Best Professional Development Advice for Nonprofit Careers

One Woman's Story

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So, you want a nonprofit career, or found yourself in a nonprofit career, or want a lift in your nonprofit career? There's something for everyone in this summary.

Best Overall Advice

A. **Gather, connect with your field, without fail!** Make Time. Get to know your colleagues, peers, others who do the same or similar work.

B. **Get trained on your core field, philosophy, and approach to the world.** Learn about strong governance, meeting management, accountability. Keep getting trained, inspired, learn best practices everywhere you go. Ensure your board is trained/educated well so they see the value in staff and volunteer training. Steal ideas shamelessly, but give credit where it's due or expected. Adapt strategically to fit within your or your organization's capacity.

C. **Develop a trusted circle** (fellow CPOs, CVOs, managers, trainers) whom you can confide in, always respecting confidences and keeping high professional standards.

D. **Break out to visit and learn from nonprofits outside of your circle.** Network, learn, test ideas with others. Listen well to what works. Praise good works everywhere you go.

E. **Give yourself the gift of "Think Time"!** Schedule it. Leave the office if you must. Allow time to let ideas flow, consider options, rejuvenate.

Best Professional Development Advice for Nonprofit Careers *(courses, program or organizational models, philosophies) listed in order of importance and usefulness*

1. **Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network, (INRN):** the nonprofit's best friend for affordable, accessible, high quality core nonprofit topics, strategic planning, executive coaching, and free downloadable resources. (You knew I had to include this, right?) Learn about governance and great high functioning boards as your top priority. www.inrn.org
2. **Ai, Appreciative Inquiry:** A strengths-based approach that will energize any meeting, decision, group. Infinitely adaptable. Draw out aspirations, not problems. Build buy-in, draw out successes in a paired or group environment. It's a life philosophy. It will change the way you look at the world. Worldwide collected resources at http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/
3. **Accelerated Learning:** Find out how people learn and work together…it's not just for trainers. Everyone does some form of training whether it's taking an idea back to the office and building buy-in, orienting board members or other volunteers, presenting at meetings, facilitating groups. Everyone should know some facilitation skills. It's fun to learn and fun to practice. Includes understanding personal styles. Everyone should know their own learning or leadership style and how it works best with others, how/why to form a strong diverse team. Sharon Bowman: www.thebowperson.com or The Center for Accelerated Learning, www.alcenter.com
4. **The Influencer: The Power to Change Anything.** Learn to change hearts, minds, Fabulous for important strategic work, complex, www.vitalsmarts.com
5. **The Harwood Institute Lab for Public Innovators:** Learn the importance of "Turning Outward" and why it's essential now and in the future. www.theharwoodinstitute.org

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Great Topics to explore and add to your toolbox

- Active business writing
- Change management
- Creativity
- Decision-making and goal setting (and use appreciative inquiry)
- Governance and all aspects of board leadership and nonprofit management
- Measureable outcomes
- Messaging and brand management
- Relationship building and management, donor relationships, volunteer management
- Relieving Stress and other self-care or organizational care strategies

Great Resources *(including personal favorites, in alpha order after INRN)*

- **Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network,** www.inrn.org and www.inrn.links for more suggested resources
- American Society for Training & Development, ASTD, (and your local chapter), Telling Ain't Training conference and more www.astd.org
- Association of Fundraising Professionals, AFP, http://www.afpindiana.afpnet.org/
- BoardSource, all nonprofits, all the time, leader in governance booklets and much more, www.boardsource.org
- The Bob Pike Group, learning, training http://bobpikegroup.com/
- Bridges Out of Poverty, understand clients so you can help them even more
- Charitable Advisors, Indiana-based best nonprofit job postings anywhere, and other services http://www.charitableadvisors.com/subscribe.html
- Creative Training Techniques http://www.creativetrainingtech.com/5free.html
- DISC behavioral styles assessments and training programs
- Independent Sector www.independentsector.org
- Indiana Office of Faith-Based & Community Initiatives, OFBCI http://www.in.gov/ofbci/2336.htm
- Indiana Youth Institute www.iyi.org
- Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy: degree programs, The Fundraising School, Women's Philanthropic Institute and much more www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/
- Nonprofit Quarterly, NPQ http://www.nonprofitquarterly.org/
- The Drucker Institute, http://www.druckerinstitute.com/
- The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Pages/default.aspx

I'm sure I've left out many great resources. Go back to suggestions C and D and collect more great ideas! Enjoy.

Indiana Nonprofit Resource Network (INRN) is a regionally-based service delivered on behalf of Indiana United Ways. We provide affordable, accessible, and high quality training and custom consulting services such as board retreats to any Indiana nonprofit organization. For more information, visit http://www.inrn.org or our Facebook page at http://www.facebook.com/NonprofitTraining, or sign up for our e-mail list at http://www.inrn.org/contact/join_mailing_list.aspx.

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