



High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact

Christine W. Letts, William P. Ryan, Allen Grossman

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Nonprofit leaders are beginning to confront the most important unfinished business of their sector. Having invented scores of successful model programs to address virtually every type of social problem or goal, they are discovering that large-scale, sustained impact remains elusive. Today, the only way to get the full benefit of successful programs, however, is for nonprofit leaders to begin building high-performance organizations?nonprofits that are capable of creating sustained, effective impact. That requires reversing decades of under-investment in the capacity of nonprofits. A sector that has been indifferent, if not hostile, to the needs of its organizations, where leaders are forced to manage upstream, against countless obstacles, now needs to apply its ingenuity and passion to the challenge of creating high-performance organizations.

Drawing on management techniques used by successful managers in both businesses and nonprofits, *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations* outlines approaches that nonprofits can use to build their capacity for learning, innovating, ensuring quality, and motivating staff. Illustrated with case studies and examples, the book outlines processes for achieving these goals, including:

- * human resources management-to attract and develop employees truly in synch with an organization's mission
- * benchmarking-to identify practices that best meet a nonprofit's needs
- * responsiveness and quality systems-to continuously review and upgrade quality of service
- * product development-to tap the talents of every employee to create effective programs

The authors argue that these processes?far from corrupting a nonprofit with practices that evolved to make companies more profitable?actually help an organization convert its values and integrity into results for clients and communities. These adaptive capacities help nonprofits deliver on their mission, building the model organization that will make the biggest impact with model programs.

High Performance Nonprofit Organizations goes further, laying out an agenda for changing the nonprofit environment, making it more supportive of its managers and more aware of the potential of organizational capacity. The authors assess the special opportunity of several stakeholders-including the nonprofit board, foundations, and the national office of multisite nonprofits?to create a new culture that values organizational performance. For the nonprofit manager trying to build an organization that is truly responsive to its clients and community, *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations* is an essential review of best practices. For the board member, foundation program officer, or nonprofit leader trying to create sustained impact, it is a provocative challenge to deal with the sector's unfinished business with a new approach.

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