janna McFerson, Project Coordinator for AmeriCorps, explains that the AmeriCorps Information Session is a condensed version of the VISTA format. The AmeriCorps sessions last 40 minutes—just enough time for a PowerPoint presentation and a brief question and answer period. Attendees receive a follow-up call afterward giving them the chance to ask any



The AmeriCorps
Recruitment
Season is now
officially open!

Throughout July
and August 2008
the push is on
to find new,
quality members to
join the
AmeriCorps pro-
gram. Those who
are bilingual are
especially
encouraged
to apply.

To learn more about
AmeriCorps and
VISTA Service
please visit:

www.connectoc.net

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A Model for Collaboration

EDUCATION CORNER



In their model, Gidron and Hasenfeld discuss four hierarchical levels of collaboration. While each successive level must be successfully implemented before moving up to the next, they point out that not all collaborations need to seek to reach the highest level

1. **Referral** – At this level, agencies understand and trust the quality of work the others are doing and freely refer clients to each other.
2. **Coordination** – Agencies have an institutionalized connection with each other often involving a formal liaison who refers clients to specific agencies within the collaboration depending on clients' needs. The liaison also functions to aid communication and understanding between the organizations.
3. **Coalition** – Organizations work together developing the coalition and engaging in mutual creative efforts to improve services to clients. Partners represent each other with outside entities. At this level resource dependency is in play, however, this can be a temporary condition in an effort to achieve a common goal.
4. **Joint Ventures** – At this advanced level of collaboration an entirely new entity is created that incorporates aspects of each of the composite units.

Gidron, B. & Hasenfeld, Y. (1994). Human service organizations and self help groups: Can they collaborate? *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 5(2), 159-172.

Diversify Your Board

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organization. You don't want the phone call to take the place of the meeting.

Meet with your connector. Two people from your organization should attend, one of whom being the executive director, so that you can capture all the input and build a deeper relationship with the conduit. Come prepared with a packet of concise, compelling information about your organization and a board member job description. Address your goal for searching for great board members and emphasize how the board is playing a central role in shaping the future of the organization. Clearly and directly state the gaps you are trying to fill so that the conduit can focus on those to help you where you need it the most. Make sure to address the following questions for each potential board member s/he suggests:

- How does the connector know the individual?
- Why does the connector think the person would be effective on your board?
- Why does the connector think this person would want to be on your board?

- Could the connector play a role in making the preliminary introduction (e.g., send an email, place a phone call, or participate in the first in-person meeting)?

Follow up immediately with your conduits thanking them for their valuable input and advice.

Additional follow up. Make sure to close the loop with your conduits and provide updates about their recommendations (e.g., whether their referrals led to new board members, donors, volunteers, or other connections).

Using conduits is an effective way to ensure that your board will be diverse, engaged, and continually drawing in new energy and resources. Furthermore, not only do connectors assist you in filling vacancies on your board, but they also expand your networks of contacts and advocates for your organization.

Lee Draper is President of Draper Consulting Group, which provides management services to grantmakers and nonprofits including strategic planning, board development, and fundraising (major donors, capital campaigns, and grantsmanship). Visit www.drapergroup.com for additional information.

UPCOMING CONNECT WORKSHOPS

Board Development with Lee Draper of Draper Consulting Group
July 24, 2008
9:00 a.m to 12:00 p.m.

Resource Development with Vivian Linderman of Blue Lotus Consulting and Training
August 20, 2008
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Volunteer Management with Kristi Piatkowski of CONNECT and Orangewood Children's Foundation
September 25, 2008
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

For More Information and to Register Online Click Here!

Recruiting (cont. from p. 4)

additional questions they may have. "I want the process to be short, sweet, and exciting," Janna explains. "After all, volunteering is fun!" An AmeriCorps member is also at the session to give attendees more information on the rewards and challenges that go hand-in-hand with full-time volunteering.

In the future, Judith, Erica, and Janna hope to offer their recruitment sessions at career centers at local colleges and universities. This would make them even more accessible to recent college graduates and could occur in conjunction with job fairs and postings on campus.

So far, VISTA has held four Pre-Screening sessions and AmeriCorps, two. The sessions are advertised on the CONNECT website and in Quick CONNECTIONS, as well as on Craig's List Orange County in the effort to reach as large an audience as possible. AmeriCorps and VISTA members are also enlisted to pass the word along to their friends and acquaintances. Judith sums up the success of the new process nicely, "It is exciting to see the diverse backgrounds of applicants making the decision to serve, and it is rewarding to see that the new recruiting process is a positive aspect of that decision."

Collaboration (cont. from p. 3)

scheduling can sometimes be a challenge, we made the decision as a group to try to conduct them together. We do this for three reasons.

- 1) Our clients see us working together and recognize us as a group.
- 2) It is more convenient for our clients to have only one visit with everyone at the same time.
- 3) From a practical standpoint, it is safer for us to visit as a group.

The partnership decided at the very beginning how we wanted to be perceived by clients and other agencies. Together we agreed: We will always do what we say we'll do. It might sound plain and simple, but that's our motto. Everyone's time is valuable (especially our clients), and the need is so great that it would be easy to over commit. To combat this we only make promises we can keep. We figure using this model can only lead to increased trust from our clients, increased credibility in the community, and strengthening of our partnership as we fulfill our commitments and duties to those we work with and to each other. It's a recipe for success that I recommend to all who are thinking of joining forces with others to fulfill your missions.

Comments/Suggestions/Contributions?

We'd love to hear from YOU!

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