



Developing Leadership for the Chaos Era: You May Need a Coach!

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There are at least six eras in the development of modern leadership theory and every era contributes to the focus. So says an acquaintance of mine, J. Robert Clinton. He further suggests we are leaving the Complexity Era and moving into the Chaos Era. Auto dealer closings, banks short on capital, increasing joblessness, home foreclosures, new credit card rules and more easily fall within the definition of the Chaos Era. I believe there is nothing as useful as a good theory.

Calling this new era of leadership the “Chaos Era” places the emphasis on the situations to be faced by the leader. How can situational storms be quelled? Also, in addition to a high degree of situational leadership skill, there is a high degree of relational leadership skill needed by next generation leaders. I think most would agree that a tidal wave of change has hit in our lifetime. But, we need to make a distinction between change and transition.

One of my mentors, Dr. Leonard Sweet has said “Change is incremental. Transition is supersonic, change at the edge of chaos that phases from incremental to exponential. Change is when you have to do better what you already know how to do. Transition is when you have to do what you don’t know how to do.” Or as William Bridges has said, change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, and the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the situation.” Dee Hock, the man who created the trillion dollar Visa credit-card empire, says that “Change leaders and change teams operate on the boundary of chaos and order.” He calls this the “chaordic zone.”

Chaordic zones and tidal waves are all part of next generation leadership. But what does this mean for the non profit leader who has to navigate transition and change for his/her organization? It means every non profit leader needs a star plan that includes: Selecting a coach, Transforming performance measurement into a habit. Allocating resources to the initiatives that change lives, and Revisiting the mission.

Selecting a Coach - I have a friend who thinks everyone needs a coach these days. Here are some of the reasons. A coach can guide you through developing a well written strategic plan. A coach can help you be proactive in keeping up with changes in the nonprofit field. A coach can help keep your team accountable. A coach can help you raise awareness of your services and increase revenues. A coach can help you focus on what is important, not just urgent, that which needs to improve.



Transforming performance measurement into a habit -This is a day when a good story gives mileage. But many want more than anecdotes, they want results. Good intentions are not frequently rewarded. For one thing, with 22,000 non-profits in Colorado, there is increasing competition for resources. Those who measure performance and outcomes fare better in snagging support.

Allocating resources to the initiatives that change lives – A coach can show you how the lessons of non profit management can attract corporate leaders for the organization you lead. They will address how understating your mission can hurt you. They will show how setting objectives, measuring outcomes, focusing on changed lives, and allocating your resources to four or five key life changing initiatives will strengthen your serve. They will give examples of how this strategy attracts additional attention and revenues.

Revisiting the Mission – Many successful organizations revisit their mission every three years. The environment and client needs change. It is necessary to look at what needs to go as well as what needs to change and what needs to stay. Client focus, managing the mission, and leadership development are all part of refining the forward focused mission. A coach can lead you through the process of refining and reenergizing your organization’s mission.

So, how does a nonprofit leader select a coach/consultant? What should they look for? Here’s a short check list. Look for someone 1. with education in program design and evaluation, organizational or leadership development 2. with experience as a non-profit CEO or CFO, 3. who will listen to you, 4. who is recommended by others and someone 5. who promises to give you alternatives.

We offer one hour free consultation at Roundhouse Advisors. If we cannot meet your needs, we will show you how you can find the coach/consultant that is just right for you. Remember, you don’t have to handle the chaos by yourself.

"Ray" Peacock has over forty years of experience in non-profit leadership. He has designed, evaluated created, and terminated programs serving ages from preschool to senior adults. He has served as a local, regional, and national consultant, interfacing with the White House and National Press Club. Most recently, Ray was CEO for a four state non-profit with 800 employees and annual operating budget of \$40 million. In three years, Ray created a team that took the non-profit from a \$6 million deficit to a \$5 million surplus, and raised \$6 million in capital funds. He is familiar with educational and health care accreditation procedures.

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