

YNPN Twin Cities & EPIP

2011 Nonprofit Leadership Conference Session

Giving and Trading

Bridging Philanthropic and Generational Power Dynamics

Power dynamics influence our relationships every day. From the complex interactions between grantmakers and grantseekers to the daily exchanges between established nonprofit leaders and those of us at the earlier stages of our careers, the balance of power colors everything we do.

At the 2011 Leadership Conference, on June 14th, YNPN-TC and EPIP co-facilitated a session that explored how the balance (and imbalance) of power affects our interactions, and how we can work through these dynamics to best utilize our talents and resources.

Presenters: Tracy Babler, Director of Development and Communications, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability; Ellis Bullock, Executive Director, Grotto Foundation; Joel Luedtke, Senior Program Officer, The Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation; Nathan Magel, Board Member, Young Nonprofits Professional Network - Twin Cities; Kelly Rowan, Development Manager, Charities Review Council; Nick Scheibel, Donor Services Associate, The Minneapolis Foundation; Kim Snyder, Principal, Excelsior Bay Group; Paul Verette, Grants System Administrator, The Minneapolis Foundation

Session Notes

RESOURCES

You can learn more about the organizations with which the presenters are affiliated at their websites:

Ellis Bullock www.grottofoundation.org

Joel Luedtke www.phillipsfamilyfoundationmn.org

Nathan Magel www.ynpntwincities.org

Kelly Rowan www.smartgivers.org

Nick Scheibel www.minneapolisfoundation.org

Kim Snyder www.excelsiorbaygroup.com

Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy:

www.epip.org

Young Nonprofit Professionals Network - Twin Cities Chapter:

www.ynpntwincities.org

Nonprofit and Philanthropy Good Practice: <http://www.npgoodpractice.org/concept/Intergenerational%20Dynamics>

Philanthropy 2173: The Business of Giving
<http://philanthropy.blogspot.com/>

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations
www.geofunders.org

- An executive summary of GEO's Do Nothing About Me Without Me publication can be found here: <http://www.geofunders.org/document.aspx?oid=a0660000005aHR6>

Crucial Conversations - book/technique for preparing for high-stakes conversations:
http://www.vitalsmarts.com/crucialconversations_book.aspx

The following are comments from our Fish Bowl discussion. These comments were made both by our session presenters and session attendees.

Kim Snyder

- The crux of many challenges is confidence... Fundraisers are not beggars, but saddle themselves as such. We don't contact funders and don't perceive ourselves as having the power to shift that dynamic.
- Foundations need us to deliver a social return.

Ellis Bullock

- Recently heard some good advice for funders:
 - When you first wake up in the morning, go into the bathroom, look yourself in the mirror and say, "It's not my money."
- Advice for fundraisers:
 - When you first wake up in the morning, go into the bathroom, look yourself in the mirror and say, "It's not my money."
- It's all our money and we need to work together to use it most effectively.

Paul Verette

- Control of Information
 - Paul's first job was with a funder who found itself with a shortfall of \$5 million dollars. It communicated the hard news at a meeting of its entire group of grantees. A few days later, each grantee received a call telling them how, specifically, this shortfall would impact their organization. To Paul's surprise, the response to his organization's shortfall was not anger or resentment. By sharing the news in a controlled way with the group as a whole, his org was able to maintain as productive and trusting a relationship as possible with each grantee.

Tracy Babler

- Organizational Power Dynamics
 - As funding constraints limit the giving capacity for each foundation, we are seeing foundations beginning to align their giving more and more toward a smaller set of

focuses. This changes their relationship with nonprofits as they are able to fund fewer programs/orgs.

- Nonprofits have the idea that foundations are in charge of deciding the winners and the losers.
 - If you perceive yourself as a loser, you don't trust the "winner"
 - If you perceive yourself as a winner, you often have the risk of losing your community of peers.

Balancing power dynamics through increased information sharing

- imperfect info: some have the info, and some do not. Those with this info have a leg up.
- Grantmakers are disconnected from self and are more about structure & institution
- Grantseekers... negative emotions...

Information as a leveling power

- Power forms what information is created. "Insufficient" reporting requirements demand products not processes, but nonprofits need feedback on process just as much as much. Reporting should benefit the nonprofit more.

Personal Power

- When a person feels powerless, they will either
 - become corrupt and sabotage the system --or--
 - connect themselves with powerful people
- There is power out there for the getting.

Funders & Small Startups

- It's important for young nonprofits to accept that the power dynamic b/w grant seekers and givers are sometimes imbalanced, and learn how to harness it for the best outcome.
- Biggest challenge for startups is to establish initial trust with potential funders.
 - Best to start with small foundations.
 - But bigger foundations can create connections b/w nonprofits through their position. (eg Bush Foundation's work on InCommons)

Personal Perspective

- If you give someone the permission to hold power over you, they will take it.
- They have something to teach ← ----- → I have something to learn
 - That is a straight line... ..not an imbalance.

Stewardship

- The "third power" in our relationship is mission.
- Funders and nonprofits create relationships because they both care about the same mission. Talk to that.

Money

- Communities know what's best for them.
- Resentment is created when those communities feel they must conform to the foundation's notion of their interests when seeking funding.

Large-Group Insights and Take-aways

- Transparency of Info: Foundations could share more of the info they've collected for the benefit of pushing causes forward.
- Necessity for nonprofits and Foundations to put their power together.
 - nonprofits rely on government funding as well as funding from foundations. What can we do to work together to better represent the work of the sector as a whole?
- Encourage this sort of gathering to happen more often. There are a lot of great people in the room; but are all the right people in the room? May be some missing.
- Grantseekers are intimidated, but need to recognize the self interest of foundations' needing stories.
- Expanding Beyond: what still has to change...
 - the new generation hasn't learned all it could from the older generation.
 - Given the thought and attention we've devoted over the last several decades, we should be much further along.
- Curious to know what this session would look like if we didn't know where each other were from. (balancing power as much as possible by making attendees simply the people they are, not the positions they hold or the orgs they represent.)
- When seeking funds from foundations, it's difficult to know what stories they would like to hear... ...there's a lot to tell.