

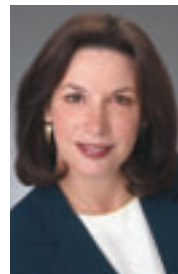
Management File

Tips, resources and information to better manage and develop your working life

By Michael Kroth, Ph.D. and Patricia Boverie, Ph.D.



Management File is designed to help readers overcome management and work challenges, while also providing tips, tools and resources of interest to nonprofit executives. If you have a management tip, challenge or information you would like to share, please email ap@afpnet.org.



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Motivation

Nine Ways to Create a More Passionate Work Environment—Starting Today!

Do you have any “living dead” on your staff—people who just get through the day? If so, what effect does this halfhearted attitude have on your donors and the fundraising goals your organization is trying to achieve?

A passionate work environment is not only more enjoyable, but also more productive. In fact, how people feel about working in an organization can account for 20 percent to 30 percent of business performance. All things being equal, employees who are more enthusiastic and motivated will produce more, be more creative and be more committed to organizational success than those who are not.

Passion can be defined in various ways, but for our purposes we will define it as a strong desire to do something. We asked people what causes them to be passionate about working in an organization. Their responses fell into three categories:

- Meaningful work
- Enjoyable work
- Being in a nurturing workplace

Following is a list of nine activities anyone can start tomorrow to create what we term “occupational intimacy,” a more passionate work environment comprising the three organizational categories. It is not an exhaustive list—you may have others that work just as well or better for yourself or others you work with—but it is a starting place.

Meaningful Work

1. Become the best.

It is hard to be passionate about something that is mediocre. A master craftsman who has worked for 38 years at the Waterford Crystal Factory in Ireland told us he is still passionate about his work because he knows he is one

of the best in the world at his craft and because he works for the best crystal factory in the world.

The process of becoming better makes many people passionate about their work, so that they either strive to develop into the best they can possibly be or they work to be the best in their



class, occupation, industry or field.

- What would it take for you or your organization to become the best you can be?



2. Connect to your mission.

Capital campaign consultant and author Stanley Weinstein, ACFRE, explains, “Commitment to mission is the sine qua non of non-profit fundraising success. Donors may give modest amounts because a respected peer asked, but major commitments become possible only when the donor believes in the organization’s mission and the value of the philanthropic investment. Additionally, volunteers—even those who are

inherently uncomfortable with fundraising—become motivated to make that personal ask when they remember that the request for funding flows from their commitment to the valuable work of the non-profit organization.”

- How can you connect volunteers, staff and yourself to the contribution you are making to the world?

3. Create a challenge.

Why do organizations try to win the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (see www.quality.nist.gov)? Why does a manufacturing company set zero defects as a goal? Why do organizations set high fundraising

goals? Challenges can ignite passion for the work of the organization or for an individual.

- What challenge will spark the imagination of your organization?

Enjoyable Work

4. Put the right people in the right job. This activity is more difficult because it involves peoples’ livelihoods. Each person naturally has work that he or she likes to do. Some like working with people, while others would rather work with a computer. Some have an affinity for numbers, others for engines. It is remarkable how often people take jobs—volunteer or otherwise—simply because they were offered and find they are miserable years down the road.

- Does your organization strive to get

staff and volunteers involved in the kind of work they truly enjoy doing?

5. Create the best physical environment possible.

There is actual evidence that aesthetically pleasing objects enable people to work better. Music can soothe, inspire or energize workers. Decoration can reinforce the atmosphere most conducive to the particular work needing to get done. On the other hand, dreary environments can drain energy and even depress the people who inhabit them.

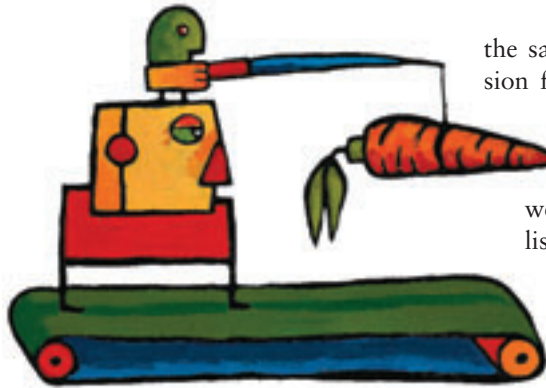
One call center we studied went from an error-prone place where employees sobbed on the elevators on their way to work to the best in their industry class. They did a number of things to make it happen, but one was to improve the physical environment. When they bought new chairs (the previous ones were held together by duct tape), their productivity numbers immediately went up and continued to rise. Now each individual colorfully decorates his or her office with plants, pictures, balloons and other personal touches.

- What can you do to make your organization a place that your staff and volunteers find cheerful, motivating and productive?

6. Give people permission to have fun.

We work with a 300-employee organization comprising mostly accountants and information technology (IT) professionals. We wondered if they would be fun to work with. As it turns out, they create activities to make work humorous, entertaining and enjoyable. They have had a “Gong Show” event with employee acts, including the CFO dressed in prison stripes lip-synching “Jail House Rock.” He brought down the house and made it comfortable for others to let their hair down.

Fun does not have to be wild and crazy. It can be simple. For a leader, it



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means letting people know that it is okay, even encouraged, to do things that make people laugh and enjoy themselves at work.

- How can you make your volunteers' and staff's work more fun?

Being in a Nurturing Workplace

7. Learn constantly.

When we interviewed passionate people, we always found that they take risks and learn. When work becomes monotonous or, as one of our good friends says, when you have “baked

the same cake too many times,” passion fades. Organizations that proactively promote learning are more passionate.

One Inc. 500 organization we studied (from *Inc.* magazine's list of the nation's fastest growing privately held companies) requires each member of its senior management team to take an hour each week just to read a book or article or view a video. Later in the week, team members get together and share information learned with each other. Other organizations rotate people into new positions, assign stretch projects or send people to training to improve their skills or get new perspectives.

- What can you do to introduce new learning opportunities into your organization?

8. Build relationships.

Most fundraising, we have observed, involves social activity and relationship building. One of the most powerful roles that professional organizations such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) play is to create a web of relationships that is constantly renewing, challenging and supporting. While an individual's organization may not be doing its best to motivate staff and volunteers, often the professional relationships people have keep them energized about their field.

For others, the relationships at work make the job enjoyable and meaningful. One of our clients reorganized its entire manufacturing organization. One group slated for dispersal was a group of women who worked closely together. Their informal role in the organization, however, was to serve as the social glue. The organization realized in time the huge mistake it would be to destroy this important group and made them the only exception to the newly decentralized organization.


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- Are you applying the principles you practice with donors and volunteers to your own staff?

9. Provide recognition and rewards. We almost did not include this because it almost seems like a cliché. There are so many ways to do it, but it is easy to forget. One high-tech company we looked at puts the names of not only of its employees, but also their extended families on its organizational chart to recognize the valuable contri-

bution fathers, mothers, daughters, sons, cousins, aunts and uncles play in making the organization a success. Each new employee also puts his or her handprint on the entrance of the building. Those handprints, together, symbolize the importance each person has as a part of the team.

- Undoubtedly you do a great job of recognizing and rewarding your volunteers and donors, but do you put the same effort into your fellow employees?

We have presented nine ideas you can implement today to create a more passionate, more productive work environment in your organization. You also can apply each one of them to yourself. They are not the only ideas that might work for you, nor will all of them apply to you or your situation. Each one has, however, been effective for others. Cumulatively they can be a powerful force. 

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Reviews and Comments

Cheri R. Brown will lead the Diversity Workshop, sponsored by The Alford Group Inc., at the AFP International Conference on Fundraising in Baltimore, Md., on Sunday, April 3, 2005, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Brown is founder and executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), a nonprofit leadership training organization that works to eliminate prejudice in communities worldwide. She has led hundreds of leadership training programs for organizations around the world, including the U.S. Congress, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the National League of Cities, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and many others.

This minireview of Brown's book is meant only to aid your own research. For more information, contact the publisher directly. To order, visit www.afpnet.org/afp_marketplace_and_bookstore.

Leading Diverse Communities: A How-To Guide for Moving from Healing Into Action by Cherie R. Brown and George J. Mazza (Jossey-Bass, Revised Edition, 2004), paperback, 192 pages.

Based on the National Coalition Building Institute's popular leadership development program, *Leading Diverse Communities* gives nonprofit, community, campus and business leaders the tools they need to embrace diversity and encourage their stakeholders to do the same. The book, co-written with George Mazza, a federal civil rights attorney in Washington, D.C., is filled with practical guidance on how to achieve results and provides a simple, skill-oriented guidebook for busy leaders.

Leading Diverse Communities distills the National Coalition Building Institute's wisdom into 32 concise leadership principles grouped into four chapters: Building Environments to Wel-



come Diversity, Healing Ourselves to Change the World, Becoming Effective Allies and Empowering Leaders to Lead. Each principle is illuminated with theory and a related example, activity and worksheet that can help develop the skills required to put a particular principle into practice. The first principle, for example, is "Guilt is the glue that holds prejudice in place." The author provides a theory illustrating the principle, gives an example (in this case a large metropolitan police department under increasing public scrutiny for alleged racist practices, with a resulting "siege mentality" that prevented officers from honestly looking at the problem) and includes activities to work through and discuss.

Other principles in the book include "Treating everyone the same may be unintentionally oppressive," "Building a team around us is the most powerful way to bring about institutional change," "People who feel good about themselves do not mistreat others" and "Diversity leadership requires reclaiming courage."

Leading Diverse Communities will help leaders welcome diversity, work through their own stereotypes and misinformation, resolve conflicts, communicate across group lines and develop vital intergroup leadership skills.