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Dear Alice,

Welcome to the latest issue of Workforce Learning, a bi-monthly e-newsletter that I hope will provide managers with new insight and ideas about how to improve employee relations.

In this newsletter, I focus on the non-profit arena - an industry that is near and dear to my heart. I have spent a majority of my career working with and for non-profit organizations, and I know what a positive impact these groups have on our world.

As luck and opportunity would have it, this month I had the pleasure of speaking at two non-profit conferences.



- In April, I addressed HR leaders at the [Human Resource Association](#) (HRA-NCA) 2008 conference about the challenges of retaining talent in today's tight labor market.
- And just last week, I spoke at the [Association for Fundraising Professionals](#) networking breakfast on how to provide leadership development opportunities for staff in their organizations.

Below you will find:

- Thoughts and ideas from those workshops,
- An article about how volunteering can be an affordable and effective way to help your staff learn and grow professionally and personally.
- Lastly, I reviewed a *Forces For Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*, by Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant. This must-read for all non-profit leaders offers insights into what you can do to be more effective.

I hope you'll find this information useful. If you do, please send me an [email](#) with you're your thoughts. Also feel free to forward this e-newsletter on to anyone else you feel might benefit from the information.

Here's to empowering *your* workforce! - **Alice Waagen**, *Workforce Learning*

April's Focus: STRATEGIC VOLUNTEERISM



When you can't afford to hire someone to help your staff with professional development, help them grow personally and professionally by encouraging them to volunteer at the nonprofit of their choice. But be careful: Choose the right organization to work with - one that matches their goals, skills, and schedule.

By [Alice Waagen](#)

One of the most frequently asked questions I am asked by managers is: How can I provide professional development for my staff when my organization won't fund or support the idea?

What a good question, for this is indeed a dilemma.

Fortunately, one of the most overlooked ways to provide staff development is by encouraging your staff to volunteer.

Why volunteer?

Whether it is serving on a task force for a professional association or giving time to a nonprofit organization that is focused on providing positive social impact, this experience can be a goldmine for skill building and professional and personal enrichment.

Consider the testimony that a colleague of mine recently offered:

I always wanted to make a difference in my work, help people or the organization in some meaningful way, but the politics of my job frequently undermines the work I try to do. So I seek out ways to give back in the community. I get much greater return for my investment outside of my paying job.

My colleague is not alone for giving back is always healthy - for the mind, body, and soul. However, the key to success is to match your goals with the needs of the organization you choose.

Picking the right non-profit

I know from experience that choosing the wrong non-profit to work with can be as bad as picking the wrong full-time job.

A few years ago I rashly committed to a volunteer assignment without doing my homework. I quickly discovered that I wasn't comfortable with how the organization was managed - and then found out that this assignment required a three-year commitment.

I had to resign, for I had bitten off more than I could chew. Unfortunately, all involved viewed my resignation poorly.

Ask questions

Since then, I have put these simple guidelines into practice, and have had only positive experiences as a volunteer.

So before jumping into a situation, encourage staff members to do their homework and ask themselves some tough questions.

1. "Pre-engagement" questions:

- What is your personal goal or objective in serving this group? How will it be met by this effort?
- What are the job duties? How do they match your key competencies and interests?
- What is the tenure of the engagement? How does one resign? Will you be expected to recruit your replacement?
- Will you be expected to do fundraising? How do you feel about that?

2. Throughout the engagement, ask yourself:

- Are your talents being fully utilized? Does the work match your pre-engagement research?
- Are you getting something back for your giving? Is this a valuable experience? Do you have a sense that you are making a difference?
- Are you making new friends? Learning new things? Having fun?

3. "Post-engagement" questions:

- Did you and the organization part as friends?
- Would you recommend this organization to others?
- Would you work for them again?

Looking for a great volunteer opportunity? The folks at Volunteer Fairfax can help. Volunteer Fairfax is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to mobilize people and resources to meet regional community needs. Their website www.volunteerfairfax.org serves as a learning house of volunteer opportunities. They also have an informational and referral service in which they help walk people through finding a volunteer opportunity.

The good news and the bad: USEFUL DISCUSSIONS FROM THE APRIL HRA-NCE CONFERENCE

~~~~~ First, the bad news: FORCES DRIVING AWAY TALENT

At the April HRA-NCA Conference, entitled: *Retrain to Retain*, I led a session with several dozen HR professionals who specialize in the nonprofit arena and together we devised a list of the forces driving away talented staff members from their organization.

Consider the following:

Forces Driving Away Talent	What To Do About It
Untrained managers	Implement management and leadership training
Bad Managers	Better accountability for managing others - implement a management objective in annual performance plans
Total Comp / Fringe Benefits (lack of)	Not much to do here if staff are leaving for better fiscal incentives
Bored - lack of challenging work	Use organizational task forces and other cross-functional assignments for job enrichment
Poor fit. Either a bad hire or work expectation changes make the staff person not right for the job	If possible, reassign to new position or help the person to find work elsewhere
Job changes (results in poor fit)	Same as above
Life changes (spouse unemployed, financial burdens, etc.)	Like fiscal reasons, not much one can do here but help employee to find work elsewhere
Lack of opportunities for growth	Define growth and development in more creative ways than strictly upward (such as lateral assignments)
Lack of budget or time for growth opportunities	Look for development activities that do not require funding, like book discussion groups, volunteerism)
Board changes result in changes to strategy or direction	Use change management techniques to lead staff through to the new direction in a positive way
Unrealistic timelines for promotions (managers setting unrealistic expectations)	Ensure that promotional timelines are realistic. Managers need to be held accountable for communicating accurately promotional expectations
Not clear what it takes to get promoted	See above comment
Transient labor force in metro DC area	Some turnover is inevitable due to family / life issues. Know the pressures and constraints on staff influencing their ability to work for your organization to attempt to anticipate turnover
Lack of physical space	Create a cross-functional task force of staff to see if there are any creative ways to use the existing space more efficiently
Difficult commutes	Explore flex work options and/or working from home options
Outdated technology	Attempt to get budget dollars to upgrade if possible

Now the good news: CREATIVE WAYS TO DEVELOP SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Never one to let the bad news take control, I had my group at the HRA-NCA conference come up with creative ways to keep and hire new top-notch employees.

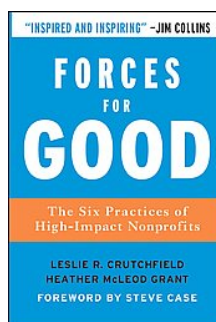
25 Ways to Retain and Retrain:

1. Mentor an employee in a different department
2. Have internal experts to talk about topics important to the organization
3. Schedule sessions with the CEO to discuss the organization's mission
4. Establish and promote an article library
5. Establish new, more useful metrics for important programs
6. Publicly acknowledge successful projects and the project team. Identify them as your "internal gurus."
7. Encourage membership in professional associations
8. Encourage use of tuition reimbursement (often tremendously underutilized)
9. Create a "recommended reading list" of business books
10. Develop an individual career development plan
11. Use job shadowing is an important tool
12. Find ways to enrich your present job
13. Team up with manager in another area to act as your mentor
14. Identify a career mentor in your profession (outside your organization)
15. Take on a new position while another staff member is on extended leave
16. Research free online technical training (such as vendor tutorials)
17. Create ways to cross-train within and across departments
18. Volunteer to lead an ad hoc work team
19. Take a one-day community college course
20. Invite employees to serve on a new committee or task force
21. Organize company events, such as retreats and parties
22. Have a brown bag lunch once a month where senior managers speaking and inspire staff members
23. Allow individuals time to work in other departments that interest them, especially when large, important projects arise
24. Host a panel discussion with other nonprofits in your area
25. Offer how-to sessions, such as "How to create useful developmental goals"

ALICE WAAGEN'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

Forces For Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits

By Leslie R. Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008)



One of my first consulting clients was a small, struggling nonprofit. Being recently sprung from a career in the for-profit corporate world, I was certain that I could "fix" this organization's internal issues. After all, I had a long career solving workplace issues for large businesses and believed the nonprofit world would certainly benefit from all this wisdom and experience.

I couldn't have been more wrong. Although there may be parallel functions and processes in both for-and nonprofit enterprises, in truth, the two sectors are distinctly and profoundly different.

That is why I consider ***Forces for Good: The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits*** such an important read. Crutchfield and Grant have produced a groundbreaking work that shifts the focus away from the traditional metrics for measuring nonprofit success (such as operating ratios and management efficiencies) and looks instead at social impact.

Methodology: The authors went looking for "high impact nonprofits," and after conducting dozens of intensive surveys and interviews to determine which organizations had the most positive impact, they selected the top 12 organizations that are most effective in accomplishing their missions.

The Top 12: America's Second Harvest, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, City Year, Environmental Defense, The Exploratorium, Habitat for Humanity, The Heritage Foundation, the National Council of La Raza, Self-Help, Share Our Strength, Teach for America, and YouthBuild.

The findings: Interestingly, Crutchfield and Grant initially hypothesized there was something inherent in the leadership of a successful nonprofit. However, they found that the real secret to the organization's success was its ability to work with and through other organizations and individuals - a la the "it takes a village" concept.

Try this for yourself: Their advice is to borrow from the best in the business and adopt these six strategies:

1. Work with governments and advocate for policy change.
2. Harness market forces and see business as a powerful partner.
3. Convert individual supporters into evangelists for the cause.
4. Build and nurture nonprofit networks, treating other groups as allies.
5. Adapt to the changing environment.
6. Share leadership, empowering others to be forces for good.

The bottom line: Crutchfield and Grant have provided us with a new way to evaluate nonprofit management that will yield results in the worlds that we wish to serve. For anyone involved in the nonprofit sector - whether as a staff member, volunteer, or donor - this book is a must-read.

For more information about the book, visit: www.forcesforgood.net.

Buy the [book](#).

Don't miss a great opportunity this fall: The Emerging Leader Institute (ELITE)

Starting in September, Alice Waagen will be leading the Emerging Leader Institute (ELITE), a hands-on development program that provides employers with targeted management skills training for their key, high-potential managers.



Topics include:

- Leveraging Interpersonal Effectiveness
- Leading & Managing Change
- Effective Communication
- Performance Management
- Building Effective Teams
- Managing Conflict

For more information, contact Alice (alice@workforcelearning.com) and visit HeliosHR (www.helioshr.com) for program details and registration information.

Upcoming Speaking Engagements

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On May 13, 2008 Alice will be presenting a keynote address, entitled Lead Change (Or It Will Lead You), for the CMS User Group in San Diego, CA.

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