

League of American Orchestras

Volunteer Council

Minutes of Strategic Conversations – Presidents & President-Elects

Conversation #6 – Leadership Development

Tuesday, December 8, 2015 3:00 EST

Facilitators:

Linda Weisbruch (president, Volunteer Council)
Debbie McKinney (president-elect, Volunteer Council)
Terry White (secretary, Volunteer Council)
Samara Ungar (manager of the annual fund, League of American Orchestras)
Caitlin Whealon (meetings and logistics coordinator, League of American Orchestras)

Volunteer Participants:

Group 1: (2) Midwest 1, West 1
Group 2: (1) Southeast/Middle Atlantic
Group 3: (2) Midwest 1, South (1)
Group 5: (1) West
Group 6: (1) Southeast/Middle Atlantic

Linda welcomed everyone to the sixth Strategic Conversation. Before starting today's discussion on leadership development Linda asked everyone to share their organization's credit card policy.

- In a Group 1, volunteers acquire credit card information and forward to the symphony office for processing; the office sends a check for the proceeds back to the volunteers
- Using the Square: 4 organizations ranging in size and location utilize this technology to great success
- One Group 5 uses PayPal

Square is a phone app paired with a mini-scanner for your phone, the transaction fee is 3%. Linda suggested that those interested in getting Square visit the online app store and coordinate with their bank.

Linda asked if anyone had input/suggestions/questions about the agenda item on preparing for the upcoming year. Possible action items for 2016-17 include: board orientation planning, new member drive and orientation, goals/vision establishment and communication, fiscal year calendar preparation, member surveys/community focus groups, inclusivity assessment.

Leadership Development

A Group 5 raised an issue: their organization does not have an incoming president and wondered if they could offer a co-presidency without making a by-law change. All agreed that this scenario would require a by-law change.

- One Group 3 experienced the same problem, which was one of the reasons for their operations audit and subsequent restructuring
- A Group 2 recruited an administrative assistant which reduced the workload, thereby making the position more doable, as well as more attractive
- A Group 6 offered that their out-going president became vice-president to encourage a candidate to become president
- Another Group 3 suggested that if the Group 5 endeavors to make a by-law change, it would be a good practice to look at other policies for the future, i.e., voting by email
- All agreed that having a president and a vice president work in tandem is a solution which would not necessitate a by-law change

Linda queried the participants about the leadership PowerPoint developed for SOVA (Southeast Orchestra Volunteer Association), which she had shared with them. Several had had an opportunity to do so. She reassured everyone that all organizations have challenges in leadership development. She cautioned that hoping someone will simply step up to lead is not a strategy.

Growing leaders is organic; it needs time and intention. She offered ways in which organizations can create an environment that encourages personal growth and taking responsibility.

1. Lay the groundwork
 - a. support and a solid infrastructure
 - i. meetings – inspiring, informative, business-like; detailed agenda in advance; scrupulous time limits
 - ii. job descriptions for all responsibilities, timeline and to-to resources
 - b. opportunity for personal growth
 - i. listen – find out what each member needs to grow
 - ii. don't be clique-y; give newer members a chance to shine
 - iii. train members to use all the tools you have available for a better job
 - c. attention and praise – you can never thank members enough; recognize personal growth
 - d. atmosphere of camaraderie – volunteers will step forward in an environment that is nurturing and FUN
 - e. is your messaging on straight – or do you say one thing and do another?
2. Develop a strong recruiting, mentoring, and engaging program
 - a. member recruitment and mentoring was discussed during the Membership conversations – to reiterate
 - i. mentor is first line leadership developer, they set the tone for new members first encounters – their job is to ask, encourage, recognize, thank
 1. identify new members' skills, talents and desire for involvement
 2. mentoring handbook to outline duties
 - b. placement/nominating

- i. also talked about nominating committee configurations in a prior conversation; however this works in any group, need to make sure it is ongoing and very intentional
 - ii. identify future leaders' development track three to five years out
 - iii. there is no resting even if there seems to be a plethora of good leadership waiting in the wings
- 3. Talk to members –
 - a. mostly look to candidates as being ready and able, the one quality often ignored is “willing”
 - b. have the conversation early on with candidates; create a personal plan of development; placement to enrich overall knowledge
 - c. survey membership about their willingness to serve
- 4. Plan B?
 - a. recycling old presidents is not the best strategy
 - b. is the job too big – review in strategic planning regularly
 - c. are term reductions in order?
 - d. shared leadership
 - i. project management vs strategic vision
 - ii. external vs internal
 - iii. shift day to day responsibilities from president to entire executive committee
- 5. Bottom line – An organization where members have great mentoring with the correct tools to do a good job in an environment that encourages growth and celebrates success, coupled with a vibrant leadership identification and growth program will be successful in developing future leaders.

The Group 3 which has recently restructured reviewed their reorganization; their new structure encourages equality of duties and shifts some responsibilities from the president. One of the goals is convincing membership/leadership that the job is ultimately very doable. It is about delegation of duties.

Linda asked how they were endeavoring to communicate to their membership that the reorganization is making the president's job easier, which in turn would encourage candidates to step forward.

- The group's president is leading by example so volunteers can readily see how it works. They have created a smaller board and executive committee; the leadership is supporting the changes. They are also focusing with articles in their newsletter to keep the members fully informed.

Linda asked the participants to give an overview of their organization's process to address questions of leadership:

- Group 3 – this is an issue because they don't have a process; membership has become stagnate, and they need to mentor and identify leadership
- Group 1:
 - twelve-member board is recruited from the membership

- new members with promise are invited to attend a monthly board meeting to become familiar with board activities; if interested they are invited to become a board member and then possibly a leadership role
- the president must serve on the board for two years prior and the term is two years
- recruiting the next president begins during the first year of the term
 - their current president has agreed to stay and mentor the incoming during her presidency; mentoring by the immediate past president is very important
- Another Group 1:
 - all past president “life advisors” per their by-laws
 - nominating committee always looking for people with skills
 - mentoring process can even disclose individuals not to be considered for leadership
 - every president has a different approach to the position which is difficult for the members
 - have commitments now for president and president-elect for several years out
- Another Group 3:
 - at beginning of year, all board members and chairmen received president’s personal note setting out goals and the job descriptions where possible, with a request to update the job descriptions as year progressed
 - held a three-hour retreat to review the goals plus selected one strategic plan item to review in depth
 - considering going to two-year terms, as most spend the first year getting a handle on the job
 - always looking for new members, asking about their interests and willingness to chair a committee in area of interest
 - identified two new co-chairs this year with potential to become officers
- A Group 5:
 - no nominating committee per se; president fills all positions
 - president serves two years with no formal president-elect (vice president acts as president-elect)

Linda inquired if anyone had further questions. One Group 3 asked how to get new people to chair fundraising.

- Group 1s:
 - West
 - members not interested in board position will often play a limited role in fundraisers; these members are encouraged to take on larger roles at the fundraisers going forward
 - new members showing interest are approached immediately and given simple jobs to become acquainted with the organization
 - Midwest
 - collaborates with local music departments and have found student volunteers there; these volunteers are generally interested in a one-time project
- Group 3s
 - Midwest
 - looks to their last fundraiser to determine if anyone involved is interested in a larger role
 - South
 - uses realtors in their showhouse; companies sponsor the showhouse for a day and provide volunteers on that day plus pay for the privilege.

Linda asked which organizations operate under a separate 501(c)(3): all participants operate as separate organizations with the exception of one Group 1, which operates under their orchestra's umbrella.

In closing, Linda expressed an interest in having all the facilitators follow up with the Strategic Conversation participants and asked everyone to email her their schedule of events, which she will include in the Participants spreadsheet.

Participants inquired when registration will open for the League's Conference in Baltimore:

- League website will go up the end of January and registration will begin in mid-February.
- The Conference will have an app to enable everyone to see who is registered and encourage networking.
- Conference will be June 9-11 with some preconference activities for volunteers on June 8 (Dine-Arounds).
 - Linda pointed out several award-winning organizations for this year are represented in our Strategic Conversations group.
 - She also mentioned that 2015-16 projects can be submitted to the Gold Book following conference, and hoped that all would share projects.

The League would like to assess this program's strengths and weaknesses to help with future programming. An online survey will be distributed to the participants; the deadline for responses is December 20th; all are encouraged to respond.

The facilitators expressed their great enjoyment of these calls, and thanked everyone for participating. All hoped the participants took something away from the series of calls, and wished that the broad range of information all shared would positively impact every organization.

Everyone hoped to see each other in Baltimore at Conference.

The Conversation closed at approximately 4:00 EST.