

Dear _____

Thank you again for all of the great information you shared with me on your role as the Executive Director for _____. Your professional and personal insights were quite compelling, inspiring and insightful. You not only have a keen knowledge of your own organization, but you have a deep understanding and empathy for your peers in similar positions.

I've compiled all of the information from the 15 interviews I did into this Summary of Findings. I hope that you will find these insights helpful. The summary will include highlights of the major themes that arose from the interviews. It also includes my new updated coaching process that is aimed to address the biggest themes I've heard. I would love to get your feedback to insure that my new process hits the nail on the head. I also included possible strategies and next steps that I hope you will find helpful.

Please note that all of what we discussed remains confidential and the summary does not include any information related to you or your organization.

The work that you do at _____ on behalf of our community is incredible. Your leadership, passion and commitment to excellence on behalf of our community is great appreciated. Thank you, again, for being involved in this project and for your generosity in spirit!

Final Summary of Findings from Interviews with Executive Directors and Chief Executive Officers of X County Not-for-Profit (501c-3) Organizations

This Summary of Findings is a result of 15 interviews with Executive Directors/CEOs and Board Members of non-profit organizations in X County. No specific information about any of the organizations or the ED/CEO have been included in this summary to ensure confidentiality. All of the ED's/CEO's interviewed for this project represent organizations that serve and advocate for the well-being of people of all ages, education and the arts.

The summary is broken down into four sections:

- I. The Most Common Challenges.
- II. The Help and Resources Leaders Want the Most and Are Not Receiving.
- III. My coaching process and how it addresses the challenges and needs expressed from interviews
- IV. Dialogue on Possible Strategies, Solutions and Next Steps.

I. The Most Common Challenges.

There were 3 primary areas that came forward as the biggest challenges the EDs and CEOS were experiencing within their organizations. I have shared the major themes that emerged from these challenges below:

1. FUNDING AND “KEEPING THE DOORS OPEN”

- Funding and competing with other non-profits for grants, donors and government monies.
- Constantly juggling funds around to make the agency work.
- Too reliant on government funding and agencies that are always changing the rules for access and tracking of funds.
- Not having enough highly trained and experienced development professionals on staff.
- Always having to live with financial restraints that stops or limits new programs/services to client base.
- Donor fatigue, never-ending campaigns and not having enough time or expertise from board and staff to lead these efforts.
- Not integrating a more efficient for-profit business model into the organization.

2. BOARD MANAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE AND OVER/UNDER INVOLVEMENT WITH THE ED/CEO

- Difficulty in knowing how to manage and interact with so many different personality types on the BOD.
- Board turnover, interfering with day-to-day issues and board members not being aligned with ED/CEO's work or style.
- Blurred lines with board members who are also volunteering at agency and how to differentiate the roles.
- Board not being fully aware of how hard the work is and expecting too much from staff, management and volunteers.
- Succession and transition plans are critical.

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- Getting the board to become more involved with the public and donors to serve as good-will ambassadors for the agency.
- Wanting clear guidelines on the selection/recruitment of new BOD members.
- Board members burning out.
- Not utilizing board committee structures effectively. BOD and ED/CEO are then not fully engaged on a regular basis.
- Inconsistent annual performance/compensation reviews from BOD. BOD not recognizing work that ED/CEO and staff do for agency.
- Have by-laws, budgets and other governance items that are easy to understand so ED/CEO does not have to bother the BOD or staff.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES, STAFFING AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Not having a well-trained HR professional on-site or on retainer. This includes help with training, hiring, supervision, terminations, benefits and being proactive vs always reactive when HR issues come forth.
- Volunteers who are now employees and how to manage and supervise their activities.
- Never being fully staffed due to budget constraints, turnover and not recruiting highly qualified applicants.
- Lack of strategic planning.
- Not having funds/time/expertise for staff and management training. We promote people, but how do they become leaders without proper training and mentoring?
- Difficulty in finding revenue sources for HR-related services.
- Gaps in skill levels with staff and what is really needed for the position.
- ED/CEO assumes multiple job functions, may not have the skill set needed to effectively manage all duties. ED/CEO feeling under constant pressure to perform by the BOD. Bottom line: ED/CEO's are wearing way too many hats!
- Growing leaders and building in succession plans for ED/CEO and key managers is critical for long-term stability, but is not a high priority of the BOD or the BOD is not aware of this need.

- ED/CEO is deluged with emails, phone calls and requests for meetings. Lack of staffing requires ED/CEO to do most follow up.
- By asking all resources to complete all projects, ED/CEO and his/her staff experience burn-out.
- Concern that “silos” will develop within the organization when competing interests are at play with staff, volunteers, BOD’s and donors.

II. The Help & Resources that Leaders Want The Most

There were major themes that were mentioned continuously throughout the interview process about the help and resources that leaders within their organization want the most:

- Technology to manage clients, data, volunteers, donors and grant/funding requirements.
- Consulting agreements to outsource certain agency tasks.
- Unbiased, independent coaching/consulting support for the ED/CEO to deal with board, staff and professional growth.
- Peer group support/advice, inside and outside of agency contacts for support and competition-free insights.
- Implement a coherent business model, but keep the heart of the NP culture intact.
- Help with possible mergers of smaller NP’s into larger more established agencies so there is not as much duplication of efforts.
- Training in the following areas: communication skills, how to effectively manage and supervise employees, how to conduct performance evaluations and best practices for hiring the best people and knowing when/how to manage people out of the organization.
- Avoiding unnecessary, expensive and damaging legal situations resulting from HR matters that possibly could have been avoided if a comprehensive HR person/team/system had been in place.
- How to counsel out older board members without offending them.
- A “911 line” that ED’s can call right away for some immediate help related to day-to-day operations without having to rely too much on board members.
- Have by-laws, budgets and other governance items that are easy to understand so ED/CEO does not have to bother the BOD or staff.

III. My coaching process and how it addresses the challenges and needs expressed from interviews

The challenges and needs of the non-profit community in X County are vast. In my research, although funding is the number one concern, I've chosen to partner up with XYZ firm that specializes in Fundraising since this falls outside of my primary area of expertise.

My process below encompasses the other challenges in this report that I feel fall within my "sweet spot" of expertise and passion. I would greatly appreciate your feedback on my process and how it addresses the needs and desires of your community.

[Insert coaching process and how it addresses the biggest challenges and desires. Note that this is in the document to solicit feedback and get the litmus test]

IV. Dialogue on Possible Strategies, Solutions and Next Steps.

There are many ways to address the biggest challenges, needs and desires that I heard about in my interviews. Below is a list of suggestions and ideas to help address these as a possible starting place to close the gap between the challenges and desires.

- **Board-Related Issues:**

1. Consult with Volunteer Center of Sonoma County for specific training that they may offer for board training, ED/CEO training on how to most effectively work with their BOD's and how to select and retain the best board members.

2. Reach out to fellow ED/CEO's that you know for their ideas on consultants/groups that they may have used in the past addressing these issues.
3. Consider talking directly to your BOD president letting them know about your specific issues that you feel need addressing at the board level. Or, if you have an Executive Committee structure, bring this up as an agenda item. Be very specific in what it is you are asking and trying to address. This may come as a surprise to them, so be clear and to the point with some possible solutions as part of your presentation.
4. Develop a written criteria and profile for what kind of board member you are looking for. I can share what I have from COTS.
5. Take full advantage of board committees that bring you into more contact with key board members, if this is of importance to you. I'm referring to an Executive Committee, Finance Committee and Development Committee.
6. Meet regularly with your board president and other board members as you see fit. Keeping the president and others "close to the hip" can keep some agency issues from becoming bigger problems than they need to be.
7. If you don't already do this, be sure to encourage your BOD to hold annual board retreats with you being very involved in the set up and goals of the retreat. This is where a lot of the issues at hand can come out and be addressed.

- **HR, Staffing and Management Issues:**

1. Consider planning a strategic planning session with your staff to get a really clear idea of how you are all working on a day-to-day basis. A SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) is very helpful in getting a higher level view of your agency. Include all employees and possibly some key volunteers, too.
2. Depending on what you all learn, you may want to hire an outside group/person to focus on some specific staff training that will address some key issues right away. This kind of engagement can be cost effective since you are only asking for a project-specific engagement.

3. Consider conducting an HR analysis of how you are set up now and what kinds of gaps you may have related to the delivery of HR services to your agency.
4. Consider hiring an outside HR agency for some very specific tasks that you feel the most attention. Be very clear what you need to keep costs down.
5. Hiring an executive coach/consultant for professional development for both the ED/CEO and his/her key management team. Be very clear on what it is you want to accomplish with this kind of engagement. Interview at least 3 professionals before you choose, check out their training/background and call on references. Discuss in advance with the BOD your desire to seek out this professional assistance with your goals, rationale and how it will be paid for by the agency.
6. Make sure you have a solid HR attorney either on retainer, on the BOD or is doing work for the agency on a pro-bono basis. This is very important so you can go to them when an issue comes up that is time sensitive or you want to be sure you are following all of the proper legal requirements related to HR and employee law.

Thank you again for all of your comments, insights and ideas that have gone into this fact-finding project. You and your fellow leaders do amazing work here in X County and you should be so proud of all that you, your team, board and volunteers do on behalf of thousands of people in our communities.

